

Australian Principals Federation

President's Message—Julie Podbury



The title is wrong...it's about Workload!

When the DET launched the PH&WB Strategy I always claimed that the title of the first initiative was misnamed. DET called it **School Policy Templates Portal!** It should have been called Workload or Workload Reduction and Support. First they developed the School Policy Template Portal, and we know by the number of hits the portal gets (460,000 to date) that it is well used and appreciated. The next initiative was around the workload associated with **OHS**. The stats on that are deeply encouraging. The latest DET initiative, that would belong in that first column, had it been appropriately named is PAL. The **Policy and Advisory Library (PAL) – which is now live on the Department of Education's website**. I have had the good fortune to have a tinker with PAL pre-launch. All I can say isit's a ripper! I predict it will be your best friend/PAL very soon. It is the one source of information for DET. No more scrambling from one place to another trying to find a critical piece of information. It is important to note that this is an adjunct to and NOT a replacement for the School Policy Template Portal, which is for local school policies.

*The new [Policy and Advisory Library \(PAL\)](#) for schools went live on the Department of Education's public website on **Monday 15 June, 2020**. Schools were notified through the School Update yesterday on Tuesday 16 June.*

PAL is the new one-stop-shop for all the Department policies that schools need to follow. You only need to go to PAL when looking for any Department policy or guidance on any topic including school operations, HR, OHS, finance, infrastructure, school council governance, information management and technology, student administration, health, safety and wellbeing. PAL replaces all other sources of Department policy. This means that policies which you previously found on the School Policy and Advisory Guide (SPAG), HRWeb or on other parts of the Department's website or intranet (eg Finance Manual, Running a School, VSBA A-Z of policies and other locations) are now all consolidated into the one online library. PAL is one of the initiatives of the Employee Wellbeing and Operational Policy reforms (which also includes the Principal Health and Wellbeing Strategy) designed to reduce workload pressures, support your health and wellbeing and generally make your life easier.

If you have favourites and bookmarks saved to existing webpages and intranet sites containing DET policy, please update these to PAL over the coming months. To ensure a smooth transition and to minimise the number of broken links, from the start of Term 3 the Department will be redirecting all existing policy pages to PAL. These redirections will remain in place for 12 months.

PAL is very much a constant work in progress and the Department will continue to review and update content to ensure that it is fit-for-purpose and meets the needs of schools. The first stage was to get everything into the new PAL site and the next stage will be to further enhance the content.

The PAL team would be grateful for feedback as they refine and enhance. Please let the APF know and we will pass on the suggestions.

My Best Friend/PAL



In this Issue

On P1 we applaud the introduction of **PAL**. It will save you hours per week is our guess.

P2 is a report on the [feedback we received from members](#) regarding what we have learnt from the changes brought about in **remote learning and operation**.

On P3 [EO Gemma](#), talks about our **surge in membership and thanks you**. She also tells us details of when to expect our **annual tax receipts**.

John Handley reports from the [June FISO](#) meeting on P4

The [improvements to Edupay online](#) are discussed on P6

Mark McKelson airs an interesting outcome that has emerged from the lockdown. [Parents not delivering kids to the classrooms](#) each day on P7

APF Website

<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 can respond Mon, Thur & Fri only.

Member Feedback—What we have learnt.

In the last issue we discussed some of the learning we have gained from our recent COVID-19 experience. There have been many comments and much discussion. The following is a summary of members comments from across the State. Some of the comments represent teacher's views.

TRUST- DET trusted us to implement change at short notice –**trusted us do our jobs** and the world didn't fall apart, everyone did an amazing job.

ACCOUNTABILITY – DET backed off with the constant accountability, such as PDPs/AIPs therefore, levels of stress/anxiety lessened considerably– We still continued to discuss in meetings where we were at and found we were still on track with most goals- just because oversight was removed, didn't mean we stopped checking off goals/targets.

Meetings for AIP accountability, meetings for PDPs etc were reduced/cancelled, however staff still met and discussed at school level to determine where we are at etc, but without the pressure caused by DET.

