

Australian Principals Federation



President's Message—Julie Podbury

Tutors!

This is an important initiative for our students who have fallen behind and for those struggling with their confidence and wellbeing. At the same time it is a distraction from all the other important tasks and cultural school events that need to happen in T4, AND adds considerably to the workload of our Principal Class. The last Agreement made a commitment regarding the introduction of new initiatives.

12 PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

(16) "Consistent with clause 12(3) where the Employer proposes to introduce a significant change in the work required of principals the Employer will provide an opportunity for principals and their union(s) to be consulted about that change and give consideration to matters raised by principals prior to the decision to implement any significant change."

This is yet another example where significant change is proposed and appropriate consultation has not occurred. I would argue, that while not a permanent change, it is nonetheless significant. Informing us is not consultation. It increases the workload on school Principal Class teams and radiates that load to many others in the school. So, on one hand while the initiative is to be applauded, it is yet another example of why people are buckling under the ever-increasing load in schools. This is not the straw that breaks the camel's back, as we are long past that.

The notices that advised schools of the funding they were to receive for this initiative confused many. While it advised of funding level and the equivalent EFT, it neglected to remind schools of the fact that is for two terms only. So the EFT divided by the funding produced a rate that looked like serious underfunding. One extra sentence, that is would have prevented much angst.

The other element of the program that elicited considerable grief was the use of part of the school's surplus credit allocation. While there may have been some schools where this funding was a surplus. In most schools it was part of a larger long term plan to be used to tackle a learning challenge, when sufficient funding accrued. For these principals, they were furious that their autonomy was thwarted in this way.

One of the outstanding key elements of this initiatives that needs to be highlighted however, is the autonomy and flexibility that is embedded in the program. How you use the tutors, the role they will play and the focus from engagement to literacy and numeracy to confidence building and wellbeing is a school based decision.

What is interesting in discussions I have had with Principal Class in recent days is that the longer the students are back at school, the more they can see the cracks forming in students they thought had done OK. It seems we are all good at covering up when things are tough. The problem then, may be much bigger than first gauged. This is why flexibility will be important.

COVID-19 safe school.

This is yet another responsibility that has been added to the load this year. Sanitising, high touch points, deep cleaning, social distancing, mask protocol, immunocompromised and other terms are all new considerations we are coming to terms with this year. The following article from pre COVID-19 times, provides an educators approach to how to sheet home why hand washing matters. (see following page)



In this Issue:

APF Website

<https://apf.net.au>

A HANDS-ON EXPERIMENT

Teachers in a school were tired of nagging their students to wash their hands. Surely the number of sick days people took were a direct result of the germs being spread around the classroom. The teachers decided to make it into a science project. They put five different pieces of white bread in zip lock bags after having each one handled in a different way:

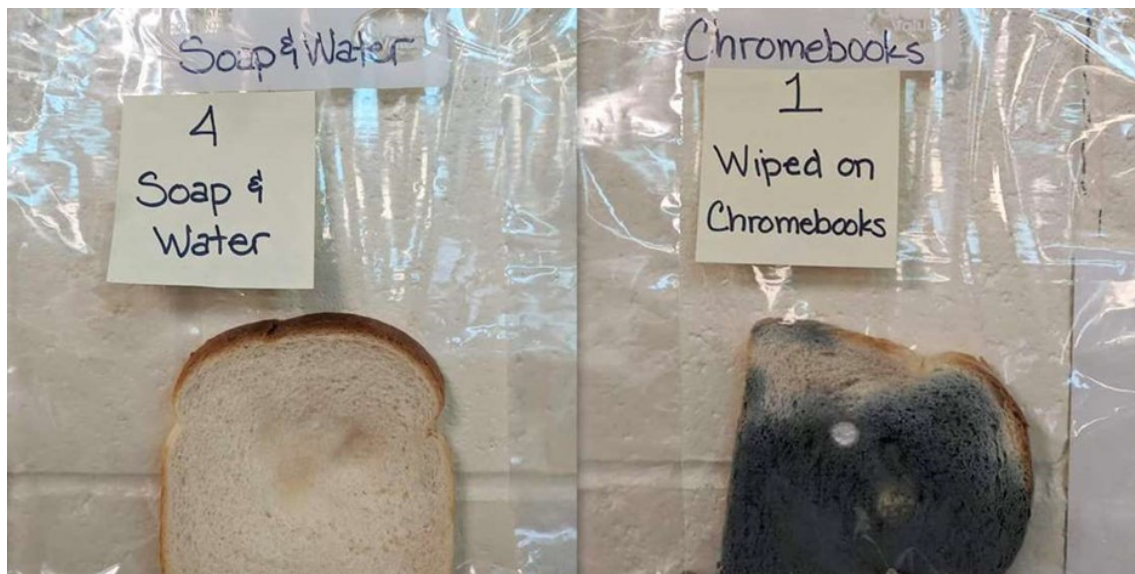
- Touched by students with unwashed hands.
- Touched by students whose hands were cleaned by a hand sanitiser.
- Touched by students’ hands just rubbed on a classroom Chromebook.
- Touched by students’ hands just washed with soap and warm water.
- Touched by a teacher’s gloved hands.

