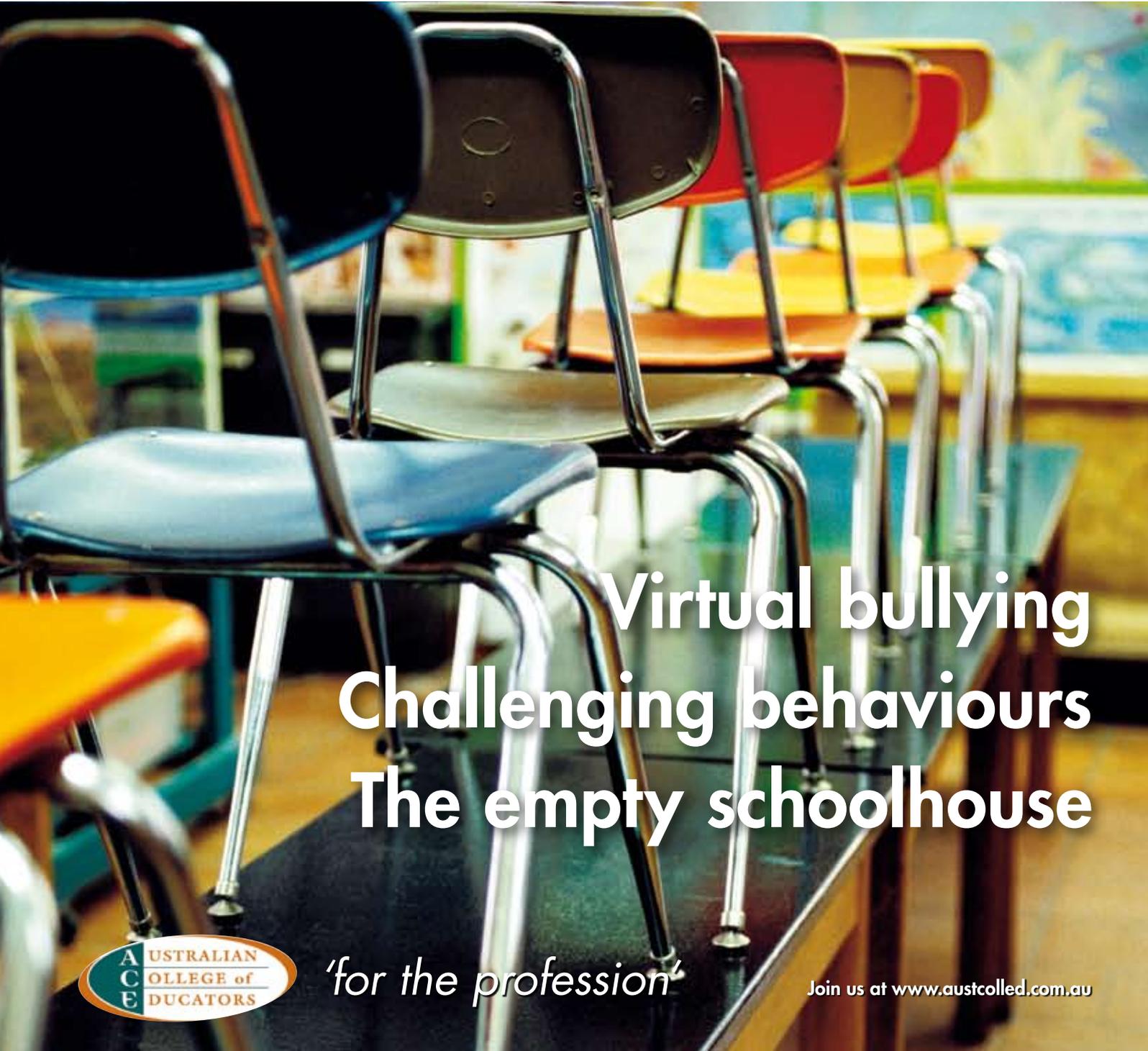


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\* Note: this assessment does not provide a *diagnosis*; rather it assesses how a child is *functioning*.

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**EDITORIAL**

*Inadequate facilities in schools; under-qualified teachers; a teacher shortage in rural government schools. Think that's a thumbnail sketch of Australian education? Think again: it's actually about Zambia and, according to the Lusaka Post, the problem, essentially, is this: 'Those who run government don't take their children to government-run schools; they take them to private- or church-run schools. It is not difficult to understand why they don't attach much importance to the functioning of these schools. It is simply because they have no stake in them, their children don't go there.' The Commonwealth's new review into non-government school funding means a whole raft of funding questions have now re-emerged. These are, in the end, questions to do with adequate facilities and an adequate supply of qualified teachers for all schools, government and non-government, but the question at the heart of the matter is this: do those who run government take their children to government-run schools?*

**Letters to the Editor****THE FLEXIBILITY PRINCIPLE**

*Mary Bluett, President, Victorian branch of the Australian Education Union.*

An increasing number of experienced teachers are opting to be part-time as a way of balancing a demanding, albeit rewarding, career with a modicum of quality personal life. This option both increases job satisfaction and provides work-life balance at an important point in their career. Many claim that as a result it prolongs an otherwise prematurely ended career. In this time of teacher shortage, even the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DE&T) acknowledges this as positive 'workforce planning.' Both research and media coverage, however, indicate that this 'career life-boat' is largely denied our principals. For its part, the DE&T puts a raft of obstacles before principals seeking part-time or job sharing positions while simultaneously lamenting 'a principal shortage.'

A case in question involved a western suburbs secondary school principal who sought to go part-time – sharing with the school's assistant principal. The DE&T initially vetoed the move, maintaining it needed one person to be directly accountable for all decisions associated with the running of the school. After months of representation by the Australian Education Union (AEU), the DE&T finally agreed to the part-time move, so long as the principal, assistant principal, school council and the staff agree to the new arrangement. While the principal and assistant principal were keen, one of the other parties failed to endorse the change. The result? The DE&T refused, and the principal resigned! Question: who lost? Answer: everybody.

The role of principal has changed significantly over the years – and this is the key to the emerging crisis that faces us. A national Monash University study, supported by other research, points to the growing and overwhelming demands of the job combined with its impact on health and personal life as the greatest disincentives to apply for or remain in the role of principal. Principals are experienced, committed teachers who overwhelmingly bring a passion for educational leadership to their desire for career advancement. This is as it should be. Yet the reality is the 'job' is something else again. The increased focus on managerial responsibilities – global budgets, occupational health and safety, buildings, grounds, human resources, industrial relations, fundraising, accountability, community relations – swamp principals and divert them from their key role – and potential job satisfaction. The role has become too great for one person.

Many schools attempt to spread the load via assistant principals or leadership teams, an approach that's not always possible and, where it is, one that doesn't address the DE&T requirement that ultimate responsibility resides with one person! To find solutions to this complex problem we need to ask what we want from our principals, and the answer cannot be 'everything' since that's the problem! The best answer, in my view, is that the role ought not to be about financial management, administration, blocked toilets, occupational health and safety or red tape. We want educational leaders, focused on educational outcomes working with an engaged staff. We must provide the time and space for our principals to fulfil this role.

As well as redefining the role we must also provide the capacity for part-time employment. To do otherwise will rob the profession of many experienced principals and will continue to turn many experienced teachers and assistant principals away from a career of educational leadership. The AEU is currently exploring an antidiscrimination case as a trigger to force the DE&T to focus on the right of

principals to access part-time. We shouldn't have to do this. After three research reports, the DE&T cannot escape their responsibility to act now!

## RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

*Merv McCormack, Principal, Casimir Catholic College, Marrickville, Sydney.*

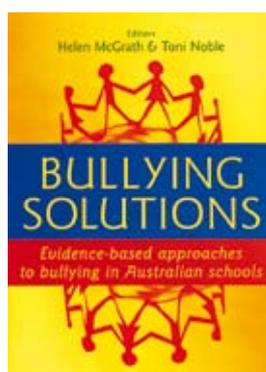
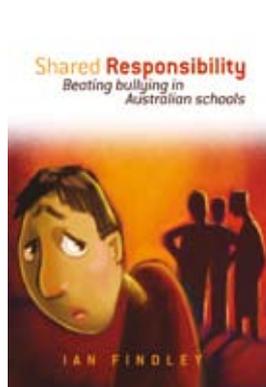
I write as the principal of one of the schools, Marrickville's Casimir Catholic College in Sydney, mentioned in Paul Harney's article on restorative practices (*Professional Educator*, August 2005: 14-17). From the outset of the project, teachers were enthusiastic about Casimir's involvement, since the college has a well-developed history of pastoral engagement with students and parents. It was seen as a good opportunity to revisit how we interact with those within our community who have been affected by inappropriate behaviour. I felt this was important since there was no sense among staff that 'we already do these things here, so what's new for us.' Rather, it was a case of 'how might we do better what we already do well?' The results have been very encouraging, with reduced rates of suspensions and detentions, and improved sophistication in the type of initial teacher intervention with inappropriate student behaviour. So much can be done in those first stages of management that can prevent situations from escalating to greater levels of seriousness and hurt. The regularly brief revisiting of restorative practices during staff meetings ensures that they are principles and strategies that have much to offer any school that prizes quality relationships within its community.

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# Are you busy this week?



Mentoring offers educators plenty of opportunity to learn from one another, says **Moira Dodsworth**, and it's definitely a two-way street.

'**ARE** you busy this week? Can I come and see you?' These are two questions I've heard regularly during the past year from a first-year student, I'll call him Tim, doing a Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education. I'd known Tim for many years, his parents being family friends, and had tutored him during Year Twelve in assignment writing and for the Queensland Core Skills Test.

