

Australian Principals Federation

President's Message—Julie Podbury



Special Edition

There are two issues to discuss in this newsletter. The first is to clarify that the **APF is an industrial organisation**....We are a UNION! I am stating the obvious because one member saw this in an AEU delegate's message to their constituents last week. This was the reply to a principal who raised questions about the value of the AEU over the APF in representing Principal Class. The red is their own emphasis.

“.... The VGSA 2017 and subsequent VGSA's are negotiated by the AEU and the Government. Other associations or individuals can log submissions, but DET aren't required to respond. That's why we are reaching out to our 2500 Principal Class members now to invite them to contribute to the AEU Log of Claims process that is all about workload.

Finally, sometimes employers like to practice a bit of 'divide and conquer' and I have spoken to VPA, VASSP and APF folk about this over the years. We are stronger together....”

There are a number of factually incorrect matters in this and I am certain you can sort the wheat from the chaff in this statement. Never let the truth get in the way of a good story!

The other issue is the **COVID-19 virus** and the disruption both the virus and reaction to it are weaving through our communities. Principal Class are on the front line in this, and decisions made in Canberra are impacting in our schools.

Most schools are making very good use of the daily DET information, including the changing advice, and crafting excellent communications to parents with the aim of **informing, educating and calming parents**. Those same schools are working swiftly to ensure they are prepared for any possibility of a shut down of schools. There are many questions that need answers and from my experience DET are trying hard to respond as rapidly as possible.

We will publish some of the member feedback in this issue, so that you can gauge the breadth of feeling across the state.

We will also outline some of the best practice from our members in preparation for shutdown and how to manage this effectively and fairly for all concerned.

Link to the latest from the DET about coronavirus – bookmark this

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/department/Pages/coronavirus.aspx>

Most importantly, DET have assured us that they will give at least 24 hours notice if the decision is made to shut schools. See this link with an important statement from Victoria's Chief Health Officer [here](#).

Clear communication with school staff is really important at this time. This is an example from one of our colleagues:

Morning all,

I received an update at 10pm last night, I have included the important points in this email. I will email parents/carers this morning to ensure they are aware of the current arrangements, at present the cancellation of camps/excursions is the one we will work on this morning.

In relation to our own staff gatherings, I will meet with the leadership team this morning and make arrangements for smaller groups to meet in PD etc, briefing will still go ahead.

In this issue:

In this special edition on Coronavirus we try to provide as many useful links, and as much information, ideas, and members feedback as possible.

We start the newsletter raising concern about some misinformation relating to the APF. We assume this is ignorance and not intentional.

Also included is a statement from [Steve Baldock](#), National Partnerships, TheirCare.

Our EO Gemma Naylor invites members to have a look at the **new APF website** which was launched this week.

<https://apf.net.au>

Members only sections requires log-in. This is the same as was previously used.

If you need this information please text Gemma or Julie. Gemma will respond Mon, Thur & Fri. Julie will not be available to respond on Fridays.

Please chat with your students about good hygiene, there is soap in their toilets and we will replace it as the need arises.

The main message is for us to remain calm, there are already students who are extremely anxious. These measures are in place to keep our community safe and well – that's the key message.

The principal followed this with the latest information from DET.

@@@

At another school they developed a script for use by teachers in their communication with primary and secondary students. A very good idea to ensure a consistent message.

Secondary Teacher Script

The last 7 days have been interesting and at times confusing with all the news and information about Coronavirus. We want you to know that you are safe, and we are doing everything we can to take care of you during the virus situation. It is challenging and we can understand it may be causing you to feel both confused and anxious. We don't want you feeling alone, and we want the facts presented to you straight up. You are intelligent, young adults who deserved to be treated with honesty and respect.

For your part, we need you to self-care. You have a role to play.

Here are the facts from the school's perspective:

- No staff member at XXX College has been reported as infected with Coronavirus
- No student or family member from XXX College has been reported as infected
- The school remains open as I must follow the best advice from the Department of Education. This may change and we will let you and your families know immediately if there is to be a school closure – this could happen at short notice
- XXX staff are working on plans to deliver online content and homework plans in the event of a school closure
- **We are setting up some rooms near the office to help when people might feel unwell during the day**
- We are closely monitoring the situation and reacting accordingly when things change – and then letting you know.