Recommendation: No need for Big Brother watching and breathing over us constantly via accountability documents and meetings with principals/SEILS, as we are quite capable of doing our job (the job you employed us to do)

Allow Principal Class the autonomy to lead and make decisions about what matters to their school communities. End the dictation of what must be in Strategic Plans, AIP's and Principal PDPs.

MEETINGS Held independently and many via WEBEX. Curriculum Day was held via WEBEX with every staff member logging in. We were provided with independent time to complete an activity, then came back together- Fantastic Day!

Less stress for those who previously needed to travel long distances on country roads. Those in urban areas were very pleased not to have to waste precious time on clogged and slow urban roads. More productive use of time.

Attended other school meetings as we logged in remotely without the travel.

PRINCIPAL network meetings- held via WEBEX, which was brilliant- no travelling (for example some principal network meetings meant some travelled 3 hours there and back to get to the meeting on dangerous roads).

Reduction in network meetings allowed for us to be in our schools supporting staff/families which reduced pressure with the MUST ATTEND meetings from SEILS.

Allowed for increase in meetings with others' particularly urban colleagues.

Recommendation: Provide an option for attendance at all meetings to be held via WEBEX if possible.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING A vast increase in staff attending professional learning opportunities as they were able to log in via WEBEX. Rural schools tend to be forgotten with staff having to constantly travel distances to attend learning opportunities, however the increased delivery via WEBEX allowed for them to attend.

Altered pressure as able to attend online. Accessed far more online PD than normal.

Recommendation: Provide a variety of professional learning via WEBEX /online activities.

NO PARENT ACCESS ONSITE: Every staff member said this had reduced anxiety levels 100% - due to no parents popping in /bringing lunches etc, standing outside classrooms which caused student disruption. (See Mark McKelson's blog about this on P7)

No carpark mafia milling around at the end of the day...plotting!



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

**New members
aplenty.**

**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

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Join the APF

<https://apf.net.au>

Forms can be
completed on-line.

The Union exclusively for the Principal Class



PARENTS: Increased parent participation with the school during remote learning. Increased positive interaction with parents during flexible/remote learning (stronger positive relationships between school/families).

However, some schools and Principals experienced some really difficult parents who wanted everything exactly as it would be during normal times. They wanted face to face for 6 hours per day, which was neither possible nor fair on staff or students.

Recommendation: Increase phone calls to families for wellbeing checks /positive calls home.

Revisit policies reducing times parents are able to access the school?

No open door policy? To reduce student disruption?

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT: Students previously disengaged became increasingly interested and focused during remote times of learning. Releasing us all from the constant oversight dramatically increased the creativity of Principal Class and teachers alike. Part of the reason why some students engaged, is that the creativity brought to the table as teaching was more engaging for students.

Students thoroughly enjoyed the remote platforms –coming together with their peers. (increase in focus). Brighter students flew ahead of their peers.

Students enjoyed the online reading activities (preference for online text)

Improved computer literacy skills.

Problem obtaining enough devices/internet at extreme cost to the school

ATTENDANCE data is still reading as absent even when CODE 807 used

Recommendation: Provide access to devices for vulnerable students/poor readers or disengaged students.

End the deep oversight and the administrative burdens and allow for full creativity in school operation and pedagogy to blossom.

**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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Mark - 0418 551 375
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John—0407 557 862
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Ring us direct

EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT LEADERSHIP IN A COVID WORLD

Current health and economic crises will bring about permanent changes, demanding revised leadership practices. Leaders need to work with colleagues on adopting new practices, distribute leadership in order to draw on collective intelligence, and lead in emotionally intelligent ways. This means giving yourself permission to be both optimistic and realistic, creating a healthy tension that keeps optimism from turning into denial and realism from devolving into cynicism. Debrief your workday with a confidant, ideally outside your school and someone who cares more about you than the issues at stake. Bring more of your emotional self, letting others know that although the situation is fraught with feelings, it is containable. Adaptive leadership is a daily opportunity to mobilise the resources of people to thrive in a changing and challenging world.

“Leadership in a (Permanent) Crisis” by Ronald Heifetz, Marty Linsky, and Alexander Grashow in *Harvard Business Review*, Summer 2020

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

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

A message from Executive Officer, Gemma Naylor



I would like to wish everyone a safe and happy end to Term 2 and trust you all will find some rest and relaxation during the break after such a difficult start to 2020.