That was the year he started working at the Police Citizens Youth Club, where his desire to teach grew. Tim had learning difficulties – the result of having cancer as a small boy – but he was unwilling to allow this to affect the fulfillment of a dream. As a teacher, with a love of learning and a respect for his determination, I knew I had to do everything in my power to help him.

As a professional educator teaching in a high school, I've read plenty about the value of adolescents and young adults having other important adults besides their parents in their lives, and seen that with my own eyes. I saw myself as one such adult in Tim's life. I am, in other words, a mentor.

What I saw in Tim was a desire to achieve, yet because he lacked self esteem and critical thinking skills he had difficulty in reaching his goals, so together we devised a program that would help him. Tim visited me soon after the beginning of semester and together we looked at time management and organisation skills. Together we read assignment tasks and pulled them apart. I helped him in interpreting the criteria and planning the completion of tasks.

Planning essays and assignments seems to be a skill many students do not acquire at school and so we spent time on them. Tim began to write plans for his assignments, making a point of writing an introduction and conclusion and constructing paragraphs. We then met on an irregular basis, Tim emailing me drafts to which I'd reply with constructive criticism and praise.

There was obvious value for Tim in the process, but it wasn't long before I found myself considering my practice as I constructed criteria sheets for my own students and had to think with more academic rigor as I helped a student at a higher level than secondary school. Tim was required in his course to keep a

weekly journal. To help him, I began to do the same and found myself learning as I wrote about my practice. The experience also helped when it came to teaching my students about journal writing and metacognition. I also enjoyed the contact with an enthusiastic young teacher with his ambition and idealism. Mentoring, I quickly came to realise, was having great value for me too.

I was very challenged by the task of analysing an education department document. I wondered about the value of the task – do teachers really read these documents? The assessment also seemed to require the student teacher to read the tutor's mind to identify particular assumptions that turned out to be important. I dutifully read the document and together we worked through 'teacher talk,' how to understand education policies and how this affects and is relevant to the classroom teacher. I became a learner in English as well as I tried to remember things learned at school about analysing texts.

Schools no longer seem to teach students what parts of speech are, much less adjectival and adverbial clauses, but here was a first-year student required to do this. I encouraged Tim since, I think, an understanding of grammar, as well as good spelling, is essential for teachers, but it's an enormous task for someone who has never done grammatical analysis before and has difficulty with writing skills. English competency is a challenge we still have to overcome.

Other tasks were much more successful as I encouraged Tim to use his imagination in using story books for drama. *The Quangle Wangle's Hat* by Edward Lear gave tremendous opportunities for poetry, playing with words and designing outlandish hats. We read stories aloud together, looking for the unusual, and tried to devise lesson plans that met required outcomes in different ways, even considering frying an egg on the teacher's car in a unit on energy. We unpacked the outcomes, discussed classroom management and worked together on what worked and what didn't during Tim's portal task. I was a sounding board for his experience, reliving some of my own early disasters, and sharing his joy when something went well.

I enjoyed the contact with a young, enthusiastic student teacher, I loved talking about teaching, and sharing my insights and tricks of the trade with a receptive listener. As I put my practice into words, I considered how pedagogy had changed and thought about why I was doing what I did. Tim valued me as a critical friend, and reminded me that I became a teacher because I love and believe in the value of learning. I was encouraged by the enthusiasm that is still being brought into the profession.

'Mentors are those individuals who are willing to be open and available and to be a living challenge and encouragement to others mainly through their willingness to tell the stories of their experience and help others realise that they are creating their own stories. Applied to contemporary education, especially the education of teachers, it means that mentors know that "without a vision the teacher perishes" along with the students and the learning process.' (Altany 2001)

These are just words, of course, but since the experiences Tim and I have had, I think I know better what Altany means. Sometimes the person who teaches keeps turning up at school, TAFE, university, wherever, Monday to Friday, but really the teacher has perished.

Tim's self esteem grew as he had a successful year including a score of six in his final results and, when he turned up with a bunch of flowers to tell me his results, I was re-inspired as a teacher. My dream of changing the world was not so unrealistic; perhaps, Tim suggested, even if I hadn't changed the world, maybe there would be a student he taught who would be the one to do it. Who, I wondered, was the mentor now?

*We unpacked the outcomes, discussed classroom management and worked together on what worked and what didn't during Tim's portal task. I was a sounding board for his experience, reliving some of my own early disasters, and sharing his joy when something went well.*

*Born and educated in South Africa, Moira Dodsworth has taught in the private and public sector in central Queensland for nineteen years. She presently teaches home economics and hospitality at Sarina State High School, and lives in Mackay with her husband and two children.*

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New technologies: love them or loathe them, they're not disappearing anytime soon, and if your students are at risk of becoming the target of virtual bullies, now's the time to do something about it, says **Janet Stone.**



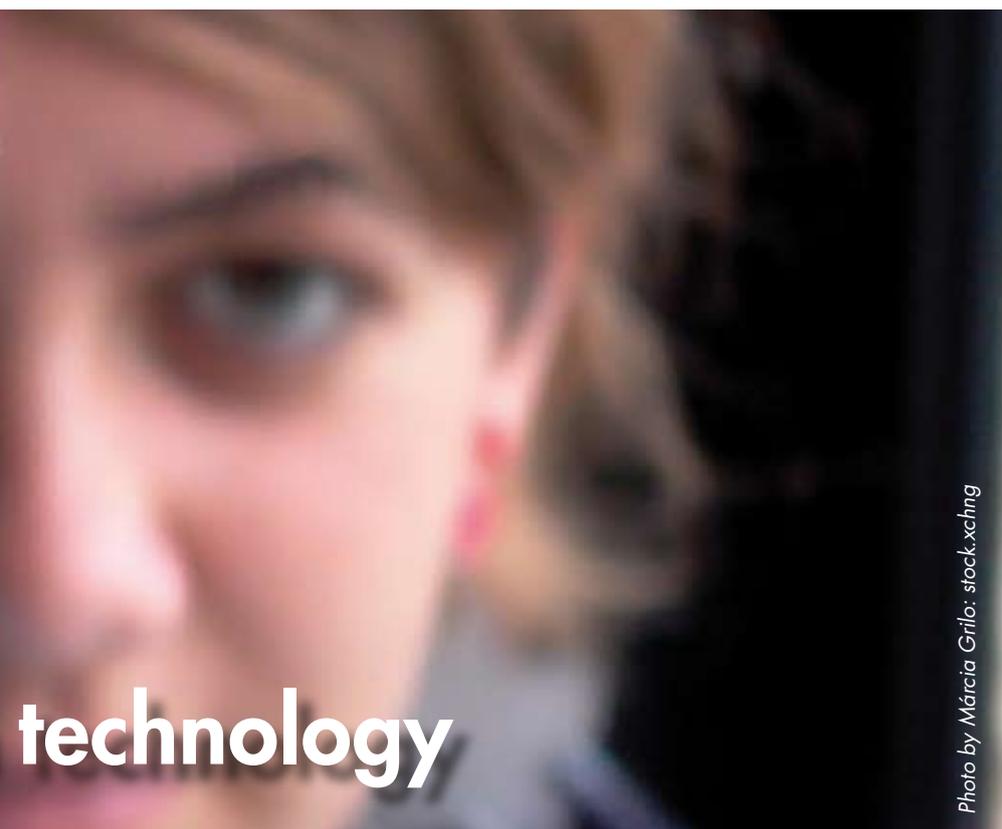
**MOBILE** technologies: they've become so much a part of youth culture that educators and researchers now say we need to explore how to use them in the classroom, as Elizabeth Hartnell-Young suggested in the August 2005 issue of *Professional Educator*.

On the up side, mobiles and the internet can facilitate more effective communication. Patients at Melbourne's Royal Children's Hospital, for instance, are sent an SMS reminding them of upcoming appointments. Researchers who tested the system found that failure to attend appointments in the trial group was significantly lower than for the control group. (Downer, Meara and Da Costa, 2005) Organisations such as ReachOut, meanwhile, are using SMS technology to send exam tips and stress management strategies to Year Twelve students.

On the down side, they can also facilitate forms of 'virtual bullying' that are quite powerfully real. Do the internet and mobiles give students, especially girls, a way to bully each other in a non-physical and indirect way? That's something we wanted to investigate at Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar School (IGGS) in Melbourne after being selected in 2003 as an intervention school in the *beyondblue schools research initiative*.

Let me define things, first, following Field (1999), who states that 'bullying involves the psychological, emotional, social or physical harassment of one person by another' (16) through exclusion, physical violence, verbal abuse, aggressive body language or sexual harassment. Crucially, bullying involves the exercise of power – the bully wants to feel powerful and make the victim feel powerless, frequently but not always where the bully is in a group and the victim is on her own – which adds to the powerlessness the victim feels. (Field, 1999)

The IGGS interest in virtual bullying goes back to research that shows that, typically, bullying by girls is quite different to bullying by boys. Physical aggression



# technology

Photo by Mária Grilo: stock.xchng

is rarely seen in girls because, as Rachel Simmons puts it, 'Our culture refuses girls access to open conflict and it forces their aggression into non-physical, indirect and covert forms.' Covert bullying – gossip spreading, exclusion, 'dirty looks' or 'greasies' and rumour spreading – are extremely difficult for adults to detect, especially when new technologies are added to the covert bully's bag of tricks, since the bully can conceal her identity. As the students interviewed during our *beyondblue* Action Plan implementation all said, bullying via technology feels anonymous, and this changes the responsibility and accountability a girl feels for her behaviour. What's also emerging is that even when the bully and others are in different locations the virtual group is alive and kicking in cyber space.