The zip lock bags were sealed (so classroom air wouldn’t get in) and tacked to a bulletin board. A month later, the results were dramatic.

- The Chromebook-touched bread was almost completely black with mould and disintegrating.
- The bread touched by dirty hands was almost as bad.
- The bread touched by hand-sanitised hands wasn’t much better.
- The bread touched by washed hands was white.
- So was the one touched by gloved hands.

Students’ reactions: *Ewwwww, gross!* Hand washing improved dramatically, and students and their families realised that hand sanitisers weren’t an effective alternative.

One of the teachers posted a description of the experiment on Facebook, and it’s been shared more than 60,000 times.



Acknowledgement: “Gross! School Experiment Shows Students the Effects of Not Washing Their Hands” by Scott Stump in *Today*, December 17, 2019



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**Thank you for
advocating for
the APF—our
membership
growth is
fantastic.**

**From the start of
December I will
be full time with
the APF.**



Gemma Naylor
APF Executive
Officer

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Join the APF

<https://apf.net.au>

Forms can be
completed on-line.

Principal’s Digest,
November 2020

SUPERANNUATION, Mark Arkinstall, APF Industrial Officer

Superannuation is basically a way to save for your retirement. The money comes from contributions made into your super fund by the department and is ideally, topped up by your own contributions. We continue to be surprised that some members don't really understand how important this part of their remuneration is to their future, and their capacity to decide when enough is enough.

The department must pay 9.5% of your salary into a super fund for your benefit. This is called the Super Guarantee and it's the law.

The more you save the sooner you can stop working!

For numerous reasons including the timing of your initial employment with the department, the roles you've held, etc, many of our members are in varying schemes with different structures, benefits and contribution rates. No two members have exactly the same circumstances. What we do have in common though, is the need for every one of our members to be actively planning for your retirement right now.

Unfortunately, it is our experience that most people do not begin to develop an understanding of their superannuation needs until quite late in their career, which is exactly the opposite of what needs to happen. In truth, the earlier our members attend to this important area the better.

A long and financially sustainable retirement needs to be planned for!

You should be actively contributing to your super, preferably from the earliest time in your career possible. Compound interest is a wonderful thing but it takes time to really work for you.

The Department is required to offer eligible employees the opportunity to choose a complying superannuation fund to which they wish to direct their employer's SG contributions (see below for more information). Employees are advised to obtain appropriate financial advice when considering their options in relation to choosing a fund.

Where an employee does not take the opportunity to choose a superannuation fund, the Department will direct SGC contributions to the default fund, VicSuper Pty Ltd (see [link](#) for more information)

Comprehensive superannuation information, particularly concerning an individual's situation, should be obtained directly from your fund.

ESSSuper: <https://www.esssuper.com.au/> 1300 655 476

VicSuper: <http://www.vicsuper.com.au/> 1300 366 216



It is crucial that our members:

- Better understand their superannuation.
- Act to build their super: See what a difference your super contributions can make and discover the most tax-effective ways to give your super a boost.
- Explore your future super: Work out how much income you'll need in retirement and find out how to get your super on track to help you achieve the type of retirement you're hoping for. Planning is a must!
- Make this a priority. Find your latest statement from your super fund, study it and contact your fund for further advice. Do it today!!



Support for members

We are here to support and offer advice to all members at any time. If you are concerned about a colleague, please let us know.

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

LEADING FOR SOCIAL COHESION IN VICTORIAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: FINAL REPORT

Authors: Jane Wilkinson, Lucas Walsh, Amanda Keddie and Fiona Longmuir



Earlier this year, members of the APF and other education stakeholder groups participated in this study conducted by Monash and Deakin Universities, and REDI (Research for Education Impact). We were unaware at the time the study was conducted as to how significant the findings would be, given the year that has unfolded in education since then.

Key Findings

Major social issues impacting students

School leaders identified a range of social issues currently facing Victorian public schools. These include family violence, social isolation, mental health and the impact of social media.

Cyberbullying represented the top social issue identified by school leaders as negatively affecting the student community (60% of school leaders place this in their top three issues); followed by racism (22%), mental health (20%) and poverty (20%)

In terms of building social cohesion in their schools, school leaders were most concerned about students exposed to **family violence** (69%) or affected by **mental ill health**(66%)

Almost half the school leaders (47%) reported a **significant increase** over the past five years in the proportion of students at their school requiring intervention because of **mental ill health**. 23% reported that exposure to family violence had significantly increased over the last five years.

Most school leaders (46%-63%) noted that the incidence of students experiencing discrimination or harassment from other students had not changed over the last five years. However view were mixed. With, for example, 21% reporting an increase in race based discrimination while 25% reported a decrease.

[Link to shortened report.](#) A copy of the full report is attached with this newsletter.



As a consequence of the report being released and reported in the media, we asked members of the APF Council any social cohesion changes they identified since the students had returned from remote learning.

