

Australian Principals Federation



President's Message – Tina King

As you embark upon the start of another term, we extend a warm welcome back to all and trust you had opportunity for a well deserved break and recharge.

Much of this newsletter is devoted to addressing the matter of principal workload and the issues burdening our school leaders. The problem is complex as are the accompanying solutions, however we must move beyond simply acknowledging the issues and urgently move towards tangible and visible outcomes. The recently released [VAGO Report into Principal Health and Wellbeing](#) identified that workload continues to be the most significant cause of poor principal health and wellbeing. Concerningly, it was identified that not only is workload increasing but in areas that are determined to be low value-adding, thus taking leaders away from their core responsibility as an instructional leader. The time has come to re-imagine the role and be solution focussed in addressing the problems which exist and have existed for a long time.

Recently, I was delighted to receive positive feedback from several members in relation to supports from regional staff in response to some tricky and challenging matters. On these occasions, members reported how regional staff, from the SEIL all the way to the Regional Director, acted with decisive action and support, with the unequivocal backing of the principal. As complaints increase and various individuals take aim at the school and subsequently the principal, it is reassuring to hear that the behaviour of these individuals is being called out and challenged by the employer's key representatives.

Best wishes for the term ahead and whilst we don't want to keep focussing on the downside of being a school leader, we do acknowledge that whilst it is a 'tuff gig', there are many upsides and rewards.

T. King

FINANCIAL YEAR 22-23 TAX RECEIPTS, Jenna Benison, EO

A reminder that APF memberships are 100% tax deductible.



Tax invoices for the previous financial year are currently being generated and members will receive their invoice via email very soon.

Thank you for your membership and support throughout the year.

If you have any questions or queries, please email Jenna- jbenison@apf.net.au or call 0412 584 002



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www.principalsdigests.com



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<https://apf.net.au>

SAVE THE DATE

APF Annual General Meeting & PD Seminar

Friday 27 October 2023

9:30 am – 3:30 pm

Rendezvous Hotel

(Details to follow)

The Union exclusively for the Principal Class

Principal workload and wellbeing.....time for action.

In January 2003, yes you read that correctly **2003**, the Department of Education and Training (as it was then known) commissioned a study into the impact of workload on the health and wellbeing of principal class employees in the Victorian Government School sector. The following year, the findings of the study were released by way of a final report known as **The Privilege And The Price** (August 2004). There were many findings outlined in the report, many which resonate with school leaders of today, with the main ones being:

- The worst aspect of a school leaders job is the amount of unnecessary paperwork.
- The sheer volume of work is the biggest source of stress.
- The job is seen as difficult and demanding with many saying that they never seem to get on top of the work.
- In some areas of the work, (notably staff and student management, financial management, accountability, complaints, facilities management) principal class stated that there is no one with the right skill set to whom they can delegate.

(The Privilege And The Price Final Report August 2004)

Bearing in mind that this study was commissioned back in 2003, here we are 20 years later, hearing the same chimes and chanting the same matters of concern. Worse still, subsequent findings from reports such as the [Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey Data](#), the 2022 [Productivity Commission Review of National School Reform Agreement](#) and the recent [VAGO Report into Principal Health and Wellbeing](#) all endorse the findings dating back to 2003.

The role of the principal has changed significantly over the last 20 years as have the accompanying demands, burdens and responsibilities. Yet here we are, still talking about reducing management loads and adding to a problem that has been cumulative over many years. The role and accompanying responsibilities of our school leaders have simply become untenable. Principals continually report burnout, disconnect and continued sense of being overcome and overwhelmed by the sheer quantity of the work. We cannot simply keep acknowledging the problem, but need to work collectively to seek tangible outcomes that not only have positive outcomes but offer attraction and retention to the role.



At the Education Summit held earlier this year and in conjunction with other key Victorian organisations (CEP, PASS, VASSP & VPA), we asked principals in the room to identify the enablers and barriers to doing their job.