Consider the following scenario. Ivy turns off her mobile for class and, when she turns it back on at lunch time for a call from her mother, picks up thirty different SMSs about her behaviour at a party on the weekend, all forwarded to other girls in the year level and to students at other schools. Many of those on the periphery exclude Ivy or send her their own harassing SMSs. By the end of lunchtime, Ivy is confronted by one girl and the altercation that follows is filmed by another student on her mobile, with the footage forwarded to other people via MMS, and later downloaded onto the recorder's personal website for anyone in the world to view. When Ivy goes home after an exhausting day, she logs on to MSN to chat with her sister who's overseas, but is drawn into the MSN conversation of two girls she knows at school who are discussing her. She's the hot topic on MSN that night as more people get involved in the conversations and the next morning, predictably enough, she doesn't want to go to school.

We decided to focus our *beyondblue* Action Plan on bullying with technology at IGGS because we were becoming aware of an increasing number of formal reports of bullying with technology of the kind described, with a little exaggeration, here. We also realised that there were some gaps in our bullying and mobile phone policies, and

## HOW BULLIES USE MSN

*'You can exclude someone by blocking them, so even though they know you're on the internet, they won't get invited into any of your convos...or you can start to have a mean convo about someone and then invite them into the convo and because you have invited them in, they can see what you're writing.'* Year Nine student.

## HOW BULLIES USE WEBSITES

*'You can have a "gossip" link on the page where you can write all the year level gossip for everyone to read – you don't include names but you write just enough information so that everyone knows who you're talking about anyway. Or other people can bully people in the Guest Book and everyone who goes into the Guest Book can see what everyone else has been writing and they can add their comments.'* Year Seven student.

## ASK YOURSELF

- *Do you have a mobile use policy and does it cover virtual bullying?*
  - *Are processes in place so that cases of alleged bullying are handled quickly, fairly and uniformly?*
- *Do staff and students know those processes exist?*

wanted to address those gaps so that bullying could be minimised and victims could feel confident that their situation would be dealt with quickly, fairly and uniformly.

We formed one focus group from each of Year Eight, Nine and Ten. The aims of these focus groups were to educate our *beyondblue* Action Team, to have a general discussion about the issue and to develop a survey that all Years Eight, Nine and Ten students would complete about their technology use and their experience of bullying with technology.

The girls were very willing and excited to share their thoughts and ideas about bullying with technology. The first thing we found was that the girls didn't know a great deal about the law and were quite surprised to learn that some people who have been bullied using technology have involved the police. Many thought it was acceptable to pass on other people's personal contact details without their knowledge, which helps explain how phone numbers and passwords can get into the wrong hands. Most believed it was their right to have their mobile on at all times and to answer it whenever it rings, in any situation. In contrast to their ideas about mobile phones, however, the girls in all year levels agreed there was a 'moral responsibility' to control what others place on your website and to delete anything that is offensive or constitutes bullying.

To ensure continuing student participation in the education process, we held a competition, inviting the girls to design a poster that highlighted the issue of bullying with technology and advertised ways to get help. There were many entries and three winning posters were duplicated and placed in prominent positions in the junior and senior schools.

The results of our focus groups survey were similar to the research results found in the general adolescent community, particularly in terms of mobile phone use and the incidence of bullying via technology. Ninety-one per cent of respondents have their own mobile phone; seventy per cent had their own mobile by the age of thirteen; eleven per cent share a family mobile phone for at least one day a week – some sharing a family mobile and possessing their own. Fifty-five per cent stated that their parents had outlined no rules regarding the use of their mobile, while the remaining forty-five per cent most commonly set a limit on how much money could be spent per month on the phone bill. Other rules were that mobiles were to be used for emergencies only, used for 'not too long' – although how long was not quantified – and used 'sensibly,' whatever that meant.

Just under ten per cent of respondents said they had received a threatening or offensive message on their mobile, with most messages sent after school, typically at night, with only two per cent overall being sent during the school day.

Just under five per cent said they had sent a threatening or offensive mobile message. Common reasons for sending such a message were that it's easy, avoids a face-to-face confrontation, is fun, relieves boredom, is 'just another way of communicating' and is 'not necessarily a bad thing.'

Almost sixty per cent said the rules in the IGGS mobile phone policy were not followed, while fifty-seven per cent said the policy did not help to prevent bullying with technology, since most of the bullying occurs outside school hours.

Thirty-five per cent said they had received a threatening or offensive message whilst participating in an internet chat, such as MSN, while almost twenty-two per cent said they had received a threatening or offensive email. Sixteen per cent said they had sent someone else an offensive or threatening message over the internet, usually in response to a message they'd been sent. While reasons for using the internet to communicate such messages were similar to reasons for mobile phone bullying, the internet also 'feels anonymous' and replies are 'in the heat of the moment.'

The survey helped us to identify needs in our school and ways to address those needs, following discussions with key personnel, such as Year Level Coordinators, and by forming a reference group to discuss a 'personal website creation' policy, with input from girls from Years Six, Seven, Eight and Nine, to be led by Year Nine girls. The aim is to develop a set of guidelines that will focus on not bullying others and on safe internet use for the creators of websites and the people who view them.

Key staff will review the IGGS mobile policy and bullying policy, to investigate the inclusion of an explicit statement in both that addresses bullying with technology, and investigate ways to advertise both policies to staff and students. Current bullying and mobile telephone policies appear in the student diary and staff handbook, yet both policies are quite lengthy and it's likely that few adolescents take the time to read them.

The reality is that the internet and mobiles are here to stay, and we're coming to rely on them more and more for communication with those around us. Communication with technology is a good thing – as long as parents and schools teach young people to use that technology wisely and with consideration for those around them. Essentially, the most effective way of reducing the incidence of bullying with technology is to involve young people as much as possible in developing policies and implementing the education processes, so that they own the ideas behind any plan of action and willingly hold the values that are necessary to communicate with technology in a non-bullying manner.

For references go to [www.acer.edu.au/professionaleducator/references.html](http://www.acer.edu.au/professionaleducator/references.html)

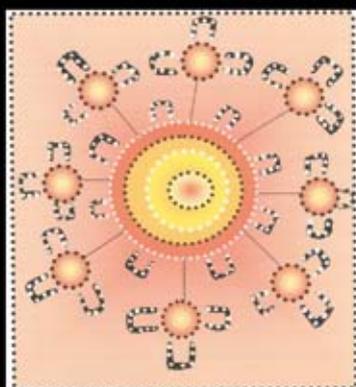
*Janet Stone is a psychologist and counsellor at Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar School, Melbourne.*

*The beyondblue schools research initiative is a national research partnership funded by beyondblue, the National Depression Initiative.*

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# Managing students with challenging behaviours

As educators, we're all dedicated professionals, but chances are we'll meet a 'student with challenging behaviours' who tests our patience and stretches our skills, and today these students seem more plentiful and more challenging. Luckily, says **Lyn Harrison**, there's a framework you can use to work with them.

**WHEN** you're working with 'students with challenging behaviours,' you need a framework for practical guidance and helpful strategies. Let me explain how a four-level framework based on a philosophy of restorative justice enables significant behavioural interventions that lead to improved learning outcomes.

## LEVEL ONE: MYSELF AS THE TEACHER

While it's often hard to change the behaviour of another, it's still the case that our own set of beliefs can help or hinder us in teaching challenging students. Do we begin each day fearful of the next outburst, dreading the impending confrontation, questioning the justice of this child's presence in our classroom or, even worse, questioning our own ability to manage this student? Are your beliefs helpful or hindering ones?

### Hindering core beliefs

It's not fair that I have to put up with that kid in my class.

No one ever gives me any support.

I don't have the skills to manage this student.

It's the parent's fault.

### Helpful core beliefs

This student is in my class and, as with all my students, I need to be persistent in trying to see the positives and find out how he learns best. I need to convince him that I like him.

I need to make sure that the executive has a full understanding of this student and I need to ask for support.

I need to look for opportunities for professional development that will benefit all of my students.

The parent needs as much support as the child, and blaming the parent will only add to the problem.

Teaching students with challenging behaviours is stressful and you need to be mindful of its impact on you. Do you have adequate supervision and time to debrief after a student outburst? It's important to accept that most of these students had behavioural difficulties before they entered your classroom, that it's not about you, that you just happen to be the authority figure at the time.

### LEVEL TWO: THE STUDENT AND HIS OR HER NEEDS AND WANTS

The vast majority of challenging behaviour by students is an expression of unmet needs, and our response can either deepen the need or deflect it. Dreikurs (1982) suggests four goals of misbehaviour.

- While most students like attention, some have an inappropriate need that presents as disruption, calling out or annoying others. The natural, but unhelpful, response by the teacher can be to respond to attention seeking with negative attention, thus feeding the need. It takes a great deal of control to ignore negative attention-seeking behaviour while at the same time looking for opportunities to provide positive attention when appropriate behaviour is present.
- Some students have had disrupted attachments in their life and seek to take personal control, appearing not to respond to rewards and punishments. Direct them to do something and they'll do the opposite because it means they win. As hard as it is, you can refrain from 'buying into' a power struggle through your choice of language: 'John, you understand the plan; either choose to work by yourself or in the group, or you go to the office.' The teacher then walks away, giving the student time to choose. Oppositional students often have an intense need to win, typically wanting to 'have the last word.' As difficult as this is for the teacher, the best response is simply to let them. (Hewitt, 1999)
- Martin Seligman (1995) first coined the term 'learned helplessness' to describe young people who disguise their inadequacies with a refusal to attempt what they are not good at. Doing everything 'for them' is counter-productive. Some students will go to extraordinary lengths to disguise their inadequacies, particularly a low level of literacy. The key is to be creative in finding entry points into learning – through games, interests and enterprise education.
- Some young people have a heightened sense of justice and, when they feel they have been wronged, can actively destroy your lesson or passively resist. This is best addressed, if possible, through a quiet and private conversation. When did the student feel wronged, and how can the relationship be restored?