1. Indicates that during the pandemic students greatest fear is that something bad might happen to their parents. It was clearly the most important issue facing them at the moment from my discussions with them. METRO PS
2. Yes. All three issues have become more pronounced - particularly in the case of Cyberbullying - among the older students.. "Fortnight", in particular has resulted in cyber clashes associated with allegiances within and beyond the school. At school "get/evens" are played out to the detriment of learning.

Households that are impoverished already where the husbands may have lost their jobs and then demand access to family benefit payments for their own gratification are leaving some families without sufficient food to eat and the subsequent resistance by the women results in family violence which terrifies children captive to COVID.

All 4 quotes
from Hippocampus,
an email publication of
Principal's Digest

The Union exclusively for the Principal Class

Many disadvantaged families were getting "cash in hand" which stopped overnight with travel restrictions - same result!

The effects of the above on mental health can be significant. Mums leaving kids behind while they take a mental health break themselves while unwittingly contributing to a further deterioration of the child's mental health.

One bright spot is that many children have experienced trauma and stress far greater than COVID could visit upon them and some of these children simply shrug their shoulders at just one more threat to their safety and well-being. METRO PS. LSE (Low Socio-Economic)

3. Not sure about cyber bullying or family violence but the poor mental health topic is an issue..... I don't have any evidence but I would suggest constant technology use, hyper vigilance and anxiety around having to know what's going on with friends maybe a factor..... METRO SC

4. Yes it is true at our School. Our enrolment 75. I have had 4 chn placed in temporary care in recent days

I have children not being accepted onto psychology waiting lists in Regional city nearby.

I have 50% of my staff on sick leave - mental health or chronic physical health issues that have got worse

Cyber bullying during remote learning is now impacting on student relationships back at school.REGIONAL PS LSE

5. For my school it's poor mental health and violence amongst student groups. Their time at home has been less than productive for many who engaged more in gaming and other collaborative pastimes. The animosity and poor relations that developed and were fueled by too much time on their hands has spilled over to school. I haven't seen these levels of violence in quite a while and it's seriously affecting the mental health of really good teachers. METRO PS LSE

5. We haven't heard much about cyberbullying. A bit more reported family violence, but poor mental health is a huge concern, as well as dis regulation METRO SC

The comment below, from the report sums up a key insight of leading for social cohesion in schools

"If we work from a philosophy that we cannot be responsible for the students' background, but we can be responsible for the happiness and learning environment in which we all work then we believe that the management of 'fairness, consistency and understanding' will benefit all students in the long term."

If you can find the time, this report is well worth reading and sharing with senior staff. It is attached with this newsletter.



All 4 quotes
from Hippocampus,
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Principal's Digest

The Union exclusively for the Principal Class

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



Blog 25 - Thinking Ahead

Julie messaged this morning and asked if I had a Blog for this week's newsletter. To be honest even I've been run off my feet the last few weeks and hadn't given this a thought. Between recruiting, planning, transitions, budgeting, tutoring, WorkSafe, allocating roles and supporting teachers, students and families the task is endless at the minute.

We have set aside a leadership day for our SIT team on Friday to work through our AIP and to finalise our spelling and phonics plan for 2020. Even simple tasks like finding a venue isn't straight forward. As much as my leadership team want to be with their students, I felt it was important to get ahead of the game for next year and plan ahead.

Planning professional learning for next year is top of the list in our thinking. We had booked in a consultant for up to 20 days this year and most of this work needed to be postponed or cancelled. We need a plan A and a plan B for 2021 as I'm concerned of what impact, 2 years of missed PL will mean for the team. The balance between a curriculum and wellbeing focus also needs to be discussed. My view is that we need to jump more headfirst into curriculum and get back on track with our data.

We are all so data focussed but planning without the array of surveys, NAPLAN and other testing is making it more difficult. The simplified AIP for the first half of the year really helps us get us on track to a 'COVID Normal'. Personally, I'm going to push harder there are gaps in some areas of our literacy that need some serious work and I'm not waiting to push the button.



By now you will have a much better idea of how your community has truly coped during the lockdown. The capacity of students online grew dramatically with the side effect of greater cyber bullying coming across the desk more than before. I spoke to one parent who said her child clocked 18hours one day on their iPad. There is a longer term impact of this we need to be mindful of. One observation I made BC (Before COVID) was how many parents were concerned with us being a BYOD iPad school. As much as our experience and capacity with ICT helped us navigate home learning rather successfully we need to be even more mindful of the impact this device time as had on our students.

Not sure about you but finding the time to catch up with all the staff is a little difficult with everything going on. With the less stringent PDP process in place it would be easy to miss talking with each staff member about their year. I managed to work my way through the PLC leads last week and just to sit and talk about their leadership was valuable. I'm going to try and sit with each teacher before the end of the year to get a gauge on where they are up to.



There is so much to think about, but get on top of the AIP and PD planning now and don't leave it to the last minute. It will only be a few more weeks and we will be planning what to wear to the work Christmas Party.

(We offer this suggestion for Mark for the work Christmas Party)

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.

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Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development