What has resulted are **five key themes** which have been encapsulated in a two-page summary document:

- Compliance and administrative tasks impact significantly on time and principal wellbeing.
- The impact of staff shortages and staff development has adverse influence on school functioning.
- Principal supports are needed to build capacity to focus on core business.
- Review of regional office structures to ensure better support to schools and principals.
- Adapt and reform the education system to meet the purpose of schooling.



Give More Feedback

From Principal's Digest
July 23

Why do people hesitate to give others constructive feedback, even though there are times when people clearly want feedback for themselves?

In a recent article published in the Behavioral Scientist, Nicole Abi-Esber from the London School of Economics and Juliana Schroeder from the University of California/Berkeley shed light on situations where individuals could have greatly benefited from receiving feedback on their mistakes, such as mispronouncing a word during rehearsals for a theatrical performance. Surprisingly, no one spoke up in these instances. The authors pose the question, "Why do people hesitate to provide constructive feedback when it could clearly have a positive impact?"

Previous research offers two potential explanations for this phenomenon:

1. The fear of embarrassing or hurting the person's feelings.
2. The reluctance to appear impolite or deliver unwelcome news.

Abi-Esber and Schroeder suspect that there might be another underlying reason: individuals may not realize how much the other person desires real-time feedback about their mistakes.

To test their hypothesis,

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The above findings from the Education Summit were presented to **Minister Hutchins** at a meeting held last week with the 5 key organisations. We are most thankful to the Minister for availing herself for such a meeting opportunity and for her willingness to listen and engage with intent and purpose.



Solving principal workload is complex as it is a system-based problem that has developed over many years. In addressing the issues facing our school leaders, we must now take a multi-faceted approach that involves the active participation of principals, system leaders, government, stakeholders and the wider educational community. **What we don't want to be a part of is another 20 years of just talking about it.**

NOTE: A copy of the Education Summit 2023: Reimagining the Principalship Summary Document is available on our website www.apf.net.au

We ARE all in this together! Kevin Mackay



It is surely distressing for non-school-based educational leaders to read articles in these APF newsletters of the unhappiness or dissatisfaction with elements of the system as expressed by actual educators – people whose job it is to deliver lasting and cumulative changes in student behaviours above and beyond those that could be expected to occur naturally. Just as leaders in schools often take criticisms of their schools or their staff or students personally, we know that non-school-based leaders often take criticism of

the wider system personally as well. This can be a distraction in the way of commonsense. The commonality between school-based and non-school-based leaders is their passionate belief in, and defence of, the right of every Victorian child to a world-class educational experience.

The major point of difference, however, is that school-based/experienced leaders have to deal with practicalities rather than theories or politically approved blueprints for reform.

While the non-Government educational sector in Victoria continues to ascribe to a largely autonomous school model, the Government sector has been increasingly corralled into a one-size-fits-all protocol; seemingly premised on a lack of confidence or trust in the training and experience of in-school educators to design teaching and learning programs. Programs that could match the needs and aspirations of their clients – within, of course, an agreed National curriculum framework.



Schools probably represent the one social institution that almost every community member has had experience of and has an always current view about. It's hard to dispute the status of schools (and teachers) as a hot-button topic for a majority of Victorians who are ever-ready to weigh in on any debate about what schools should be doing. It is therefore understandable that many who have not had the benefit of in-school experience believe that they know how schools should operate and what the **worth** of education should be.

And, so, when the relatively lonely voices of APF members appear in these pages pleading for understanding and genuine support, they deserve to be listened to. More than that, they

the authors conducted a series of experiments where they found that potential feedback-givers often underestimate the other person's willingness and openness to receive feedback. In one simulation, 86 percent of potential feedback-receivers expressed a desire for feedback, while only 48 percent of feedback-givers were willing to provide it. Furthermore, the researchers discovered that the more significant the problem, the more inaccurate the potential feedback-givers' assessment of the other person's desire for feedback.