A critical skill is to understand the baseline behaviour of a student with challenging behaviours, so you know when the behaviour is escalating. One student's baseline behaviour may be highly agitated, while another student's may be detached and uninvolved.

### LEVEL THREE: THE CLASSROOM

The classroom can be the safe and controlled context in which new behaviours can be learned. Christine Richmond (2005) provides an excellent framework that emphasises clear expectations as the foundations for sound management. Students with challenging behaviours need the clarity of expectations and routines. Coupled with this is the fine but delicate balance between acknowledgement and correction. Students with behaviour difficulties get significantly more statements of correction than acknowledgments. The Richmond model cautions against too little and too much correction or acknowledgement.

Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI), which is a program developed at Cornwall University (2001) specifically for the management of young people with

## STUDENTS WITH CHALLENGING BEHAVIOURS

*Consider the strategies you use to work with students with challenging behaviours according to the following four-level framework.*

*Level One: myself, the teacher.*

*Level Two: the student, and his or her needs and wants.*

*Level Three: the classroom environment.*

*Level Four: the Individual Education Plan.*



The greatest tool in the classroom is the relationship the teacher has with the student.

Early escalation of challenging behaviour can be managed through a sincere display of affection by the teacher – a simple pat on the shoulder, or an encouraging comment. Students will sense if this is insincere.

challenging behaviours, advocates nine de-escalating interventions, listed from the least intrusive to the most intrusive.

**Managing the environment** This looks at all the strategies that the classroom environment can provide, including the minimum possible classroom rules, clearly and positively stated, and displayed. Rules and consequences should be negotiated with the students. (Rogers, 1995) It's a strategy that's often ignored by secondary teachers who wrongly assume that 'by this age they should know what's expected of them.' Remember, most secondary students are at a time in their life when they are most prone to rule breaking, and have up to seven teachers with varying expectations.

**Prompting** Prompting signals to a student to either begin a desired behaviour or stop an inappropriate behaviour in a non-critical way either through a verbal statement like 'It's time to pack up the equipment' or a non-verbal signal like pointing to the rule on a poster. Some teachers use a secret non-verbal sign previously negotiated with the student. Prompts should be given only once or twice or they become nagging.

**Caring gesture** The greatest tool in the classroom is the relationship the teacher has with the student. Early escalation of challenging behaviour can be managed through a sincere display of affection by the teacher – a simple pat on the shoulder, or an encouraging comment. Students will sense if this is insincere.

**Hurdle help** When students experience frustration because they are unable to complete a task, the teacher can simply assist with the early steps until the student is confident to work alone. The non-compliant student who refuses to pick up the paper in the playground may be more willing if he sees his teacher also picking up papers. The student may be more willing to clean the graffiti off the desk if the teacher offers to assist him.

**Redirection** This can assist a student or group to calm down and return to normal functioning. Diverting the student's attention to a substitute activity can de-escalate the situation. Ask the student to assist you, say, to take a message to another teacher, or to work on the computer for ten minutes.

**Proximity** Many teachers assume that a student with challenging behaviours is best seated close to them to maximise supervision. This can be counter-productive since the authority figure close by can escalate oppositional behaviour. (Hewitt, 1999) Some teachers ask the student to nominate a positive peer to sit with, and that peer student then indicates to the student when they observe off-task or escalating behaviour. When approaching a particularly agitated student, it's best not to do so from the front, which is confrontational, but from the side.

**Planned ignoring and positive attention** Attention-seeking behaviour needs to be ignored, if in the judgment of the teacher the behaviour is not potentially harmful to the student or others. Coupled with positive attention when the desired behaviour is present, this becomes a powerful strategy. Positive attention requires a great deal of conscious effort since we're drawn to noticing inappropriate behaviour, rather than 'catching them being good.'

**Directive statements** As a student's inappropriate behaviour escalates, their rational thinking diminishes, so direct statements should be clear, specific and authoritative although not authoritarian, using the 'broken record' approach, calmly repeating a request several times, without being drawn into argument. (Lillico, 2005)

**Time away** When all other de-escalating strategies have been tried, it may be that the student needs to be removed from the classroom or learning space, not as

a punitive strategy, but to provide an alternative place with the clear understanding that they can return when they're calm and ready. A positive re-entry is critical to the success of this strategy.

#### LEVEL FOUR: DEVELOPING AN INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN

Fairness doesn't involve treating every student the same, it involves asking the critical question, 'What does this student need in order to learn?' Some students cannot be managed, and more importantly cannot learn, using the same strategies as others, which means some individuals need Individual Education Plans (IEPs). To develop an IEP you first need to identify the key stakeholders – classroom teachers, year coordinators, executive, student, parent or carer, counsellor, special education teacher, representatives from outside agencies – each of whom will have some understanding of the young person's needs and, more importantly, strategies to respond to these needs. You then need to meet, with the student attending if he or she has the willingness and maturity to participate. It helps to invite a supportive peer.

The meeting and the IEP are about enhancing learning and inclusion in the school community, not venting or debriefing. At the first meeting members are asked to name the student's strengths, interests and needs. Members then prioritise the behaviours that are of concern. Those behaviours which are either dangerous or most likely to change are given first priority. These behaviours are then reframed into a positive statement. For example, 'Walks around the room constantly' could be reframed as 'Stays in his seat for thirty minute periods.' (Richmond, 1996) A plan is formulated that documents specific strategies, the person responsible and the time frame for implementation.

Where behaviours are extremely challenging, IEPs need to be realistic and creative. Where a placement at school is in jeopardy, partial enrolment – attending only those subjects or times of the day when the student is most responsive – should be considered. IEP meetings and the plan itself should be continually evolving in response to the needs of the student. New expectations should reflect new strategies. If partial enrolment was at one point a strategy, the IEP should look at gradual reintegration, if at all possible.

At each meeting key stakeholders should evaluate each strategy, perhaps using a rating scale from one to ten, where ten is highly successful. This approach forces everyone to focus on the success of the strategy, however small, rather than making global judgments about whether the student has been 'fixed up yet.'

If an IEP meeting follows a serious incident or a suspension, strategies for repairing damaged relationships and making restitution should be built into the plan. If that's not done, the student may be set up for further failure. Why would a distressed teacher or student welcome back a student who has offended them? Similarly, why would a student who feels unjustly accused return to school not revengeful? Bringing together the key parties using restorative practices has a significant chance of healing damaged relationships and realising a positive way forward.

Students with challenging behaviours are an emerging priority for many schools. People of good will are tested, but goodwill isn't enough. What's needed is a well-planned, collaborative approach that embraces all the key stakeholders, and is forward looking and optimistic. It's hard but hopeful work.

For references go to [www.acer.edu.au/professionaleducator/references.html](http://www.acer.edu.au/professionaleducator/references.html)

*Fairness doesn't involve treating every student the same, it involves asking the critical question, 'What does this student need in order to learn?' Some students cannot be managed, and more importantly cannot learn, using the same strategies as others.*

*Lyn Harrison is an educational psychologist and manager of the Education Division of Marist Youth Care, western Sydney.*

All Australian governments and the New Zealand government have supported a substantial initiative – The Le@rning Federation’s online curriculum content project – to develop online curriculum materials for use in school classrooms. What’s the current state of this project’s development and evaluation? **Peter Freebody, Kelly Freebody, David McRae and Sandy Muspratt** have the answers.



**COMMUNICATION** and learning technologies are changing so rapidly that the practices and infrastructures of schooling, teacher education, professional development and resource allocation often seem to be struggling to provide both teachers and students with realistic, effective ways of teaching and learning. (BECTA, 2005) That’s one of the reasons The Le@rning Federation (TLF) began developing a large repository of online curriculum content that can be implemented by teachers in schools. The aim? To enhance student exposure to information and communication technologies (ICTs) and increase their ability to navigate through traditional curriculum content in innovative and interactive ways.

We present here results from initial evaluations concerning the perceived benefits of, and problems with, online curriculum materials, and the current plans for the next steps in this initiative.

TLF is a project that was started by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) in 2001 to provide high quality online curriculum content for Australian and New Zealand schools. The online content developed by TLF has, in the first instance, taken the form of learning objects, which are accessible from digital repositories and can be used stand-alone by teachers or in conjunction with non-digital materials as part of units of work.

In addition to developing, circulating, trialling and implementing these learning objects, TLF has undergone two major evaluations of the effectiveness of learning objects in schools. These evaluations have consisted of two waves of teacher and student surveys and detailed school case studies (see Freebody, 2005 and 2006) involving about 300 schools, 800 teachers and 4,000 students. The surveys asked teachers and students very specific questions on the particular learning objects they had used most recently rather than asking them to make comments about learning objects in general. The teachers’ surveys focused on the effects on student learning that the teachers had observed, as well as the effects on motivation, persistence,



*Teachers were impressed with the opportunities for independent learning that learning objects allowed students. Students working at their own pace and being able to find their own entry level was identified as a real benefit by the teachers.*

independence and collaboration with others. The student surveys focused on students' attitudes towards learning objects – whether they found them fun, helpful, interesting and easy to use.

The results of the surveys showed both teachers and students had generally positive responses to learning objects. (For a full report on the survey and case study data, including the results of a variety of statistical analyses, see Freebody's 2005 and 2006 reports at [www.thelearningfederation.edu.au](http://www.thelearningfederation.edu.au))

The responses of teachers to the different aspects of learning outcomes and motivation showed consistently positive perceptions of the ways learning objects engage students and stimulate their learning.