Some changes we are putting in place right away are:

- No School Assembly
- No Whole School Athletics Carnival
 - * This will revert to a normal school day and the Sport Team will determine alternative methods for identifying students for the next stage of competition, assuming they go ahead.
- No Parent/Teacher/Student Conferences
 - * This will revert to a normal school day
- Excursions involving public transport will revert to school-based activities

What we need you to do:

1. Keep washing your hands when you go to a bathroom. It might be a good idea to buy a small bottle of hand wash if you can find them in the supermarket – just in case.
2. Let an adult know if a bathroom does not have operational soap for you to use.
3. Don't damage or overuse the soap and dispensers, or toilet paper – leaving bathrooms in good order is taking care of your friends who need the facilities too.
4. Self-isolate at home if you feel flu-like symptoms occurring and inform your parents and the school. Please don't jump to the conclusion that you have the virus. Just keep calm and let the medical authorities do what they are set up to do best.



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

Many new members this week. Thank you all for your help in spreading the word.

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



Gemma Naylor
APF Executive
Officer

gnaylor@apf.net.au

Join the APF

<https://apf.net.au>

Forms can be completed on-line.

5. If you are feeling unwell, keep thinking about others by keeping a 'social distance' from them. It might feel unnatural but is the best thing to do right now. The elderly and sick are high risk, so let's take care of each other.
6. If you develop flu-like symptoms whilst at school, identify that to a trusted adult and we have set up an isolation area so you can wait till we call home and get you some care.
7. If you do get isolated, don't feel bad – it is just a precaution and we do not think you are a bad person or have done the wrong thing. These are just precautions to make sure we are all doing the right thing.
8. Take your main books/laptop home each night - as if we have a school closure the next day, it might be quick and you will need your books to remain in study mode.
9. If the school does close, then you will be checking emails/Office365 because that is the main platform we will use to keep study occurring

These are interesting times, but we can work together to make the best of the situation. We are not in panic mode – we are in planning mode. Smart people keep calm and think their way through things.

Should you experience any anxiety or worry about yourself or your loved ones, then please see a trusted adult so we can work through things. Don't be anxious or alone – that is why we are here...to take care of you.

We might post messages through the week to you on Compass, so keep checking every now and then. We won't overdo it, but we might need to tell you things so we can all help each other.



Primary Teacher Script

The last 7 days have been interesting and confusing with all the news and information about Coronavirus. We want you to know that you are safe, and we are doing everything we can to take care of you.

We also need you to help out to keep us all healthy.

We are lucky- No one at our school or anyone in their family has the virus.

We are making some changes to try and keep us all healthy, like not having assemblies or having big events like Athletics Day. We will let you know if there are other things that change.

What we need you to do:

1. Keep washing your hands.
2. Let an adult know if a bathroom does not have soap for you to use.
3. Don't damage or overuse the soap and dispensers, or toilet paper – leaving bathrooms in good order is taking care of your friends who need them too.
4. If you don't feel well at school, tell an adult and we will help.
5. Make sure you borrow books from the library, so you have something to read at home if we need to close the school for a bit.

These are interesting times, but we can work together to make the best of the situation. We are not in panic mode – we are in planning mode. Smart people keep calm and think their way through things.

If you feel worried about yourself or your family, then please see an adult so we can work through things. Don't be scared or alone – that is why we are here...to take care of you.

Does anyone have any questions?



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

Mark - 0418 551 375

industrialofficer@apf.net.au

John—0407 557 862

jjmhandley@gmail.com

Ring us direct

Conflict of Interest

This issue is still causing concerns for some of our members. If in doubt please ring to ask for advice.

I am happy to come to Network or other meetings to present to you on this topic.

Please email me or ring to discuss.



Mark Arkinstall

APF Industrial Officer

Mark - 0418 551 375

industrialofficer@apf.net.au

Other things to think about:



