

Australian Principals Federation

President's Message—Julie Podbury



The irony!

We note the irony that today is World Principal Class Day (APF version), when you are dealing with the most challenging circumstances in your career.

I have received some truly wonderful examples of the tributes being paid to school Principal Class Employees in their schools by teachers and parents alike. At the same time I have received a mountain of angry and embittered emails, texts and calls from members furious with the circumstances in which they have been placed.

While I understand the anger, I remind you that while you have never had to run a school in a pandemic before, the DET hasn't run a school system in a pandemic before and the State Government haven't run the State of Victoria in a pandemic before. There are bound to be stuff ups. The key goal here is to reduce the movement of people to a minimum and drive down the infections or eliminate this deadly virus.

The Operations Guide was, I'm assured, ready to go to you days ago, but changes made by the Department of Justice re permitted workers and permits, threw everything out, requiring substantial further work. I am aware that you received the guide today. However, I try to remind the members I speak to.... you are the leader of your community and in the absence of guidance you need to put on your risk management hat, and decide what to do in the interim.

Please indulge me as we start in a positive place, then we will share members frustrations and fury.

Member Feedback

Dear Julie,

Amongst this madness I wanted to send you an email to thank you for the incredible amount of work you have done over the past few weeks and in fact, for the past 5 years! Your advocacy for those of us in secondary schools, has not gone unnoticed. You have been the only one who has stood up, listened to the concerns that have arisen from VCE students being on site and led, to enable us, our staff and students to be in a much safer place – at home. We will now be able to focus on teaching the VCE students without the rising anxiety that has been impacting us all. Please know it is greatly appreciated! Having done the occasional media interview myself, I know they can be incredibly daunting, but you've accepted every invitation and have not changed the message that we all need to be safe in these troubled times. Having called you at ridiculous times of the day and night, I know you are always there for your members, I can only hope that you are taking some time out for your own health and wellbeing on this Principal's Day. Thanks Julie – Happy World Principals' Day!

Thomastown Secondary College students produced an amazing video to thank the health workers, which was lauded on 3AW and Channel 9 news

AW Melbourne - Mornings with Neil Mitchell

Leonie White, Thomastown Secondary College, discusses a video students made to thank health

In this Issue:

We are mostly dealing with COVID-19 related members issues.

Some great news from **Thomastown Secondary College** students re their tribute to health workers.

Dandenong North PS advise us [Talk for Life](#) documentary has been chalking up a *huge, world-wide* cinematic reputation. Awards, so far, include: **Best Educational Feature Film** (Istanbul), **Best Documentary Feature Film** (2020 Gold Movie Awards), **Best Inspirational Film** (New York International Film Awards) **Best Documentary Feature** (Oniros Film Awards) and **Best Documentary Feature** (Miami International Film Festival). Well deserved multiple awards for "Best Director" and " sound design" have also been won by Amel Tresjnic who created the documentary to tell the beautiful story of our EAL program over the last 25 years.

APF Website

<https://apf.net.au>



workers; White says the students made a video to thank health workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hear link <https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fnews.mmu.vic.gov.au%2Fsearch%2F%3Fclip%3Dcfe5e495689f5bc191272be05ad756e5&data=02%7C01%7CSteve.Tolley%40education.vic.gov.au%7Ca0d8af85b1154888511308d835058e02%7Cd96cb3371a8744cfb69b3cec334a4c1f%7C0%7C0%7C637317645265389460&sdata=V2%2FexChYghiHMirfDkD7Nnl7XIkmc6SCEAT69KupBIY%3D&reserved=0>

Nine - Today (see 5 mins 20s in)

Neil Mitchell, broadcaster, speaks about the coronavirus crisis in Vic including Thomastown SC's video: "I certainly got teary", he said.

<https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fnews.mmu.vic.gov.au%2Fsearch%2F%3Fclip%3D5acfd65de2374dc99e52f6a683f073d9&data=02%7C01%7CSteve.Tolley%40education.vic.gov.au%7Ca0d8af85b1154888511308d835058e02%7Cd96cb3371a8744cfb69b3cec334a4c1f%7C0%7C0%7C637317645265389460&sdata=EhALuLnFzBXE2SPafZ7O721E5Tn4Flj19wgX6lZalCw%3D&reserved=0>

VCE students

Hi Julie,

I know that the APF are all across this but I just wanted to give you my perspective on the Year 12 students coming in to school for classes. With the increase in the numbers of schools closing across the state, the delays in contact tracing from DHHS and the disruption this causes to schools I wanted to write to you.

Whenever a school closes down there is a disproportionate disadvantage to the Year 12 students in those schools. Yes, they can apply for special consideration, but is that really enough to offset the other factors that already disadvantage a student such as SFO? A one-size fits all approach to special consideration will not help our most vulnerable students.

