

Australian Principals Federation

President's Message—Julie Podbury



Summer reading and a few important reminders.

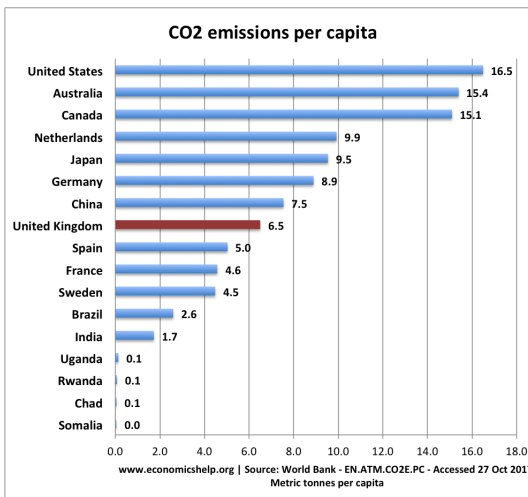


The fact that a large swathe of the nation is ablaze, has taken much of our attention over the summer break. Some members are fighting fires and others trapped in parts of the state where roads are closed and there is no way through. Further, some schools have been destroyed or damaged and our thoughts go out to all those affected or involved.

It is ironic that the world is looking at us in this disaster and are claiming that our national leaders are wrong and the attitude to Climate Change is not only shameful, but lack of appropriate policy to prevent contributing the warming of the planet, is a factor in the current bushfire disaster.

Australia's carbon emissions are up according to the latest figures, and we are now ranked second worst in the world in carbon emissions of metric tonnes per capita (15.4), just behind the United States (16.5). China was 7th (7.5).

It strikes me that the political reaction nationally has been slow, at times inappropriate and ironically some politicians think, "we cannot talk about climate change, at a time like this." However, by contrast the PISA rankings are a national disgrace and all sorts of action will be taken to fix this national embarrassment. In my view the climate change issue is a crisis and will have a massive impact on this country, its prosperity and quality of life in the lifetime of our children and grandchildren. While quality education in our schools is vitally important, the health of our planet is a far more serious matter with urgent attention and action by our nations leaders needed now. This issue is time sensitive as we are heading towards the point of no return regarding carbon emissions.



2017-2020 Victorian Government Schools Agreement expires this year!

If you are interested in joining a Working Party toward the development of our **Log of Claims** for the next 2021–2024 Agreement, you are invited to join us at a meeting at the APF Office at Tooronga Village on January 21st at 10am-2pm.

If you wish to contribute your thoughts in writing, instead of attending, I would appreciate this to me jpodbury@apf.net.au by 16th January to give me time to compile a document to provide to attendees.

Lunch will be provided. Please RSVP to me directly on by text on **0419 103 664**. Please include your name in the text. (Please note if we are overwhelmed with RSVP's we will switch the venue to Riversdale Golf Club, Mount Waverley.)

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, is available during the term break.

Counsellors are on deck right through the summer break, except for the public holidays. If you need support, please ring them on **1300 090 924**

In this issue:

We remind you that you can access the Principal, Health and Wellbeing service for assistance with **InjuryNet**, over the term break. Under the banner of **Early Intervention**, you can self refer or we can refer you if you need support. Details are on this page.

With EBA negotiations for the next Agreement underway soon, we urge interested members to express their views. Details on this page.

An exciting employment opportunity is on P2

An amusing fiction piece by **Jessica Powell**, about parent-teacher relationships, commences on P2. This is from the New York Times opinion section, and the irony of this piece will not be lost on our Primary School members and will likely also strike a familiar chord with our Secondary Colleagues.

Information about **Principal Mentoring** is on P6

My comment re **Social Media** is on P6

Exciting Employment Opportunity, Phil Brown, EO, Country Education Partnership

The Commonwealth Government has provided CEP with a grant to expand the highly regarded Rural Inspire initiative that has operated throughout Victoria for a number of years now, to other states across the country. They are looking for someone to drive this exciting project over the next three years, and see it provided in other states of Australia.

They are looking for an enthusiastic, creative and inspiring person to lead this initiative for the next three years who is passionate about young people in rural and remote communities.