Team tasks in preparation	Detail
Teaching & Learning	<p>Review DET expectations for continuity of learning.</p> <p>Preparation for online distribution of curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials for those that don't have internet access at home • Booklets – NAPLAN preparation <p>Consider which subjects will be providing work – there may be some that need to be exempt due to the nature of the work.</p> <p>eg: PE could prepare an activity grid that students could undertake at home to keep active.</p> <p>General Literacy tasks – Grid format to choose across the week.</p> <p>Work with staff to prepare – meetings will be focussed on this throughout the week.</p>
<p>Information for class teachers to debrief kids</p> <p>Positive messaging of support</p> <p>Hand washing</p> <p>Social distancing</p> <p>Community thinking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Changes to the program •Preventative •Precautionary 	<p>Review scripts for this morning and work with the staff during briefing to ensure that they are ready to deliver these with their students.</p> <p>Provide feedback re attendance.</p> <p>Identify vulnerable kids and families that we will need to maintain a connection with in the event the school is closed – develop and document a plan of action for this.</p>
DET Communications and Operations	<p>Recording of Absences – accuracy and follow up.</p> <p>Requirements for staff in the event of a closure.</p> <p>HR requirements in relation to imposed isolation etc.</p> <p>Tell staff to speak up if worried - Staff that we don't know might be pregnant or have an underlying health issue.</p> <p>Check that email addresses are working for students.</p> <p>Make sure staff information is up to date on compass.</p> <p>Create staff contact groups within the leadership team</p> <p>Cancel school tours.</p> <p>Supplies: Cleaning, Hand sanitiser, Tissues/wipes, bathrooms and cleanliness.</p> <p>Community information – send out daily updates/compose scripts for staff.</p> <p>School visits – 6-7 transition.</p> <p>Strengthening transitions.</p> <p>Staff PL activities.</p> <p>Reviewing events and activities current</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting schedule remainder of the year <p>Next week; Reviewing events and activities term 2</p>

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.

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.

As you can see from the past few pages there is an enormous amount of work to cover off if we are to get this done and ensure no vulnerable kids is left out of the loop, and we don't add to the fear and confusion in the community. From an IR perspective there is a huge demand on school leaders to prepare for this. This will need to be acknowledged once we get into a better place.

The Principal Teams are well placed to calm the waters in their respective communities and keep parents and carers appropriately in the loop.

We expect that in this time the DET will adjust due dates for some of the bureaucratic bumpf that is normally required at this time of year and generally take the pressure off Principals and schools.

The general principle that should be applied in your decision making. If in doubt...don't. In other words, if in doubt about holding a particular event, then don't. eg parent teacher nights, even though you are sure there will not be over 500 in any one place at a time. Common sense is your ally here.

As of the writing of this to you, (Monday 16th, 3pm) many schools are reporting parent choice absences between 12-20%. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from school.

These are strange times and strange things are being reported. The most interesting comment from our Prime Minister was a request to school that you keep kids apart! I'm still pondering on the logisitics of that request.

Member feedback—Coronavirus

Julie...why are we at school? I have no idea what children are carriers...I am the sole carer of elderly parents...this is ridiculous...

@ @ @

Concerned about TV explanations.

Close now before kids are sick – grandparents not at risk

Allow them to stay for 'herd immunity' and throw staff, principals under the bus, what happens when they are all infected? and they go home sick to parents???

Seems a no brainer to me

I am really concerned as last year I did have a collapsed lung. I believe I am well, but I'm 61 so expendable apparently.

@ @ @

I note however that I strongly disagree with your (David Howes) assertion regarding the adequacy of current School Cleaning arrangements. I understand precisely your intent and the caveats and pressure you will be mindful of, but urge you to quietly seek some other arrangements to ramp up cleaning provision for schools at this time. – as I have already done with extended local arrangement to engage XXX further, at local expense.

@ @ @

I am writing late this evening frustrated with the timing and communication of the latest email from DET.

69 Yr 5/6 students and 6 staff/2 parents were ready to attend school camp tomorrow. After seeking counsel from my SEIL during the day, a decision to attend was confirmed.

Communication was sent to the community informing that we would proceed. (Although with trepidation from my heart)....



Social Cohesion Survey Deadline Extended! Here's a chance to make your leadership work visible

Every day Victorian public schools grapple with a myriad of social issues that face students in their school communities. But what are these issues? And how can we understand them better so as to support school leaders and teachers to do this crucial but 'invisible' work?

Here's a chance to have your say as school leaders. Monash and Deakin Universities want to hear your thoughts on these crucial questions. Our aim is to build an evidence base to support school leaders and teachers to build stronger school communities; more engaged learners and ultimately better social and academic outcomes for all public students.

If you are a Principal or Assistant Principal in a Victorian State School, please follow this link to an explanatory statement about the research, followed by a short survey.

We've had just 70 school leaders respond so far, and we'd love to see this climb higher to ensure we capture a broad range of views from different school types and areas in the state.

[https://
teg.tgesurvey.com.au/
WTR0019/cgi-bin/
ciweb.pl?
studynome=WTR0019&
UID=9997](https://teg.tgesurvey.com.au/WTR0019/cgi-bin/ciweb.pl?studynome=WTR0019&UID=9997)

The industrial organisation for the Principal Class

To then check my email (by chance) at 10:15pm tonight and find that we could attend camp but would need to return on Tuesday is not acceptable. What is the purpose of the Student Activity Locator during such a time?!