Students generally reported that learning objects were interesting and fun. The highest-scoring response in students' overall evaluation of learning objects was to the proposition that 'the learning object was easy to work through.' While this may suggest that students found the learning object unchallenging, it's also possible that students were engaged and interested in the learning task, and therefore saw it as easy. The highest scoring response in students' evaluation of specific features was to the proposition that learning objects enabled students to 'work at their own pace.' This extremely positive feature of learning objects identified by surveyed students was confirmed by teachers and principals in case study interviews.

Analyses also revealed that teachers ascribed different value to learning objects for different kinds of learning. The items for the surveys were developed from a pilot study which found that teachers tended to stress three aspects of learning: the learning of factual content material; conceptual understanding; and transfer of learning to new situations. On these clusters of items, there were teachers whose responses were consistent, but there were many other teachers who differentiated strongly, depending on the objects they were using and on their general priorities for students' learning. While most teachers focussed on

### Learning objects

Since 2001, TLF has developed hundreds of learning objects for the compulsory years of school in the following curriculum areas:

- innovation, enterprise and creativity
- languages other than English – specifically Chinese, Japanese and Indonesian across all school year levels
- numeracy and mathematics
- science
- studies in Australia, and
- literacy for students at risk of not achieving National Literacy Benchmarks for Years Five to Nine.

*Regardless of the quality of the learning objects and their relevance to curricular content across Australia and New Zealand, it's the daily integration of the objects into classroom learning that's at the heart of the matter. Success or failure for this major educational investment depends on the creativity and application of teachers and educational leaders.*

conceptual understandings, it's clear from the data that some look more intently for content knowledge and others for transfer of learning, and that the teachers judge the value of learning objects accordingly.

The case studies consisted of interviews with principals and teachers, and classroom observations in twenty-three schools across all Australian states territories and New Zealand. These included: urban, rural and remote schools; primary, secondary and Kinder to Year Twelve schools; schools with high proportions of special needs students; schools with high proportions of Indigenous students; single gender schools; an English immersion school; and a distance education centre. Despite the variety in the sites, differences in the number of teachers using learning objects and differences in the ways teachers used learning objects, there was again a positive and remarkably consistent response to learning objects.

Teachers were impressed with the opportunities for independent learning enabled by learning objects. Students working at their own pace and being able to find their own entry level was identified as a real benefit by the teachers. This was particularly the case for students identified as 'at-risk' or with special needs. Teachers and principals in schools whose infrastructure allowed for student access outside the classroom identified the benefits of students' working with learning objects at home or during breaks. In one school, between eighty and ninety per cent of the students using the library computers at lunchtime, before and after school, were using learning objects. Participants reported that learning objects worked well not only as integrated classroom tasks but as extension learning, mainly because students were highly motivated to use them.

From the case study data, it seems that teachers who had the most positive responses to learning objects tended to be those who had managed to integrate them contextually into units of work. We also observed, however, learning objects being used to supplement traditional pedagogy in ways that did not capitalise on what was seen by teachers and students alike as the particular strength of learning objects, namely, their capacity to offer an interactive and innovative way to explore curriculum knowledge. TLF does not make judgments about participants' practice and recognises that all classrooms have different needs and structures. As a result, no pedagogical advice accompanies the learning objects made available to schools, but many teachers in the case studies warned against learning objects becoming 'time-fillers,' disconnected from the 'real' work taking place in the classroom.

Schools varied in their degree of support for and encouragement of the use of learning objects. We found schools in which teachers were actively encouraged to become involved in the initiative, by a principal or a 'champion for the cause', and other schools in which the trial participant felt, and often was, pretty much alone. There is now a body of research and professional wisdom that points to the importance of active collegial involvement and whole-school support for an educational reform of this kind. (See, for example, Cox et al., 2003) Value-adding appears to be related to the growth of innovative practice that's responsive to the demands of local sites and nurtured within a supportive, professional setting.

Statistical analyses of the survey data show that not all learning objects were ranked as equally useful. Similarly, objects in some curricular areas were rated better than those in others. This is predictable enough given the novelty of the initiative. There was very little to draw on nationally or internationally when development began in the projects in the various curriculum areas. Further, one of the general aims of TLF was to stimulate collaboration between software developers, content area experts and teachers – another first – so it's not surprising that the objects vary in their 'traction' and efficacy for learning.

At the time of writing, TLF is planning a rigorous assessment of the learning outcomes of students that result from the use of learning objects, which is not as simple a matter as it might seem, for a number of reasons. First, as we noted above, teachers currently use these objects in a variety of qualitatively distinct ways. This means that the outcomes of 'using the objects' may vary widely, and that a standard form of assessment across a range of sites may miss the effects of much of the positive work done in some settings. Secondly, teachers and students report almost immediate motivational and engagement gains when the objects are made available. This can be assessed immediately, but what's not clear – and there's not much research guidance from elsewhere – is what the time frame might be for this enhanced engagement to translate into documentable learning gains. Teachers know that doing a trial test too early can mean you fail to identify the learning gains students make, which can be as unproductive as not testing at all.

It's entirely likely that an innovation such as online curriculum learning objects won't work equally well across all curriculum areas, with all groups of students, or across schools with differing levels of technological resources and ongoing support. It's also likely that further research will lead to some counter-intuitive results. For instance, schools with low levels of technological resources may show more immediate and more significant gains from the use of learning objects precisely because they offer teachers and students brand new ways of organising classroom work that are also obviously relevant to curriculum learning.

In an important sense, the next step for this internationally significant initiative is in the hands of teachers. Regardless of the quality of the learning objects and their relevance to curricular content across Australia and New Zealand, it's the daily integration of the objects into classroom learning that's at the heart of the matter. Success or failure for this major educational investment depends on the creativity and application of teachers and educational leaders. There are few guidelines that can be relied upon from other countries since this work is so new. Then again, that's why it holds so much promise for schooling that begins to capitalise on the new technologies that increasingly surround us.

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*Photo courtesy The Learning Federation.*

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# Working together

## The effective involvement of parents in the learning process

Most of us accept that strong links between the home and school lead to better learning, yet few schools are able to form, let alone maintain, effective school-home relationships. **Tim Jenkinson** suggests educators, parents and students could be doing a great deal more together to improve learning experiences in our schools.

**THREE** decades of research in education, health and sociology have suggested that strong home-school partnerships lead to improved learning outcomes, reinforced parental and teacher authority, empowered families and a generally more successful schooling experience for all (Gordon, 1976; Heath, 1983; Pugh and De'Ath, 1989; Cole and Griffin, 1987; Rosenthal and Young Sawyers, 1996) yet research also suggests that few schools are able to form, let alone maintain, effective school-home relationships. (Ashton and Cairney, 2001)

Interestingly, a critical analysis of much of the research on parental involvement in the learning process suggests that the majority of studies suffer from various shortcomings. Most are qualitative in nature and suffer from a paucity of empirical data. Parental involvement is not consistently defined throughout the research nor are objective measures of parental involvement used. (Penuel et al., 2002) As with much educational research, the effects of parental involvement in terms of particular interventions are not isolated because, understandably, it's not ethical to include a control group of students who experience no parental involvement at all!

There's little doubt that new family formations and the changing demands of the workforce are affecting the quality and quantity of time parents are able to spend with their children. Innovative schools are rethinking how they can meet the demands of the 'busy parent' market, offering an extended school day, where non-boarders dine and then complete supervised study before going home. With all its merits, such market-driven solutions don't specifically address the diminishing 'parents curriculum,' which arguably plays an important part in a child's formal schooling. By 'parents curriculum' I mean what students once learned through parent-child conversations about everyday events, values, morals; through encouragement; through the discussion of reading, politics, religion; through the monitoring and co-analysis of television content; through the display of affection; and through the interest in a child's academic and personal growth, which it seems has passed to other groups such as the child's peers and, perhaps most disturbingly, the media.

It could be argued that one constant in 4.5 million years of man's evolution has been the family's keen involvement in the child's learning, yet meaningful parental involvement appears to drop away once children leave primary school.

Why? Students are often left out of home-school partnership discussions yet they play a key role in deciding the effectiveness of such relationships. Around the time students enter the middle years, many healthy home-school relationships established in the early years are deliberately sabotaged, by students, as they strive to form their own identity, keeping their home and school worlds separate. Parents will be reluctant to become actively involved in their child's schooling if the child is dictating under what circumstances Mum or Dad can enter the school gate.

From a teacher's perspective, we may unconsciously invest in those parents who are more teacher-like and who create home environments that are more school-like. When parents appear uninterested, apprehensive or anxious, teachers can decide that an investment of their scarce time may be in vain. These parents may have had a negative school experience – as a student or parent – and need to be made to feel safe, respected and listened to. Almost all parents have a wealth of knowledge about their own children as informal learners – knowledge which can help us develop learning programs which are truly authentic.

If reform is to become more than rhetoric, if learning communities are to become real communities of learners, then we need to be serious about forming 'partnerships' and critically analyse and rethink our school-parent communications. Effective parental involvement in the learning process requires the building of a genuine team approach and, at the very least, a significant shift in the tenor of parent-teacher-student discourse.

Today, a discussion on parental involvement involves emerging information and communication technologies (ICTs). Many schools use ICTs to offer convenient ways for parents to become involved in their child's formal learning at a lower-order level. As a winner of the 2005 Microsoft Innovative Teacher's Award, I was able to meet in Korea with other educators from around the world to present a brief summary of my work over the past three years engaging students with other teachers, parents, peers and experts using blogging, web forums, class web pages and other web-based collaborative learning tools to move opportunities for formal learning beyond the school gate. Getting parents to successfully navigate their way through these various programs, developing in them an awareness of teaching and learning for understanding, and an ability to devise meaningful and constructive assessment takes many hours and a thick skin. Unfortunately, my success rate – measured by numbers of parents using these tools consistently and meaningfully – has been extremely low!