If you are interested in this role, please contact Phil Brown for more information, or if you know of anyone who would be interested, please pass this information on. phil@cep.org.au or call 0428 171 145



Podium 2,
Tooronga Village,
766 Toorak Road,
Glen Iris, 3146.
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Summer Reading

Parent Teacher Association — Jessica Powell, New York Times, 3rd January 2020



We only wanted what was best for our children.

When they came to us at the start of the school year, looking for suggestions for their class science project, we had lots of ideas. “Make an app! Build a light bulb from a potato! Use your knowledge of physics to construct a 20-foot toothpick structure with no glue!”

But Ms. Perel, the new kindergarten teacher, had something else in mind. She lined our 6-year-olds up along the wall and measured their feet with a wooden ruler. The students graphed the measurements on a long sheet of paper, which Ms. Perel then presented to us at Back to School Night.

“We’re learning about measurement!” chirped Ms. Perel.

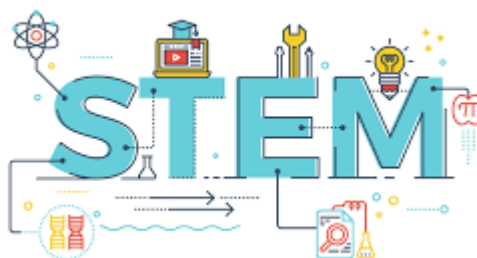
Ms. Perel was an ex-engineer from a big tech company in California; our school had hired her as its top draft pick, beating out St. Ignatius, Choatham Academy and the liberal rich kid school with the small farm. And she was a woman, which ticked our Role Model box. But we didn’t get it — why was an engineer making dots on a piece of paper? Shouldn’t she be teaching the kids how to code?

Then it hit us: This was obviously so much more than a chart. This was STEM for transcendence, STEM for understanding. Despite differences in class, race and their parents’ political leanings, there was only a 0.5-inch foot-length difference between the tallest and shortest student in the class. If you connected the dots, the graph told a simple message: We are more alike than we are different. This was STEM for diversity.

“We should bring rulers into more parts of our children’s lives,” said one mother. “Show them more about their world. Show *us* more about their world.”

Ms. Perel’s face broke into a smile. This was probably her first real teaching victory, her first taste of the myriad benefits of the parent-teacher partnership. “I’d love to do that,” she said.

Unfortunately, the unifying glow of the measurement project quickly wore off. The day after Back to School Night, Charles Marza — whose foot was only 0.1 inch larger than Gia Morello’s — told Gia she smelled like old shoes. As a result, Gia refused to join in circle time, and missed the day’s Spanish lesson because she was hiding under her desk. By the time her mother came to pick her up, little Gia was uno, dos, tres



NOTE: Tax receipts are automatically sent at the end of the end of the financial year.

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



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Join the APF

www.apf.net.au

Forms can be completed on line.



join

words behind the rest of the class.

“We should know right when these things happen,” Charles’s mother told Ms. Perel, glaring across the room at little Gia. The rest of us, gathered in the classroom for after-school pickup, nodded. We could help our children best if we could address their bad behavior in the moment it was happening.

We gently surrounded Ms. Perel like a warm hug. Would it be possible, we suggested, for her to implement a real-time behavioral monitoring tool? It’d be like the foot measurement experiment, but for behavior. Like a nifty wooden measuring implement, but online, and better.

Ms. Perel mumbled something about there only being so many hours in the school day to take on extra projects. We smiled and inched closer. “I guess I could build that,” she said faintly.

Three weeks later, Ms. Perel was ready to demo it for us. We arrived promptly at 3:15 p.m., right after class had ended, and squeezed into our children’s desks. Then, on a screen above the whiteboard, she projected her new student monitoring app, which used image recognition to classify and log each behavioral plus or minus. It assigned and tabulated scores for each child throughout the day, for everything from hair-pulling and name-calling to sharing and kindness. Any two-point shift in score triggered a notification to the parent.



