

# Australian Principals Federation

## President's Message—Julie Podbury



### *The Journey back to Face-to-Face*

We have received endless emails after our special draft guideline document was sent to you yesterday. It is meant as a thought starter, and designed to hopefully save you some time as you wend your way through the myriad of things that have to be done now.

**This newsletter is very short** and has 3 inclusions;

1. To kick off the idea of **collecting the good ideas and learning** that has come from the whole remote and flexible learning experience, with the hope that we can share them and carry them forward. We include a link to this fantastic video created by Wallarano PS on their remote learning experience. It is brilliant and worth a look. Thank you to **Gail Doney** for allowing us to include it in this newsletter. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LCgl\\_vXvrk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LCgl_vXvrk)

We have heard great stories about the fact that **some students have thrived** in this environment, without the distractions of class mates. **Some students**, who have attended school and not engaged in their education, **suddenly did engage**. We need to establish what were the factors at play here. Then there were the **school refusers, who started to engage for the first time**.

One other idea we heard of was the change in practice in respect to **meetings**. A **“Drop in”, on Microsoft Teams** was open for an hour each day after school, where there was always a member of the leadership team. Staff could literally drop in to raise any issue with their colleagues, and get a fast solution. It was very popular and well used. My understanding is that it wiped out the need for “Staff meetings” as such.

For me the whole **Webex experience** and the elimination of the drive across the city to meet, was a huge bonus. A one hour meeting always costs me at least 3 hours. **Not having to travel** is a far more productive use of my time. I know getting together and connecting is important, as we are social beings, however the time and stress of travelling in Melbourne has become a real burden, and remote attendance at planning, Network and other meetings might provide an answer for some of this.

There will be **many more thoughts and ideas from you, our members**. Please send me a few lines and we will try to bring this all together in one document. Links to videos are welcome.

2. We have the welcome **return of our blogger, Mark McKelson**, with 101 Things You Need to Know to be a Principal, as he lays out a suggested plan for you, so you can get your head around what has to be done to enact the mountain of things that need to be done, to return to Face-to-Face classes.
3. **Our Facebook page is live**. Thank you to Vice President, Andrew Cock, for his work on this. <https://www.facebook.com/APFVictoria/>



### *The following websites may be helpful*

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

DHHS website <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>



### Disconnected Students

**Combing through Facebook pages created by teachers during the pandemic we can see heroic efforts to make teaching work in a new environment, along with humour and mutual support.** There's also a lot of venting about how hard this is: many teachers are new to videoconferencing tools and the whole business of teaching online. There is a lot less 'control' on the part of the teacher and that can make us uncomfortable. Teachers worry about students who are not signing in and participating in online instruction. Reasons include no Internet access and/or computer at home, no quiet space to work and taking care of siblings while parents work. **Also, some students are not connecting because they felt invisible while they were in the physical classroom, so they feel that they will not be missed in the virtual one.** The most interesting question found in the Facebook pages: *Knowing what you know now, would you have done anything differently when the students were in front of you?*

“6 Reasons Students Aren't Showing Up for Virtual Learning” by Peter DeWitt in *Education Week*, April 26, 2020

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

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



### Blog 17 – Coronavirus Return – A Roadmap

There is no normal; normal has gone. With the news school is returning on the 26<sup>th</sup> May, our plans for home learning in Term 2 have been thrown up in the air again. My most used line of the week has been “I’ve never been a principal in a pandemic before, let me think about it”. Yesterday threw our planning, organisation, level headedness and patience out the window. I’ve been doing this for a while now and we will never again work through such a crisis. I thought I’d share what I’m doing the next two weeks to get ready for school returning.

#### Step One – Get reports organised

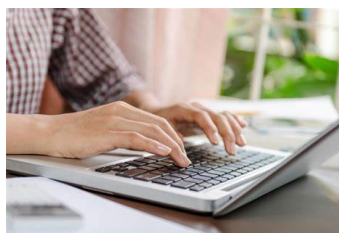
The last thing teachers want to be worried about will be reports when school returns. We have been given permission to remove the 5-point scale and create a summary of their participating in home learning throughout the semester. We are setting up three boxes to fill in on compass, Literacy, Numeracy and a General Comment.

Next thing you need to do is plan when teachers are going to get them done. I’m setting aside next Thursday and Friday as report writing days. The teachers will still send home work to be completed on these days, but won’t be contactable for questions, phone calls, video conferences or feedback. Two days is plenty of time to write 25 one page summaries.

You then need to have a staff meeting and get their focus on reports. They are anxious about school returning, but they need to get their heads in the report space first. Put your foot down and tell them that you will get that under control behind the scenes and talk them through the plan next week.

#### Step Two – Schools Back

First thing to remember here, we have 13 days till the kids get back to school. You aren’t going to get this all sorted in one day, but you have time. First thing I did yesterday was call a SIT meeting to brainstorm all of our questions. Everything from school start times, hand sanitiser and student wellbeing was listed. With the time we had, we started to brainstorm what it might look like and then parked the meeting to go and do some more research. We have Julie’s document (sent yesterday) and the DET will provide guidance, so patience is required to get the plan finalised.



Once you have a rough plan, you really need to call an informal school council meeting to share the plan. Even though it’s your decision, you need to get them involved. There is rightly, a level of underlying panic in the community, they want their kids back at school, but they are worried.

All of this can go along in the background whilst teachers are writing reports. All you need from them at this stage is confirmation that they are able to return to work and do not have underlying health concerns that you’re not aware of.

This morning, I am sitting with my admin team and a map of the school to plan out how many hand sanitiser stations we need, where we need signage, person limits in admin area and the staff room etc. You have never been called on to make so many decisions. You need to be decisive and it’s ok to change your mind when more information comes to hand.

Give yourself a week to get the return to school plan sorted. In the meantime teachers can focus on their reports and the return to school will be so much smoother. Just remember, you have never been a principal in a pandemic before!

*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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**An avalanche of 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.**



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Join the APF

<https://apf.net.au>

Forms can be completed on-line.