*Before any further schools close down I would suggest that DET look at only having VCE students **only** onsite for practical classes and for SACs. Remote learning worked so well last time for our students and they were really engaged in their learning. There were some teething problems for staff in terms of modifying SACs for a remote learning environment but we worked through that knowing the students would return at some stage.*

I am seeing more and more families pushing for their child to work remotely at VCE level and they are either citing mental health issues (usually anxiety), exposure to Covid-19 on public transport or at school in addition to the few students that have an immunity issue. This is on top of the high levels of anxiety and concern that our staff have. They have loved ones who are medically vulnerable due to age or immunity issues, but they can only access sick leave to address this. Those same teachers may be a VCE teacher and taking them away from their students at a critical time isn't the right approach.

You are likely to have had the same concerns come from other members but I wanted to add my voice to theirs.

Thank you for advocating on behalf of teachers, Principals and students.

APF Editor: We hope today's announcements by the Minister address these concerns

Permits

Sent: Wednesday, 5 August 2020 6:33 PM

Subject: Schools coronavirus (COVID-19) update: permitted workers

Are they serious?

They send this at 6.33pm. Permits aren't ready for Principals' but Principals are asked to provide them to staff before tomorrow (where possible).

Principals' will be working into the night to prepare these for staff as staff are concerned about being pulled over by police.

Another example of how Principal Health and Well Being and Workload is taken seriously.

@@@

I write at a time that I know I'm fortunate to have employment and my health (physically).

No doubt you have heard from many a PCO this week, with the rising burden and lack of support



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Many new members!
Thank you for advocating for the APF!

Happy Principals' Day



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

never so magnified as it was yesterday.

In the void of any DET guidance or direction following the significant weekend announcement of Stage 4 restrictions, school leaders were yet again left in the dark.

Unfortunately not the first time during the pandemic, but a pattern of media announcements affecting our work without any consultation, before ill-timed DET Updates (usually late Friday or Sunday night). Principals deserve credit as we have pivoted to interpret the needs of our community and the task at hand whilst the highest levels do not even provide so much as a hint as to what is coming.

Yesterday (August 5th) was a total failure in terms of DET values. All that was needed was an email from up on high stating when we could expect documentation. Instead, we received the wrong advice about a document 'doing the rounds' and those who waited under the verbal advice (from a SEIL) to expect a prepopulated form were most disappointed, as were those who soldiered ahead (as I did due to the distrust of any timeline promises). It took our employer until 2:15pm in the afternoon to send a form with a couple of pre-filled lines of text. Without fully understanding the machinations of the system, I can acknowledge that there needs to be checks and balances across the government's systems. The stuff up of ABN summed up the day.

WEBEXING

Region and DET have worked out that Webexing is easy - especially for the majority of them sheltered in the comfort of their own homes. Principals continue to be out amongst the people (and the virus) with the regular invite to join network meetings. Despite the demands of the day at school, we join these virtual meetings in search of answers. Another bonus of yesterday was to be told that our Permits have been made valid 7 days a week and 24 hours each day in case we are called into the school by Emergency Management! This was followed up this morning by the notion that we are to be answerable to parents on their way to school if checked by police - another layer to the calls we can expect from the law checking in on our staff.

Battered and Bruised

We are being battered and bruised from all sides. School leaders need the government to provide explicit instructions to parents as to what they must provide to qualify for supervision. We've been left in a position where we have to question the veracity of claims from our parents and carers. This destroys the years of work we have put in to building strong community relations, because we have been left to decode and determine the government announcements.

As principal colleagues we are rallying and demanding change. We can't continue to lead calmly (more so difficult in a pandemic) when the way we are treated or positioned to treat others is destroying professional and community trust.

Vulnerable students & Vocal parents

After going to bed at 9.30pm exhausted and frustrated I found myself awake at 11.00pm still feeling the same way.

I tossed and turned until 12.30pm and knew that the only way I was going to fall asleep again was to share my latest concern with you.

What is a vulnerable student? Is a vulnerable student one whose parent claim they are vulnerable?

It seems any student whose parent/caregiver repeatedly calls/emails the school and when they don't get what they want, contact DET who will then tell the school to accept them.

I thought the idea was to keep numbers and movement across the state down. Why is it that the vocal, rude, aggressive and entitled minority always get what they want?



Support for members

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

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Mark - 0418 551 375

industrialofficer@apf.net.au

John—0407 557 862

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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
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For a Department who claims it doesn't tolerate 'bullying', parents who attempt to 'bully' schools into doing what they want are certainly supported and empowered.

Just once I would like to feel valued and supported by my employer.

As a school we empathised with the person who requested that their child attend onsite. They are going through a difficult time and their child does see a psychologist (who provided a letter to the parent stating that the student would benefit from being onsite), but we have at least 80-100 other families and students in the same position.

Should we contact them and offer the same level of understanding (if we do I am not sure how we are going to staff the school) or do we just reward the people who make a complaint?

I am feeling extremely defeated and am just about 'done' with my job.