In an attempt to bridge this feedback gap, Abi-Esber and Schroeder explored various interventions. They found that perspective-taking, which involves asking advice-givers to imagine themselves in the other person's shoes, proved to be the most effective strategy. However, even with this intervention, the feedback-giving gap was not entirely eliminated. It appears that the reluctance to inform others about their mistakes is deeply ingrained, even when we recognize that providing feedback would make a positive difference and likely be greatly appreciated.

Acknowledgement: Nicole Abi-Esber and Juliana Schroeder in Behavioral Scientist, April 17, 2023;

Read the full article: ["Give More Feedback – Others Want It More Than You Think"](#)

deserve to have their concerns addressed in such a way that others that are too scared or busy to express the same sorts of issues can sense some sort of hope that might be able to morph into sustainable trust in their leadership.



Right now, we are faced with a crisis of confidence and resourcing. Our most valuable State-wide resource is our in-school staff. Various pundits claim (just as various redundancy figures for abandonment of teaching careers by the disillusioned), relatively young recruits. Anything above four or five percent is too high – both for the disillusioned themselves and the schools that lose them. Blind Freddy can see that this issue represents a train-wreck of prodigious proportions careering down the strictly aligned rails, right into a majority of our schools.

The tenor of many of the appeals coming through these pages can be distilled into one simple message:

“please try to understand that we trying our hardest to do an undoable job!”

Without a full complement of skilled and passionate staff, the job of teaching a given cohort of students becomes exponentially more difficult.

From one who has the luxury of being able to look from the balcony when reading the anguish between the lines of many of my erstwhile colleagues, I despair when I note that the responses of some of the non-school leaders is that despite hugely disadvantageous **circumstances that the afore-mentioned Blind Freddy could see will clearly impact on a school’s capacity to deliver on so-called improvement targets, no flexibility or differentiation seems to be even countenanced.** To me, and it might just be me, this verges on workplace bullying.

Two simple examples elaborate on this lack of flexibility or school differentiation:

- Anecdotal evidence would suggest that no allowance will be recognised by School Reviewers for the likely impacts of COVID lock-downs on school improvement targets during school reviews of periods that included all or part of the lock-down years. The Preps of 2020 will never fully make up for lost educational and socialisation learning, and the impact on all children was unparalleled in living memory. It would be fair and appropriate for a “nod” to this appearing in a Review report.
- If a school is right near the top of the NAPLAN league table, it can never expect to stay labelled as an **Influence** but is seemingly forever relegated to the category of **Renew** – which definitionally requires more work and a change in practice. (Clear thinkers could be forgiven for believing that schools performing near the top of the league tables *should* be influencing at least some aspirant schools – *directly*, and not through non-school-based intermediaries.)

This situation defies logic and simple commonsense and needs changing! The data is readily available; leave the top five or ten percent as **Influence(ers)**. This would not deny that further improvement was possible, but would help to make the classification real.



Support for members

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

However, from time to time you may be concerned about a colleague. Please do not hesitate in making contact with us so we can offer them appropriate support.

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The Victorian Department of Education is huge and seems as difficult as a tanker-ship to slow down or change course – even by just a degree! Concomitantly, it also has a very limited ability to encourage outliers to pursue innovation and to potentially influence other “like” schools. In fact, it sometimes seems obliged to discourage them – witness the disbandment of the “Innovation and Next Practise” section of the Department.

The Department is accountable for the political imperative to pursue a program of explicit and uniform school improvement in order to compete internationally. We as a system, could be more effective if we had the capacity to rationally deviate from the one-size-fits-all model that appears to drive accountability in Victoria.

The competition to compete Internationally, however, should never be allowed to condone the sacrifice of the public servants who are the ones who are expected to deliver the learning improvements. Many of the messages from these pages seek acknowledgement of the needs of actual practitioners for understanding, realism, warranted differentiation, and genuine collaboration.