Somekh, Mavers and Lewin (2001) evaluated how ICTs are used in schools throughout England to enhance home-school links and found that prospective parents and students use a school's web page, image galleries, and other facilities more than existing parents and students. A considerable discrepancy appears to exist between the number of parents and students who claim to use a school's online facilities and the number of remote users recorded on the network log. Certainly, schools need to address such context-specific issues if they are to engage parents more effectively in the learning process, but a good first step is to value active parental input. To do that we need to debunk the myths and mysteries that surround the school day, the curricula and our learning programs, making our formal learning experiences more transparent and accessible. Parents too, need to be more proactive in seeking involvement at a variety of levels throughout their child's learning journey.

For references go to [www.acer.edu.au/professionaleducator/references.html](http://www.acer.edu.au/professionaleducator/references.html)

## WHAT IS EFFECTIVE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT?

*'Effective parental involvement' is the active input of parents to shape and enrich the formal learning experiences of their children – which is much more than fundraising, attending working bees or volunteering for the canteen roster. Effective parental involvement requires educators and parents to acknowledge that a child operates within a complex system of interactions and influences, in which numerous elements – child temperament, peers, parental dispositions and environmental context – all have a bi-directional influence on the learning process.*

*Tim Jenkinson is a teacher and Head of Boys' Boarding at Ballarat and Clarendon College, Victoria. He taught at Scotch Oakburn College, Tasmania, when this article was contributed.*

*Photo, 'Back to School night' at Scotch Oakburn College, courtesy of Tim Jenkinson and Scotch Oakburn College.*

Can the policies and actions of an education authority really play a part in improving student achievement and raising standards in schools? In a word, says **Kelvin Canavan**, yes.



# Improving student achievement

**WHAT** role can an education authority play in improving student achievement and raising standards in schools? It's a question that's been the focus of plenty of recent research. Kenneth Leithwood and his colleagues (2004) studied England's successful National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in terms of the distribution of strategic leadership functions at national, regional and local levels and identified factors contributing to large-scale reform.

Michael Fullan and his colleagues (2004) reported on research in North America and England that examined the contribution of education authorities to improvement in student achievement, particularly in literacy and mathematics. That study identified ten crucial components of effective leadership and change. Mark Turkington (2004), meanwhile, examined the Catholic Education Office (CEO), Sydney, to measure the impact of a learning organisation on standards in literacy, numeracy and religious education in CEO schools. He concluded that the eight characteristics of a learning organisation were present and that the CEO did have a positive impact on standards.

Students benefit from research that identifies the relevant and contributing characteristics in those school systems reporting improved student achievement, while educational administrators under pressure from governments to provide quantitative data on student achievement also benefit from such research.

## IMPROVED STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

In Sydney Catholic primary schools, achievement in the New South Wales Basic Skills Test in literacy among annual cohorts of approximately 5,000 Year Three

students increased by fifteen percentage points in seven years. In the same period, the Year Five literacy increase was six percentage points. In 2000, the CEO set some challenging system-wide student annual achievement targets, and schools were also encouraged to set local targets.

Table 1 shows that the cohort of Year Three students reached the 2005 literacy target in 2003 and exceeded this score in the 2004 Basic Skills Test. The Year Five cohort reached the 2005 target in 2002. In numeracy, the increase in the same period for Year Three students was eleven percentage points. The Year Five increase was six points. The Year Five numeracy target for 2005 was reached in 2004.

In 2004, students from the twenty-eight comprehensive colleges that present students for the Higher School Certificate (HSC) in the Sydney Catholic school system were studying a total of 831 HSC courses. Table 2 shows the percentage of all courses across all colleges whose means were above the state mean. There has been a steady increase in achievement since 1997 and the 2005 target of fifty-eight per cent was exceeded by the 2004 cohort of approximately 3,500 HSC students.

### THE SYDNEY CATHOLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

The CEO, Sydney is the approved authority for a system of 148 non-government schools in NSW (Education Act (1990) part 7:39-40) and has responsibility for monitoring compliance of these schools with the Act. Approximately 63,000 students are enrolled in these schools. Its roles and functions are similar to those of a local education authority in England. The schools are accountable to the CEO, since they don't have governors, and teachers are appointed by principals, with salaries paid by the CEO.

*Students benefit from research that identifies the relevant and contributing characteristics in those school systems reporting improved student achievement, while educational administrators under pressure from governments to provide quantitative data on student achievement also benefit from such research.*

Table 1

Trend Data: NSW Basic Skills Tests 1998-2004 – Sydney Catholic Parish Primary Schools

LITERACY	Actual							Targets		
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Year 3: Bands 3, 4, 5	74%	82%	83%	83%	85%	87%	89%	87%	88%	89%
Year 5: Bands 4, 5, 6	84%	86%	86%	88%	93%	92%	90%	93%	93%	93%
<b>NUMERACY</b>										
Year 3: Bands 3, 4, 5	73%	79%	78%	84%	85%	84%	84%	86%	86%	87%
Year 5: Bands 4, 5, 6	84%	84%	83%	88%	87%	88%	90%	89%	90%	91%
Year 3: 2004 n = 5090 students in 115 schools    Year 5: 2004 n = 4530 students in 115 schools										

Band range: Year 3: 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) Year 5: 1 (lowest) to 6 (highest). The 2005 targets were established in 2000 and confirmed in late 2003. The 2006 and 2007 targets were established in July 2005 in consultation with primary school principals.

Table 2

Trend Data: HSC 1997-2004 – Sydney Catholic Regional Colleges

Percentage of all courses in all colleges above state mean

Year	Actual							Targets			
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	48%	52%	52%	52%	52%	56%	57%	60%	58%	59%	60%

The 2005 targets were established early in 2003 and confirmed in 2004. The targets for 2006 and 2007 were established in July 2005 in consultation with secondary school principals.

## IMPROVING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Characteristics in an education authority that contribute to improved student achievement:

- a shared vision, mission and strategic direction across the school system
- a framework of strategic planning and goal setting, supported by a culture of ongoing review and development
- an ownership by the schools of the authority's strategic direction and operation plan
- a distribution of leadership functions within schools and across the authority
- school and school system leaders engaged in ongoing capacity building that assists the development of all staff and contributes to a leadership succession strategy
- senior staff in the education authority who model high quality leadership and management for school colleagues
- an articulation and monitoring of student performance standards within a strategic framework of school improvement
- a sustained organisational commitment to professional development at all levels within the school system
- a climate that encourages dialogue, openness and trust, with shared decision-making and the empowerment of teams and individuals
- A commitment to improving the authority's own effectiveness and a willingness to regularly review and evaluate its services to schools.

It's a system that's been the subject of four major reviews over the past twenty years, each review addressing the outcomes of the previous review. Collectively, they provide valuable longitudinal data. Over more recent years student achievement in statewide examinations has been more closely monitored.

In 2004 there was evidence that:

- the perceptions of principals of the impact of the CEO, Sydney on standards in literacy, numeracy and religious education were very positive
- a culture of strategic planning and ongoing review – with a strongly shared sense of mission and purpose – characterised the system of schools
- the trend data in the Basic Skills Tests from 1998 to 2004 and the HSC from 1997 to 2004 were positive, and some 2005 targets had already been achieved.

The relationships among these three observations are complex, a matter explored in the Turkington (2004) study. What I'd like to do here is identify some organisational characteristics that are present in an education authority where student improvement in statewide tests has been sustained over a period of seven years.

## IMPACT OF THE CEO ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

In my own 1986 doctoral study of the CEO, principals were ambivalent as to the influence of the CEO on teaching and learning. Only fifty-seven per cent agreed with the proposition that 'classroom instruction is influenced by the CEO.' (Canavan, 1986: 109) The study reported that 'the ambivalence about the influence of the CEO on classroom instruction expressed by primary and secondary principals might be explained by the lack of connection between CEO, school and classroom. A lack of connection is symptomatic of a loosely-coupled system.' (270-271)

In Turkington's doctoral study of the same school system in 2004, the perceptions of principals of the influence of the CEO appear to have changed considerably since 1986. Principals were no longer ambivalent about the impact of the CEO on standards in literacy, numeracy and religious education. This study found that ninety-three per cent of principals agreed with the proposition that 'classroom instruction in literacy has been enhanced by CEO initiatives' and sixty-four per cent agreed that 'classroom instruction in numeracy/mathematics has been enhanced by CEO initiatives.' Furthermore, seventy-one per cent agreed that the CEO contributes to raising standards in religious education. (Turkington, 2004: 149)

The data from these two doctoral studies are complemented by research data gathered as part of the external reviews of the Sydney system in 1995 and 2004.