I wish to thank each and every one of our members for continuing to support and advocate for the APF. We as an organisation are privileged to work with such incredibly resilient and dedicated school leaders. The APF has and continues to see a huge rise in our membership numbers, I thank you and encourage you to (see P4)

continue to spread the good word about the APF and the work we do as the Principal Class Union.

The end of the financial year is fast approaching, with this you will all receive your **tax receipts** very early in the new financial year. Please bear with me as I get these out to you. Please contact me directly should any issues arise, gnaylor@afp.net.au or 0412 584 002.



FISO Advisory Group Meeting Report & Commentary, 10 June 2020,



John Handley, APF Advisor

After a prolonged absence due to COVID-19, this was our first Webex meeting since mid-February.

Initially there was discussion around the impact of the COVID-19 virus on schools and school leadership. It was interesting to hear quite consistent themes from VPA, VASSP, AEU and APF being shared. Such observations like how well most schools had adapted; how much school leaders and their teams contributed to the success of the transition to and from remote learning; how tired both school leaders and their staff were; how school leadership became central to the success and reinforced the high quality of leadership in schools across the state; how relationships between DET and school leaders has changed – less direction from DET but timely guidance and support; and how at the school level it appears that relationships at all levels have improved with the school communities having increased confidence in their schools. And finally, a request for clarity in DET communications with respect to whether it is advice or direction being given - is it 'should' or 'must'; is it 'advised to consider' or 'expected to do'? Let's hope these practices and their positive outcomes continue!

School Reviews

The School Review cycles are alive and well with those schools who had Term 2 reviews planned moved to term 3, Term 3 to Term 4, term 4 to Term 1, 2021. And Pre Review Self Evaluations continuing to be at least one term ahead of the review. Similarly, more of the process can be conducted on-line or via



webex etc. This scheduling and the agreement on process is being done in collaboration with School Principals; it is a more 'flexible' process. There is extensive evidence that the PRSE is a critical process for the success of the review; i.e. schools undertaking exhaustive, transparent and open minded PRSEs are consistently getting more from the review process.

Again, it was reinforced that in the context of schools developing priorities for the Strategic Plans and AIPs, it was school choice as to how many priorities should be their focus – typically, the advice is for two or three, and no more! And a reminder of the importance of a clear narrative being maintained to link all school practices to classrooms.

School Review Evaluation

DET has contracted Deloitte to undertake a review of the School review process. Various stakeholders including School Principals are being consulted. Quite a few consultations have already occurred with more to come. It is expected that any recommendations will be enacted in a new model from Term 2, 2021.

One of the talking points is how the compliance element, 'Assessment of Minimum Standards (VRQA)', interacts with the 'School Improvement focus'. Consideration is being given to whether these two elements could or should be entirely separate, and even in different time frames. As yet there is no firm position but feedback on this issue would be valuable.

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.



FISO Continua of Practice

DET is undertaking its own review of this continua with the aim to simplify the language to make self-assessment more accessible and easier to navigate over time; it is a 'refinement project' being undertaken as a 'co-design' with school leaders, regional leaders, central implementation and policy staff.

"The definition, components and descriptors that sit under each of the 16 FISO dimensions will be refined to:

- align to key Department resources including the Professional Learning Communities Maturity Matrix and the Victorian Teaching and Learning Model
- remove duplication and overlap across priority areas and dimensions
- clarify the roles of leaders, teachers and students
- be based in reliable and valid evidence
- review and refine the eight Essential Elements will be reviewed."

Consultations key questions:

"In considering the definition of this dimension:

- What are the most important aspects of the definition?
- What is missing from the definition?
- To what extent do these Essential Elements align with the intent of this descriptor?