To the non-school-based leaders who read such messages, be assured that those messages are coming from people whose hearts and minds are on the same pathway as yours – just in a different space at a particular point in time.

Kevin Mackay (OAM) is a retired principal who has lead 4 schools over a period of 45 years.
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From the memory box 9, Henry Grossek, Principal, Berwick Lodge Primary School



Not long ago I was reminiscing with a friend. We had plenty over which to chat. Our friendship tracked back to our teachers’ college days. Needless to say, our conversation slipped almost seamlessly into a vein of thought, rich in nostalgia – the good old days! We had a great time in that ever-so- enticing haven to which one can escape from the present. Small comfort though, given the omnipresent nature of the current state of play in school education.

Our conversation meandered about. Looking back, what would we change in our careers was the question on which our conversation ultimately landed. Talk about floodgates opening! Our coffees



finished and with the icy chill at the tail-end of a winter’s day fast descending, we departed. Conversations though can linger in one’s mind. This one did for me as I drove home. It was the ‘sliding doors’ aspect of our conversation which kept bouncing round my mind - the ‘what would you do differently’ career-wise question that we asked of each other.

The longer I dwelt in my retrospective career thoughts, the less certain I became of what I might have changed. Leaving the teaching profession was not a thought I gave serious consideration. Twice before I had, but chose to stay. From the vantage point of the present time, that was not a decision I would now have reversed. No, the problem my friend and I had faced in our hindsight reflections was that they only had any potential meaningfulness for the future, not the past.

Interesting as it was, to look back and pinpoint times and decisions we made and ruminate over



David Finnerty, Julie Podbury and Loretta Piazza deliver leadership programs in schools. Our **Emerging Leaders Program** has been very successful in five schools.

DAFIN are also **Coaching** the Leadership Team in other schools.

Two vacancies remain for 2024.



Please contact David on 0412 927 007 or Julie on 0419 103 664 for further information

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the past, that's all it was – a stroll down memory lane and taking a peek at paths we didn't choose to take. But what if we had? Who's to know where we would have landed.

Insofar as the here and now is concerned, and looking forward, the immediate future for our profession does not look rosy, quite the opposite in fact. Nostalgia beckons! Therein lies a trap, a particularly seductive and potentially fraught one at that. For those of us still within the profession, the siren call of the past, overlaid with nostalgic thoughts of better days long gone can cripple creative forward thinking. Yet, that's what we need most of all right now.

There was a time, decades ago, when the path to promotion in the teaching profession was blocked for many - for many years, when seniority ruled. There was another time when graduate teachers were despatched as headmasters, on their own, to remote rural schools. Another time still, we had three-term school years, terms that seemed interminably long at thirteen or fourteen weeks. For a time, descriptive student reports were in vogue – page after page after we wrote, until the parents clamoured for less. It might seem preposterous now, but there was also a time in the 1980s when we had such a glut of students graduating, that there was a logjam wait to get a job.

It's almost more than tempting to seek refuge in a past, coloured through rosy glasses, than venture into the harsh perspective of a troubled present.

So what? That all depends on how we view the future.

VIT Term 3 Registration Checklist

A few things for you to check at the start of every term

- all your teachers must hold registration and their name must appear in the [Employer portal](#) and on the [register of teachers](#) – this includes those teaching VET subjects
- provisionally registered teachers and those who hold permission to teach (PTT) may have registration expiry dates earlier than 30 September this year – keep track of teachers' expiry dates in your [Employer portal](#)
- PTT is only valid for the school(s) and subject(s) listed in the [Employer portal](#) and on the teacher's registration card.



Do you have mid-year graduates due to start next term?

Appointing pre-service teachers (PSTs) within Victorian schools is important to the profession. Many PSTs who are due to graduate mid-year have already applied for teacher registration. However, until VIT obtains evidence of course completion from the ITE providers, their registration cannot be finalised.