I feel as if we walk around with a target on our back waiting to be 'hit' from the DET, a minority of parents and a minority of staff. And, even though it is a minority the impact on the mental and physical health of Principal Class is anything but.



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.

START WITH TRUST

Building trust is the essential first step to becoming a genuinely empowering leader – that is, someone who creates the conditions for people to fully realise their own capacity and power.

TRUST HAS THREE CORE DRIVERS:

Authenticity: People believe they are interacting with the real you.

Logic: Colleagues have faith in your judgment and competence.

Empathy: People believe you truly care about them and their success.

*From Principal's Digest,
July 2020*

Everyone has a weak area, a 'trust wobble', and building trust as a leader depends on finding and addressing that weakness. Think about a recent failure, consider it from the other person's point of view, and ask which trust driver might have been wobbly: were we misrepresenting some part of ourselves or our story? Did the person question our ability to execute competently? Might we have put our own interests first? When we take responsibility for a wobble, we reveal our humanity (authenticity) and analytical capability (logic) while communicating our commitment to the relationship (empathy).

Empathy. If people think you care more about yourself than about others, they won't trust you enough to lead them. Analytical, learning-driven leaders are often impatient with colleagues who aren't like them. In addition, buzzing cell phones and computers constantly assert our self-importance, sometimes smack in the middle of interactions with the very people we're working to empower and lead. Try to pay close attention to your behaviour in one-on-one interactions and meetings, put your phones away and focus on what others are saying.

Logic. If people don't trust your judgment and competence, why would they want you in command? If this is the problem area, go back to the data and be clear about your strong and weak areas. Humbly know your strengths and then begin to expand your zone of competence, primarily by observing others.

Authenticity. The key question here is whether there's a marked difference between your professional persona and how you are with family and friends. When people sense that you're concealing the truth or being less than authentic, they're far less willing to make themselves vulnerable to you in the ways that leadership demands. This is especially important in teams with gender and cultural diversity.

The path to empowerment leadership doesn't begin when other people start to trust you. It begins when you start to trust yourself. To be a truly empowering leader, you need to take stock of where you wobble, not only in your relationships with others, but also in your relationship with yourself.

If you don't trust yourself, why should anybody else trust you?

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

Blog 21- The Stage 4 Principal

Even I lost my sense of humour this week! From Dan's press conferences, emails from David Howes and Jenny Atta, grumpy parents, scared teachers and the ongoing anticipation for our Operations Guide, who knows what's next? We haven't done this before and neither have the Executives on the top floor. It might not feel like it but we are all in this together.

Some Principals go into the role as born leaders while others grow into it. Many of you have grown in ways you haven't even realised yet. Those days of thinking through problems and consulting have been cast aside for quick thinking and decisions on the run. Not to mention the improvement in your negotiation, persuasive and ICT skills. You would have more evidence than ever to get an advanced rating in your performance review this year.

I must say 'Willing and able' has been my go to phrase for the week. You can have a bit of fun with it when you think about it. There are a number of things at the minute you are able to do but are you really willing to do them. Look for the small things, to make you laugh. They are there, we just have to look harder. I lost it in the car yesterday when Daniel Andrews referred to chickens as 'birds' it was the way he said it, it was hilarious. Or maybe I'm going a little crazy too.

When I was handing out the 'Permitted Worker Permits' so my staff could get in their car to attend work, I was taken back to those old World War II movies where the soldiers could stop you on the street to check your 'papers'. Hey, at least we can only get a fine.

I decided to write a bucket filler list of what I could achieve during lockdown. Small things like making homemade sausage rolls, a weekly webex and wine with colleagues, riding my bike each day, mowing the lawn etc. They are only small things, but when you put them all together time will pass and you will feel a sense of accomplishment. Focus on the positives, as hard as it is.



I blew my top in a network meeting last week and my SEIL (God bless her) rang and asked if I was ok the next day. There are great people doing great things during this pandemic. You are these great people, don't forget that!

At left, Mark demonstrates how he has altered his view about the world with the new mask rules!

APF Member, Mark McKelson, has been a member of the principal class at a number of schools across Victoria. He is currently 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, and has endless topics that he will write about which will appear in 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.



BACK TO SCHOOL

We already know from a range of studies that the children of affluent parents do much better without formal education than those born into disadvantage or poverty.

Aptitude tests of children on their return from the long summer holiday have repeatedly shown how poorer children from less regulated, less educated households often need special coaching to get them back to pre-holiday levels. Tracking of the pandemic thus far has shown that children are the least likely to catch or transmit Covid-19. But the dreadful consequences of months away from school are not just educational, but also medical and psychological. One hates to think how many children are currently confined to homes where abuse and domestic violence are widespread, and without any chance to speak to adults outside the home. The key purpose of a well-run school is to be a great social leveller, a fair environment where every pupil has the chance to develop their talents to the full. That is why we must let our children back into the classroom to learn, play and thrive. For their sakes, and for the future of our country.

Professor Alan Smithers is director of the Centre for Education and Employment

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