And

- To what extent do these components align with the intent of the definition and the Essential Elements?
- What high level practice descriptions should sit within each of these components? "

It was noted that

"The structure of the refined continua needs to:

- Clearly define the purpose/focus of each dimension
- Ensure the definition, components and descriptors clearly fit/align with the dimension
- Carefully consider the ordering of the dimensions/components
- Ensure the descriptors act as developmental continuums"
- It appears that as schools continue to adjust to a new way of life, impacted by COVID, DET is continuing its own journey of increasing collaboration and support for schools. The prospect of a widespread culture of 'working with' and not 'doing to' schools is exciting, and reinforces system confidence in the capacity of Principals and their school leaders to lead!



THRIVING ON REMOTE LEARNING

Some students who were not doing well before the pandemic are thriving, doing better with online learning because of:

Self-pacing – learning at home allows students to work at a much more leisurely pace, often with a lot of choice in how they organise time – a welcome change from the micromanaged normal school day.

Fewer activities – at school, many students are overscheduled with lunchtime activities, sports, after-school activities, volunteering, part-time jobs. With almost all of that shut down, there's time to focus on schoolwork and be less stressed.

Lower stakes – One student said he likes remote learning better because he no longer feels the extreme pressure of failing without constant testing.

Less bullying and chatter – Home learning provides a safe haven from the pressure to fit in socially. The online environment may allow for voices to be heard without social anxiety.

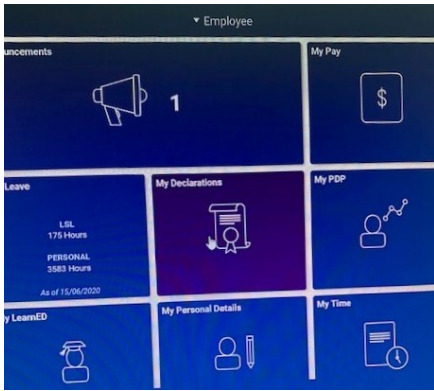
Sleep – Plenty of time to get plenty of sleep.

"Why Are Some Kids Thriving During Remote Learning?" by Nora Fleming in *Edutopia*, April 24, 2020

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

The Union for Government School Principals

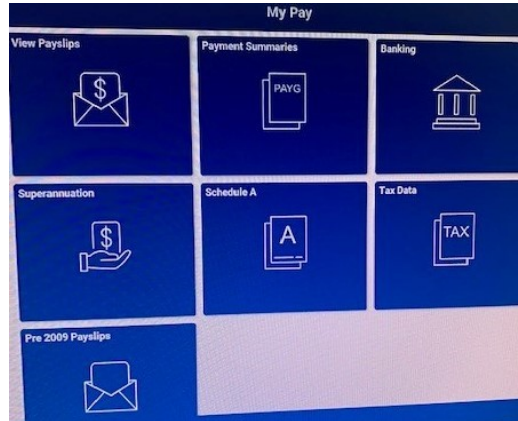
eduPay new features launched



New eduPay features on laptops and desktops were launched on Monday 15 June 2020. The APF have had a chance to play with this before the launch and report a significant improvement in the ease of use. It looks and works so much better.

Earlier this year new features were released for handheld devices. Following extensive user feedback on how intuitive and easy to navigate these features are, DET is now deploying these features, and more, to all staff desktops from Monday 15 June 2020, including: (see P6)

- Three new homepages – depending on role – Employee, Manager and HR Admin. The HR Admin homepage was developed by Business Managers, for Business Managers. There is also a new look and feel Recruitment Online homepage, along with recruitment insights and analytics. These new homepages have large blue tiles with familiar icons, and new facts available. These at-a-glance facts display leave balance, next pay and upcoming registration expiry, saving us all a click or two.
- There are two new self service options – Change of Hours and Stop Long Service Leave Pay Out. These new self service options enable staff to complete these forms online, without any manual intervention.
- Optimised a number of new pages, so they render nicely to your screen view regardless of your device. These include – Payslips, Personal Details, Pre-eduPay Payslips, Gender Identification, Disability Identification, Preferred Name, My LearnED, Veteran Status, My Leave and Cultural Information. With Cultural Information - personal information is



confidential and access to this information is restricted in eduPay.

Along with the Business Manager workshops, there are [visual reference guides](#), [FAQs](#) and [HRWeb Support](#) available to support staff with the new look and feel of eduPay.

Save this, [eduPay link](#) into your favourites now.