Luckily my active SEIL messaged (also at 10:15pm) to ensure that I received the email. After some back and forward SMS and message from her to the Area Director it was confirmed at 10:30ish that we would cancel.

So with school 11 minutes around the corner I decided to drive in and open up to; Email the community via eNews and Compass, Facebook post update, Call the camp, Message my attending staff, Call the bus company and Inform the SC president—who was awake!

Plus organise the provision for 'normal' teaching and learning tomorrow.

And here we are....

I'm just glad I managed to get the email message at 10:15pm. Usually I'm in bed! Otherwise the stress level would be far greater than at 11:55pm tonight.

But we will deal with the parent and student fall out tomorrow. The question will be....we understand the global situation but why so late from the Dept?

@ @ @

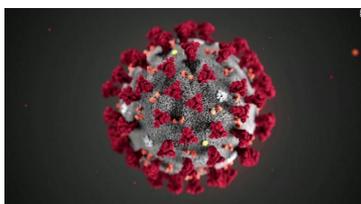
"We are once again being taken complete advantage of. Principals will work their proverbial backsides off, but we won't be used and abused and taken for fools anymore!!!"

@ @ @

Good article here - <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-03-12/coronavirus-closing-schools-here-is-how-one-is-making-it-work/12041526>

Some questions and statements for consideration

- Inequity between schools (haves vs have nots) – we are a 1:1 ipad school so technology wise not too much of an issue for us, but many will not be prepared. Also only learning (compass etc.) will not be in all schools (Ultraset anyone?)
- What about those children and teachers who do not have access or internet at home?
- Concerns for the workload for teachers – seems easy in theory, but also opens them up to much more pressure from parents and an almost 24/7 expectation – knowing that some parents and teachers will engage electronically in that manner.
- A bit like homework – the work provided will be a polarizing issue – not enough, too much. Also dealing with some parents who won't or can't engage with the work, particularly if they are trying to work from home at the same time.
- Maintaining connections amongst students – particularly as parents begin going through some tough times (loss of jobs/money), could lead to a number of other issues and hardship cases.
- Maintaining PL for teachers and how we expect and enforce their engagement
- Impacts on enrolments – International and others. We lost our first student on Friday – oddly flying back to China.
- Financial impacts on school (not underestimating the huge impact worldwide!) – big loss of income, International students, hire of facilities, out of hours care – all of which schools will have budgeted for in 2020.



We are not alone

You might find this interesting.

We Are New York Teachers. Close the Schools.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/14/opinion/contributors/close-new-york-schools.html?referringSource=articleShare>

Some good online resources for ongoing learning in the event of closures -

<https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-emergencies/coronavirus-school-closures/solutions>

This YouTube clip is from a Canadian GP and very clearly explains Coronavirus with good graphics. This is simple enough for kids to understand and makes it clear why hygiene is so important.

<https://youtu.be/kIL5m5XznNY>

The industrial organisation for the Principal Class



THEIRCARE CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE

One of the most challenging things in managing the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic is the uncertainty. We all feel we are waiting for someone else to give us some direction. Six weeks ago, TheirCare started preparing contingency plans which seemed like a little overkill. Today we are thankful we planned because we feel armed to handle the situation as it evolves.

In working through contingency planning, we focused on key areas including our financial stability, our educators (and broader support staff), communication and suppliers.

These key areas are critical for both these uncertain times, during any potential closures and coming out of closures and returning to normality.

We have had to already implement a number of changes including access to food items and as such we have made changes to our menus where needed. Our service coordinators are having to do a lot more proactive food shopping because deliveries are not consistent. We normally incorporate cooking activities into our programming but many of the ingredients are just not available, so we have had to change some of our programming elements. Whilst there are changes, we ensure that all children are fed and no child will go hungry.

Our Customer Service Centre based in Glen Iris is capable of handling a dozen calls at once without the need to put any customer on hold. We have taken many calls from many families regarding our ability to keep their children safe in our services and we are advising them that we are following all guidance from the Government and Department of Education as it relates to the coronavirus as well as being consistent with policies implemented by our local school partners.

If you are a current TheirCare partner our job is to work with you and your families. All services are following a strict hand washing/hand sanitising policy to minimise the spread of the virus and we will continue to run services as normal unless we receive different advice from the Department of Education. If you have another provider, the challenges do not discriminate so ask them about their plans. Should you have any questions relating to outside school hours care or the challenges ahead you are welcome to call our customer service centre on 1300 072 410.

Steve Baldock
National Partnerships | TheirCare
www.theircare.com.au