“Here’s an example from today,” she said, pressing a button on the app. Charles Marza’s gap-toothed smile materialized on the projector screen. To the right of Charles’s picture was his behavior log. He had made faces during the Pledge of Allegiance at 8 a.m. (-1), but shared his sandwich with Kaylen at noon (+2). He hit Lucinda at 3 p.m. (-5), but showed empathy toward Pedro, who had stained his favorite dinosaur T-shirt during lunch (+4). Charles ended the day at zero.

“But I was never near Lucinda!” Charles wailed, burrowing his face in his mother’s lap.

“My son doesn’t lie,” his mother said stiffly, wrapping her arms around him.

We spoke among ourselves. Charles could be lying. His mother could be lying. Did we have more data on Charles? Historical behavior patterns? Frequency of proximity to Lucinda?

Ms. Perel waved her hands, trying to get everyone’s attention. She reminded us of a cute little bird learning to fly, furiously flapping its arms to keep itself in the air. We let her flap and continued our brainstorm. If we had the locations of each child, we would have a better idea of which were close to each other, close enough to hit.

“But I can already see the kids,” Ms. Perel protested, “I know where they are.”

“But what if someone kidnaps them?” asked Lucy Bouhouch’s father.

“A babysitter gone rogue!” said someone else.

“An estranged mother-in-law!”

We murmured in agreement. A location tracker could save our children’s lives.

We looked at Ms. Perel. She looked around the room, like a bird searching for an open window. Finally, she spoke.

“So what you want is ...”



Support for members

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

Julie - 0419 103 664

jpodbury@apf.net.au

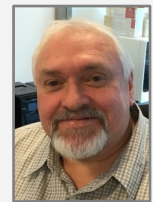
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Ring us direct



Mark Arkinstall
APF Industrial Officer

**"Most of us
don't listen
with the
intent to
understand.
We listen with
the intent to
reply."**

Stephen Covey

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

“More data,” we responded. We surrounded Ms. Perel. She stepped back, bumping into her desk.

The next week, Ms. Perel arranged the children in an assembly line during arts and crafts period. Then, as she played songs about ducks on her ukulele, the children constructed their digital badges.

When we came to pick up the kids later that day, the badges were ready to be worn, attached to rope necklaces made in bright colors. They were a little heavy for 6-year-old necks, but Rob Jones’s dad reminded us that a bit of tension in the neck was good for developing grit.

The children’s badges were synchronized with Ms. Perel’s behavior monitoring app, and worked just as we had requested. Through the app, we could track the location of each child and see which other children they were playing with.

“Using your tool, it seems you could easily tell whether a child was associating with someone who has low behavior scores,” Nat Diamond’s father said. “You could assign good scores for proper friend choices.”

Ms. Perel’s eyes bulged. “I don’t think I’d feel comfortable deciding who the children should play with.”

Of course she shouldn’t, we told her. That was a parent’s role.

“So you want access to the app,” sighed Ms. Perel.

“Just an itsy-bitsy parent account,” said Stella Marino’s mother.

“I love technology, and I’m happy to use it in the classroom,” said Ms. Perel. “But do we really need to track everything? How will your kids feel about it when they’re older?”

“What is parenting if not constant data collection?” said Nat Jones’s father.



Stella Marino’s mother smiled warmly and placed her hand on Ms. Perel’s wrist. “Brown bear, brown bear, what do you see? I see a parent account looking at me!”

After we made a few calls to the principal, Ms. Perel updated her software. Through the new parent console, we could now track the children’s location, monitor their behavior and even send them digital

hugs or strong admonishments in response to their actions.

We quickly became power users of the app. Each night at the dinner table, we parents would pull out our phones and review the day’s behavior score and a time-lapse synthesis of our children’s dotted movements on the map — a much more interesting graph than the one the children had made a few months earlier with their little feet. This is your network, we told our kids. Each dot is an opportunity, a chance to connect; the more you connect, the larger your network.

A week after launching the console, Ms. Perel called an after-school meeting. She looked at us and took a deep breath.