## EXTERNAL REVIEWS

In the 1995 External Review of the CEO, sixty-seven per cent of principals agreed with the proposition that 'classroom instruction is influenced by CEO initiatives.' The report challenged the CEO to become a 'learning organisation' with 'a capacity to create the future by harnessing the energy, expertise and enthusiasm of people who share a common vision of what is to be achieved.' (*Looking Back, Looking Forward*, 1995: 95) This challenge was taken up, and reported on by Turkington. (2004: 183)

In 2004, the CEO and its system of schools were again evaluated by an external panel, chaired by Ian Gamble, one of Her Majesty's Chief Inspectors of Education in Scotland, with Oona Stannard, Executive Director of the Catholic Education Service for England and Wales, Dr Anne Benjamin, Executive Director of Schools for the Diocese of Parramatta and Professor Terry Burke from the University of Wollongong as panel members. In their report, the panel wrote: 'The CEO, Sydney has developed very high levels of accountability and staff commitment, and a strongly shared sense of mission and purpose at all levels. These key characteristics are particularly

well demonstrated in the establishment of an overall framework for self-evaluation, planning, audit and review across all schools and the CEO. Taken together, these arrangements and substantial effective leadership have done much to establish the CEO as a learning organisation.' (*Report from the External Review Panel, 2004: 1*)

The panel's report identified 'improved student performance in examinations' like Basic Skills Tests, the School Certificate and HSC (48) and 'strong articulation and embedding of the overall Vision and Mission which is understood and implemented by all staff.' (47) It also recognised 'highly developed strategic management and organisation systems...; innovative and systematic development of an effective framework of school development, planning, target setting, audit and review...; (and) widespread recognition within schools of the value of the well-established arrangements for promoting leadership and school development.' (47) The report also identified 'extensive, well regarded and flexible professional development opportunities for staff across the system...; Personnel Performance Planning and Review procedures... (implemented) following due consultative processes...; very good industrial relations and pastoral care of staff...; (and) considerable loyalty and trust amongst staff.' (48-49)

A further review, in 2004 of the CEO, by SAI Global – formerly Standards Australia, identified:

- 'a clear statement of mission, key strategic priorities, vision and targets that is operationalised and aligned at all levels' (3)
- 'the cascading effect of the CEO's strategic priorities and targets at the regional office and school level' (3)
- that clear organisational values underpinning the purpose of the CEO are communicated to and held by staff at all levels (3)
- passionate support by staff of the learning needs and wellbeing of students (4)
- that the leadership framework is clearly articulated and extensively supported by documentation at all levels (4)
- that CEO values are embedded in the organisation, and understood and 'lived' by staff (5)
- a consistently and clearly communicated organisational purpose (5)
- that 'the CEO is active in academic research and review and encourages staff to be learners and promote a learning organisation.' (5)

Subsequently, the CEO, Sydney received the Leadership Award for 2004 from SAI Global.

There is considerable overlap of the characteristics found in the Sydney Catholic school system in 2004 with those identified by Fullan and Leithwood's research. One additional variable, however, is that of leadership continuity throughout the life of a longterm strategic plan. The CEO's senior leadership stability over the past twenty years has contributed to the development of a strategic mindset, and a shared sense of mission and purpose across the system of schools. Leadership stability is also a characteristic of school level leadership, with forty-six per cent of Sydney Catholic school principals having at least ten years' experience as principal.

The research and external reports on the CEO reported here suggest that education authorities exhibiting certain characteristics are well placed to contribute to the raising of standards in schools. Some contributing characteristics are proposed in the box at left, although you'd expect to find those characteristics to be present in highly performing schools and colleges as well. Research into the desirable characteristic of educational authorities anxious to improve student achievement needs to continue. This snapshot of the Sydney Catholic school system is a contribution to that research.

*There is considerable overlap of the characteristics found in the Sydney Catholic school system in 2004 with those identified by Fullan and Leithwood's research. One additional variable, however, is that of leadership continuity throughout the life of a longterm strategic plan.*

*Br Kelvin Canavan is the Executive Director of Schools at the Catholic Education Office, Sydney.*

*Pictured, Br Kelvin Canavan discussing student achievement targets with Vicki Lavorato, Principal of Domremy College, Five Dock and Year Twelve students Vanessa Loje, right, and Sally-Ann Rizk. Photo by Kitty Beale, courtesy Catholic Education Office, Sydney.*



Respect, recognition, rapport – they're essential in the classroom, but you don't have to call them the three R's, says **Paul Hamilton**, because they boil down to one word: relationship.

**REMEMBER** the significant teachers in your life who made a difference, the ones you had a special connection with, the ones you actually listened to and learned from? My guess is that the ones that sprang into your mind are the ones who established a rapport with you.

The rapport between teacher and student is something that should never be underestimated. Sure, the world of teaching and learning is changing, faster in some places and slower in others, but behaviour management remains one of the major challenges for all educators, which is why building a positive relationship with our students remains vitally important. The following checklist offers some simple steps to help you develop a positive relationship with the students in your classroom. These probably affirm what you're already doing in the classroom.

#### **INITIATE SOCIAL INTERACTION**

Ask yourself, at the end of a school year, how many students you've not spoken to one-on-one or in a small group in a social setting? Before school, during recess and after school are all great opportunities to have a quiet chat to students to demonstrate that you are interested in them as human beings and that what they have to share is important.

#### **PUBLIC PRAISE**

Publicly acknowledge the good things students do in and out of your classroom. Make a big deal about the little things at a class assembly or at the start or end of each day. Allow students time to publicly praise each other for the great things that occur in and out of the classroom.

## SHARE YOUR LIFE

Know your kids, but just as importantly let your kids get to know you. Let them realise that you're a real person. You don't sleep under the desk; you have hopes, dreams and faults. Acknowledge the gifts you have and the mistakes you make. Tell stories that have life messages.

## RELATE TO YOUR STUDENTS IN A DIFFERENT SETTING

Coaching or tutoring your students away from the classroom is also a great way of building positive relationships. It's a time when classroom rules are forgotten, when the roles and skills of you and your students might be a bit different, and there's a chance for a more relaxed form of interaction. Tutoring or coaching can also be a great opportunity to teach life lessons that don't fit easily into the curriculum.

## EARN RESPECT, DON'T EXPECT IT

As a first-year-out graduate I remember finding out, to my dismay, that my students didn't initially show me any respect. It took some time to realise that little things – like using the children's name on regular basis, instead of saying 'hey, you' – had a huge influence on my behaviour management and the respect I was hoping for. How can we expect our students to use our name and demonstrate good manners if we're not modelling it ourselves with our students? Respect is a two-way street.

## BODY LANGUAGE

Sometimes a smile or a thumbs up can be just as effective a tool for praise as public words of acknowledgement. Those special, memorable moments can break down barriers that may have been built in previous years.

## DISCIPLINE IS NOT THE ENEMY OF ENTHUSIASM

Setting and following classroom rules that have been created by the entire class is pivotal in building relationships within the classroom. A structured classroom that promotes and gives an opportunity for students to develop self-discipline can still allow enthusiastic contributions from its members and create an approachable teacher that students respect rather than fear.

## LAUGH WITH YOUR STUDENTS

Introduce a joke of the week. Tell humorous stories. A classroom without laughter is a classroom without life. Camps can be a terrific opportunity to enjoy one another's company through drama, skits and jokes at an evening concert or performance.

## EVALUATING OUR EFFORTS

How do you know you've been successful in building positive relationships with your students? For me, the results don't become truly evident until the following year. When we come across our students in the years to follow, what do they do? Do they smile? Do they say hello? Do they have a chat with you? It doesn't have to take an entire year to develop these relationships with our students. The results can be far more immediate and often are. But becoming an approachable teacher is surely what we are all striving for. Sometimes we get so caught up in curriculum and the daily rituals of teaching that we forget what the students want most of all – a teacher that they can approach, talk to and learn from. I'm always surprised at the students that come back and visit me the following year – they're often the ones I thought I hadn't reached.

*How can we expect our students to use our name and demonstrate good manners if we're not modelling it ourselves with our students? Respect is a two-way street.*

*Paul Hamilton is Head of House and Year Four teacher at Immanuel College on Queensland's Sunshine Coast. Email [hamiltonp@immanuel.qld.edu.au](mailto:hamiltonp@immanuel.qld.edu.au)*



In the southern hemisphere, April is the strangest month, breeding a school funding debate out of the dead land, mixing memory and frustration, stirring dull policies with autumn platitudes. **Steve Holden** reports, with apologies to TS Eliot.

*Chris Bonnor's NSW Secondary Principals' Council's policy paper, Sustaining Quality Schools, is at [www.nswspc.org.au/documents](http://www.nswspc.org.au/documents)*

# National perspective

**THE** Commonwealth Minister for Education, Science and Training, Julie Bishop, last month announced that the Department of Education, Science and Training will review the school funding system, which funds non-government schools according to the estimated socio-economic status (SES) of parents in terms of household income, occupation and parental education level, as determined by postcode. The SES funding model has been the subject of controversy since it was wheeled out by David Kemp in 2001, not least because sixty-seven independent schools were quarantined from SES-determined funding cuts as the result of the Commonwealth government's 'no losers' guarantee when the model was first implemented.

The policy of the Labor opposition was to cut that funding to schools, a policy described by the previous Commonwealth Minister for Education, Brendan Nelson, as Labor's school 'hit list.' Labor is expected to replace that with a needs-based policy that will guarantee funding for all non-government schools. Why? As Kim Beazley put it, on ABC Radio last month, 'I think all kids are precious and they're all entitled to see some degree of investment from the taxpayers in their future. It's an investment for them, our precious children.' The policy change was welcomed by Labor's Craig Emerson, who floated his alternative funding policy in the *Australian* in March: 'Funding distinctions between government and private schools must be abandoned,' he wrote. 'Instead, funding should be based on the needs of the child.' Bishop also wants to see all schools funded under one system, over time, but insisted the government would retain the SES model. 'Obviously we are looking for a formula that is fair and equitable across the non-government school sector,' she said in April.

Still on funding, Sydneysiders got excited about education last month, momentarily, when the *Sydney Morning Herald* ran for two days in a row with a New South Wales Secondary Principals' Council and NSW Primary Principals' Association discussion paper about cooperation between government and non-government schools. The paper, *Sustaining Quality Schools*, by Chris Bonnor, president of the NSW Secondary Principals' Council, suggests "associating" rather than "integrating" those privately-run schools which wish to receive public funding' with 'strict conditions that ensure that the money we spend on schools narrows rather than widens the divides between our communities.' The *SMH* reported that the plan met with opposition from some independent schools and the NSW Teachers Federation, but got the thumbs-up from low-fee Catholic and independent Christian schools. 'Our suggestion is that we could explore associating some government-funded private schools with public education,' Bonnor told the *SMH*. 'Sharing a common library, assembly hall and playing fields could be one form of association.' The 'association' model shares many similarities with Emerson's school funding model, which itself shares many similarities with a model proposed by the University of Melbourne's Professor Jack Keating in his inaugural professorial lecture, presented back in December 2003. According to Keating, 'funding should be based on the needs of the child.... Schools with large numbers of children from disadvantaged backgrounds would receive more government funding than schools with children from more privileged backgrounds.... The allocation of resources upon the basis of programs that in turn are based upon students' learning needs can invite the participation of non-government schools.'