FOUR WAYS TO BE A LEADER WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN

Two dynamics are often at work in boss-employee relationships. First, people who gain authority over others tend to become more self-centred and less mindful of what others need, do and say. Second, subordinates devote immense energy to watching, interpreting, and worrying about, even the smallest and most innocent moves their superiors make. It's possible for good leaders to avoid this 'toxic tandem' by taking four basic steps:

Providing predictability

When people know what's likely to happen – including unpleasant events like lay-offs – randomness is reduced and they can do their work without constant anxiety.

Clear, regular, consistent communication without spin or ambiguity is the key.

Increasing understanding

If predictability is about what will happen and when, understanding is about why and how.

Leaders need to give detailed explanations for why major changes are being made. People react negatively to unexplained events and do much better if they have information that's simple, concrete and repetitive.

(Continues in column on P7)

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



Blog 19 - Do parents need to be in the classrooms?

Following two weeks of parents dropping off at the front gate I had to put this out to my community. Let's just say I've stirred the pot, but there is a discussion to have here.

Dear Parents,

The best change to come out of social distancing and the staggered start to the school day is that parents are not entering the school grounds in the morning. Children are walking independently to their classrooms, unpacking their bags and getting themselves organised for the day. The corridors are quiet, calm and orderly. There is no disruption to the morning, with children late to class because of soccer or basketball. I thought we would have an increase in separation anxiety but the reverse has happened. Learning is starting earlier and the children are significantly calmer. It has never been more settled. I can't ignore the impact this is having.

This is really challenging my own beliefs of what a school should look like in the morning. Having never seen the morning from this point of view, I've always backed in the idea that parents walking into the rooms is great for teacher and parent relationships. But is it the best thing for student independence, learning and development? I know there are private schools where parents drop their children and they walk in independently. I am happy to be the face at the gate and have conversations with parents in the morning.

The last thing I want is to let go of our sense of community and strong social connections. If we decide to continue with this start to the day, we need to think differently about how we build community. There are things that will never change:

- *parents at assembly*
- *parent helpers in the classroom*
- *parents at camps and excursions*
- *parents entering the grounds at the end of the day*

Parents can easily call or email teachers with important messages for the day, but we need a plan for the end of the day. Here are a couple of ideas:

- 1. Teachers all come out at the end of the day to talk with parents in the yard.*
- 2. The classrooms are open for the last five minutes of the day for parents to come in and see what has been happening for the day. This will help with the what have you been doing today conversations and building the parent and teacher relationships.*
- 3. Parents organise class coffee mornings to welcome and catch up with other parents*

I'm just putting this out there for comment and discussion. I want to stress, no decisions or formal plans have been made. I look forward to your opinions.

Mark

Since sending this out I've had about 40 responses to my email. Interestingly, 80% of them have been in favour of continuing with this process. That was not the response I anticipated. Even more surprising was the student response. In the six classes I went into, they were overwhelmingly in favour of coming in to school alone. But this does make me nervous. Parent and teacher relationships are key to education success but so is student independence.

The COVID-19 pandemic is forcing us to think about processes that we have never questioned before. I don't know where this will end up, but it sure has created a strong discussion. And that's a good thing!

APF Member, Mark McKelson, has been a member of the principal class at a number of schools across Victoria and is currently the principal at Camberwell South PS. He is writing these "blogs" based on his experiences, in support of new or acting principal members of the APF, for the APF Newsletter. The opinions expressed are his own and do not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the APF.



(Continued from column on P6)

Affording control

People don't embark on careers to feel powerless.

The whole point of work is to achieve outcomes and have impact. That's why people are so deeply frustrated when events seem to render them helpless.

Effective leaders delegate maximum autonomy over how and when things are done – and make a point of celebrating small wins.

Showing compassion

When it's necessary to deliver bad news, leaders need to put themselves in their colleagues' shoes, understand their anxiety and fear, express genuine empathy, and take the time to answer questions.

Maintaining people's dignity is a major goal at times like these.

Acknowledgement: ["How to Be a Good Boss in a Bad Economy"](#) by Robert Sutton in Harvard Business Review, Summer 2020

Quote from
June 2020 edition of
Principal's Digest