“I’m finding the app disruptive. Some of you show up at school and follow the children around without looking up from your phone, bumping into the kids and other parents. And then there’s the parental intervention feature — sometimes you all press the admonishment button at the



STUDENT VOICE

Three ways to give students a degree of choice without sacrificing control over essential curriculum direction:

- Student-generated test questions - Have students work in groups for 30-45 minutes to devise test questions that might be used in the actual exam. This not only gives students a sense of control over their learning but also serves as an effective review session.
- Open assessments – Leave 10% of the syllabus for an assignment that students create with the instructor. The default is a paper, but students are free to come up with a more creative and interesting assignment.

- Class constitutions – Having students collectively come up with ground rules for a course gives them a collegial sense of working together toward a shared purpose. This could include the use of cell phones, tablets, and laptops in class or how late work is handled.

Offer students one new choice, either in how they demonstrate their learning to you or in how your class forms its community rules. In doing so, you just might nudge them one step closer to the goal we have for every student: taking ownership of their own education.

“Small Changes in Teaching: Giving Them a Say” by James Lang in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 22, 2016

Quoted
from Hippocampus,
an email publication of
Principal’s Digest



same time and the room sounds like a bunch of barking dogs.”

Someone slid a plate of gluten-free cupcakes in front of Ms. Perel. Another pressed a gift certificate for a massage into her hand. We wanted to show her that the gratitude of empowered parents knows no bounds.

But a week later, the parental intervention features suddenly disappeared. Ms. Perel provided little explanation. At morning drop-off, she mumbled something to us about bugs and cloud infrastructure. When we protested, she reminded us that we’d still be able to see the children’s scores each day and track their locations. But from now on, she said, the parents would have to trust her to discipline the children on her own.

“Besides,” she said, “we can find other ways to use technology. There’s a great writing app that I’d like to try.”

“An app built by a private company?” scoffed Stella Marino’s mom. “I’m not giving them my child’s data.”

Ms. Perel shook her head. “It’s just an app where children use their fingers to trace letters on a screen. It’s far more innocent than what you had me build.”

But there was no way she could convince us. That handwriting app would probably track the evolution of our children’s signatures as they grew up and sell needless, invasive ads for cartoon-festooned writing implements.

“Don’t try to distract us,” Charles’s mom said to Ms. Perel. “This conversation is about our ability to use the parental console in the app. If we don’t have access, how are we going to get the children to behave better?”

“Gold star stickers,” Ms. Perel said flatly.

But someone else had a better idea. Sandra Lute’s mother ran a social network that we used to post pictures of our vacations, our children and their diverse friend groups. She marched us down to the coffee shop one day and showed us how she had used deep learning neural something-or-other to analyze our pictures to determine our children’s friend networks, interests, and preferences for cupcakes versus cake. It was a gold mine of information.



At that moment, we realized that if we could combine Ms. Perel’s location and behavior data with our children’s interests and social connections, we would know, and be able to anticipate, everything. We would be able to send microtargeted messages to our children — pixelated love notes encouraging them to behave better, to brush their teeth, to love themselves and their classmates, to embrace difference and climate change and intersectionality and vegetables. We would surround our children with a cocoon of positive affirmations that would surely have a positive impact on their life trajectories.

We marched back to the school and confronted Ms. Perel in the classroom. “Absolutely not,” she said angrily. “There are rules around these things. I checked, and, you know, I’m not even supposed to be building apps.”



“Yes you are,” said James’s dad. “It’s called ‘STEM.’”

“STEM! STEM! STEM!” we chanted.

“This has nothing to do with STEM!” Ms. Perel shrieked. “I should be teaching your kids about volcanoes and weather and climate change and how dinosaurs became extinct!”

Simple rules for times of crisis, Bill McGowan

Rule #1: The truth is non-negotiable. Once your credibility is shot with staff and supporters, all is lost. Your people will be willing to follow you into battle as long as you’re straight with them. Once they sense you’re telling them only half the story, they will feel used and exploited.

Rule #2: Own your mistakes. The goal is to pivot quickly to the concrete steps you’ve already taken to correct the situation.

Rule #3: Set realistic expectations as to when the situation will improve. If it is going to require time and patience, project ahead to your staff a time in the future when they will look back with a sense of pride and accomplishment that they persevered instead of surrendered.