To ensure your PSTs are ready to teach in Term 3 2023, the VIT will prioritise the pre-assessment of these applications while waiting for the evidence of course completion (EOC). The VIT expects to receive most EOCs from providers by 31 July 2023, and will finalise application assessments as soon as possible after that.

PSTs with pending VIT registration cannot undertake the [duties of a teacher or early childhood teacher](#) – even under supervision.

You can check in your [Employer portal](#) whether the PST has a pending app by adding them to your teacher list.



Destressing Teachers' Work Lives

A RAND survey published as recently as a year ago found that nearly three-quarters of teachers said they were experiencing frequent job-related stress compared to just a third of all working adults. Principals' leadership qualities are identified as being increasingly important in lessening the impact of stressful circumstances on teachers. Consider these:

Listen to Teachers:

Nurture a Climate of Self-care:

Give teachers time and space to support each other: .

Provide ample Resources:

Don't Overlook "engaged/exhausted" Staff:

While school leaders can mitigate some teacher stress, teachers in the end may be the best managers of their own workplace pressures. Teachers who say they are not coping well with work stress report far lower job satisfaction than teachers who say they have found ways to manage workplace pressures.

Sarah D. Sparks & Debra Videro, May 11, 2023, in Education Week

See complete article: <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/5-ways-principals-can-de-stress-teachers-work-lives/2023/05>

From July Hippocampus,
an email publication of
Principal's Digest

www.principalsdigests.com

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The responsibility for gaining and maintaining teacher registration lies with the PST. If the PST has not yet applied for registration, please encourage them to do so as soon as possible. You can help them by providing this [information pack](#) and the following advice.

Advice for employers of PSTs with pending VIT registration

You should

- provide your applicant all paperwork necessary to process their appointment
- inform your applicant that if they are unable to secure their registration prior to the starting date, they will not be able to take up their position until their registration has been granted
- add your applicant to the teacher list in your [Employer portal](#) (and confirm that their name appears on the [public register](#) once their registration is approved)
- not allow an applicant to teach even under supervision without confirmed VIT registration or permission to teach.

Employer pack: a guide to teacher registration

The [Employer Pack](#) covers a range of topics about VIT and teacher registration including

- who we are, what we do and misconceptions about our role
- why teacher registration is important to the profession
- employer obligations
- teacher obligations
- employing new teachers
- initial registration and annual registration processes
- conduct and suitability
- employer resources.

Using the Employer portal

The Employer portal allows schools to monitor the registration of teachers, recommend provisionally registered teachers for full registration and support applications for permission to teach.

Download a copy of the Employer Portal Guide for instructions on how to access and use the Employer portal.

Schools that have an early childhood service attached to their program will have separate employer portals for each setting, and should list teachers only in the relevant portal.

More information can be found in our FAQs for employers or the Employer resources sections.

Periodic registration checks

It is good practice to include periodic checks of the Employer portal to ensure teachers remain registered and are not approaching an expiry date.

Update your teacher list by adding new teachers and removing teachers who have left.

Check for upcoming provisional expiry dates. Provisionally registered teachers can apply for a further grant of provisional registration within 3 months of their registration expiry if they have not completed the provisional to full Inquiry process. Please note that provisionally registered teachers also have a 3 month grace period – this means that if they appear on the register and in the Employer portal, they are registered and able to teach – even if their expiry date is in the past.

(Continues in column on this page)



Check the expiry date and permitted subjects for permission to teach (PTT) holders. PTT holders can only teach at the school and in the subjects listed in the teacher list (scroll to the right to see this information) in the Employer portal. PTT holders do not have a grace period and their PTT will expire on the day after their approval expiry date unless another application is approved.

If any of your teachers have [conditions](#), they may supply you with a letter outlining these conditions.

More information can be found on the [Support my teachers](#) and [Employer's obligations](#) sections.