Rule #4: Don’t scapegoat the media. As Mark Twain once famously said, “Never pick a fight with those who buy ink by the barrel”.

Rule #5: Don’t foster a culture of suspicion and secrecy. There’s no quicker way to create an ‘us vs. them’ climate than to kill collaboration. When times get tough, leadership needs all hands on deck to get through. To ensure this, take care of your own first when it comes to the sharing of information, even if it’s just a matter of minutes or hours before that information is disseminated externally.

from Hippocampus,
an email publication of
Principal’s Digest

The industrial organisation for the Principal Class

“The dinosaurs wouldn’t have died if they’d had access to the right data,” snapped Stella’s mom.

The next day, around 10 a.m., Ms. Perel’s student monitoring app disappeared from our phones. We rushed to the school, images of disaster filling our heads — of lice, an earthquake, kidnapping, the Rapture. We dashed to the kindergarten classroom, tripping over each other, pushing a few fourth graders as we ran to the large blue door with poorly drawn pictures of sunflowers.

The classroom was empty. The digital tracking badges that had connected us to our children were spilling out of the trash can. We rummaged through the pile, looking for our children, clutching their badges to our chest. Ms. Perel had left us a message on the whiteboard: *Off to smell the flowers.*

Stella’s mother screamed. Rob’s dad called the police. “Wait,” someone said. “There’s a garden somewhere around here. There might be flowers there.”

We ran around the building until we found a fenced-in garden behind the school gym. We pushed past the rickety door and rushed in, stumbling into a small, grassy enclosure of ferns and flowers. Our 19 little angels — and Charles Marza — were lying on their backs, looking up at the blue sky; their fingers playing with the grass, the knees of their pants covered in dirt. No one was fighting. The notes of a ukulele skipped across the marigolds as Ms. Perel played her song about ducks and the children sang along.

We breathed a collective sigh of relief. Wasn’t this what we had always wanted for them? To run free, breathe the fresh air and dream of life’s possibilities?

We tiptoed through the garden and encircled their necks with their digital badges. Then we drew back, pushing ourselves along the fence. We watched our children float in and out of the day, watched their badges’ gentle blue lights blink in anticipation of connection.

Jessica Powell ([@themoko](#)) is the former head of communications for Google and the author of “The Big Disruption: A Totally Fictional but Essentially True Silicon Valley Story.”



Principal Health & Wellbeing—Mentoring & General Support

Principal Mentoring links Substantive & Acting Principals with experienced current or recently retired principals in a mentoring relationship. These trained mentors partner with their mentees to share their expertise and provide support, as sounding boards and trusted advisors.

Mentors are trained in psychological first aid, and will be able to help recognise emerging health and wellbeing issues and link mentees up with other support and services as needed.

The program offers up to twelve hours of mentoring time. Sessions can be delivered face-to-face, via Skype or phone, or a combination of the two.

You can participate in this program at any career stage, and the service is totally confidential.

How can I register for the program?

Principals are able to access the mentoring program by expressing their interest through the Bastow website. See: [Principal Mentoring](#). For further information contact **Sarah Carthew** on 8199 2986

You will be asked to complete an expression of interest as part of the registration, to help match you with a mentor.



Social Media

Once upon a time, when we got cranky about something, we mullied it over for a few days, and then wrote a letter to the editor or the offending company to express our considered concern.

Today it seems that people get cranky, don’t think, and fire off or post an invective filled opinion, which often does long term harm to the writer as well as their intended target.

Social media is a huge issue in our schools. Some wronged or unhappy parents fire off public comment at will on their Facebook page, personal blog or Twitter, rather than bringing their concerns directly to the school.

Social media poses another set of risks for our staff and it is worth reminding them of these on day one of each year.

On-line contact with or friending students socially is a huge risk for staff and should be discouraged. Members can also cite challenging issues arising re staff making contact with former students.

Staff commenting negatively about you or the school on social media is a breach of the Public Sector Code of Values.

Parents and staff should be encouraged to bring their concerns directly to you to be addressed, rather than voice them online.

Julie Podbury

The industrial organisation for the Principal Class