# In brief

## TONY AWARD

Education consultant, Tony MacKay, was named the 2006 College Medallist by the Australian College of Educators in March. He received the award, as the citation put it, 'for his remarkable impact on educators in Australia, the United Kingdom and internationally, through his work in professional development, strategic thinking and facilitation for government bodies, education agencies, think tanks, school boards, leadership teams and the profession.'

## BOOST FOR INDIGENOUS ED

Dr Chris Sarra was named the inaugural head of a new Indigenous Education Leadership Institute, which opened in Cherbourg in March. The result of a partnership between Queensland's Department of Education and the Arts and Queensland University of Technology, the Institute will aim to bridge the gap between the educational performance of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students by 'scaling up,' as they say, approaches used at Queensland's Cherbourg State School. According to Queensland's Minister for Education, Rod Welford, speaking at the opening of the Institute, 'The idea is to package what has been learnt at Cherbourg State School (where Sarra was principal) and distribute this to other schools.'

## ACE ON THE ROAD

ACE on the Road hits the road in July when Professor Brian Caldwell presents a national tour of workshops on 'Re-imagining Educational Leadership,' presented by the Australian College of Educators in association with iNet-Australia. Caldwell's ACE on the Road tour coincides with publication of *Re-imagining Educational Leadership*, published by ACER Press. Catch the workshops, starting on 5 July in Hobart, then Launceston, Melbourne, Ballarat, Albury-Wodonga, Cairns, Brisbane, Rockhampton, Sydney, Dubbo, Armidale, Canberra, Mt Gambier, Adelaide, Perth, Bunbury, Darwin, finishing on 24 August in Alice Springs. Details at [www.austcolled.com.au](http://www.austcolled.com.au)

## MORE GROWTH IN APPRENTICESHIPS

If there's a skill shortage in the traditional trades, it's not for want of uptake in commencements or completions of apprenticeships, according to the latest national statistics from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER). NCVER figures show that the number of people commencing an apprenticeship or traineeship has grown for six successive quarters on a seasonally adjusted basis in the twelve months to September 2005 – up five per cent over the previous year to 267,600. The big movers were commencements for older people – that's people aged forty-five and over, by the way – which rose by thirteen per cent, and commencements in 'traditional apprenticeships,' up fourteen per cent over the previous year. Commencing apprentices and trainees, however, remain predominantly young – that's nineteen years or under, by the way – and male. The overall number of apprentices and trainees in training remains stable at 397,800, compared to 400,900 a year ago, but completions over the twelve months to September reached 139,600, up five per cent on the previous year.

## In your state

### VICTORIA

A Victorian state school principal threatened legal action under anti-discrimination laws last month if the Department of Education and Training (DE&T) were to refuse his request to work part-time. The DE&T allows teachers to work part-time, but not principals, according to the principal, who did not want to be named. 'The department's rhetoric on part-time work doesn't match the reality,' he told the *Age*. 'What it's really afraid of is that a school under that form of shared leadership won't be as effective, but there's no evidence of that.' A spokesperson told the *Age* that at least fifteen DE&T principals and assistant principals worked part-time.

### SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The woes continue at Elizabeth Vale School in Adelaide's northern suburbs, with the school's Governing Council calling for the removal of acting principal, Kathy Cotter. The move follows strikes by students, and protests by parents and teachers after former principal, Lisa-Jane O'Conner, was not re-appointed.

### TASMANIA

David Bartlett is Australia's newest Minister for Education, replacing Paula Wriedt in Tasmania after an election that returned another Labor government. Bartlett's first act as Minister was to institute a policy to 'stamp out bullying' in the Education Department.

*Make sure In Brief really covers what's happening 'on the ground' in your region, email editor. [profeducator@acer.edu.au](mailto:profeducator@acer.edu.au) with details.*



Steve Holden  
interviews the new  
Commonwealth  
Minister for Education,  
Science and Training,  
Julie Bishop.

*SH* You've been a member of Murdoch University Senate and of the board of the Anglican Schools Commission, and were a member of the Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs, roles most would assume have prepared you for the role of Minister for Education, but are there areas of the portfolio that you're finding require upskilling?

*JB* Education is an issue of critical importance for everyone and all Australians should maintain a lifelong commitment to education because of the changeable nature of the modern workforce – we all need to continually upgrade and improve our skills. My previous career as a lawyer involved continual learning, due to the necessity of keeping up to date with changes in legislation and law. The time I spent as a member of the Murdoch University Senate and on the board of the Anglican Schools Commission certainly deepened my existing interest in education policy and the impact education has on everyone in this country. A significant aspect of my work as a parliamentarian involves issues related to education and I made reference to the importance of education in my maiden speech to the Commonwealth Parliament in 1998. During my time as Minister for Ageing, I launched online services for the University of the Third Age, which shows that learning really is a lifelong activity.

*SH* The aim of the Commonwealth government's International Education Forum is 'to challenge conventional thinking about education and stimulate debate on the strategic direction of education across the globe over the next ten to twenty years.' How would you like to see education change? Are there elements of Australian schooling you'd like to keep, and elements you'd like to get rid of?

*JB* I'd like to see education change to more strongly embrace the international context. It would be good to see more Australian students studying overseas and more interaction between our education sector and those of other countries. In addition, we need to consider the skills and qualifications that people will need in coming decades as the international workforce becomes more globalised. With regard to schooling, there is a need to strive for the highest possible standards in education for all Australians, particularly young people.

*SH* There's been a lot of activity over the last decade to promote the professionalism of teaching, particularly in terms of professional standards for teachers: where do you stand on the idea of professional standards?

*JB* The quality of teaching is the single most important factor in a student's education, which makes the development of professional standards a vital aspect of ongoing efforts to improve educational standards. The Commonwealth government strongly supports the development of professional standards for teachers and school leaders. The Commonwealth government has provided \$30 million over five years to June 2009 to Teaching Australia, formerly the National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership, to raise the status, quality and professionalism of teachers and school leaders throughout Australia. As the national body for the teaching profession, one of the key ways Teaching Australia will raise the professionalism of teaching is by developing professional standards for teachers and school leaders. The standards will address the advanced career dimensions of 'accomplished teaching' and 'leadership' that are outlined in the MCEETYA National Framework for Professional Standards for Teaching.

*SH* What do you hope will be the outcome of the House Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training's 'Inquiry into Teacher Education'?

*JB* I expect the inquiry will identify a range of important issues, particularly with regard to how teacher education can be improved. The report will look at issues such as resourcing and the delivery of teacher training courses in Australia's public and private universities. Importantly, it will also look at the preparedness of graduates to meet the current and future demands of teaching in Australia's schools. We need to ensure our graduates are adequately prepared for teaching to enable them to make a rapid and successful transition from training to work.

*SH* Your predecessor, Brendan Nelson, initiated plenty of inquiries into education, literacy and teacher education, and some in the sector say teachers are all inquired out: do you have any further inquiries in mind?

*JB* There are a number of areas that require further analysis and evaluation, such as early childhood education, excessive red tape and duplication of regulation, and Indigenous education outcomes.

*SH* Is there a particular teacher who had a positive impact on you when you were a student?

*JB* As a final year student at St Peter's Girls' School in Adelaide, Miss Frost, my Senior English Teacher, made an impact. She was an austere woman, yet able to instil in her students a love of literature, particularly the English classics – the Bronte sisters, Austen, Hardy and Dickens. Dame Roma Mitchell was also influential. She was the first female QC, first female Supreme Court Judge and a great inspiration to budding female lawyers struggling to find their feet in a male dominated profession. She was also the first female University Chancellor and first female state governor.

*SH* What's the greatest challenge facing the Australian educational sector?

*JB* The greatest challenge is to ensure there is an adequate supply of people with the appropriate skills to underpin economic growth and development into the future. This starts with early childhood development, improving literacy standards, through to technical and higher education, and ongoing workplace training and development.

*SH* What's the one important thing that educators probably don't know about Julie Bishop that they ought to know?

*JB* My background in the legal profession means I bring strong analytical skills to the portfolio and I will only be swayed by valid arguments that will ultimately deliver improved outcomes for students.

*As a final year student at St Peter's Girls' School in Adelaide, Miss Frost, my Senior English Teacher, made an impact. She was an austere woman, yet able to instil in her students a love of literature.*

What's the current picture on the way educators are using classroom video data to improve teaching and learning? **Hilary Hollingsworth** has some answers.



**VIDEO** technology has been around for several decades, but collecting and using classroom video data for supporting and improving teaching and learning is still in its infancy. While a variety of research and professional development (PD) projects have made use of video data, relatively little systematic research has been done. (Brophy, 2004).

So what's the current picture? To answer that, let me describe some Australian research and PD projects that use classroom video data, and explain some of the positive outcomes, as well as some of the challenges, of these projects.

### **CLASSROOM VIDEO DATA**

There've been some very large international video surveys, like the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 1999 Video Study, that are essentially 'snapshots' of more than 1,000 lessons. (See Hiebert et al., 2003) There've also been some longitudinal video studies that capture developments in teaching and learning over time, such as Lampert and Ball's mathematics teaching study. (Lampert and Ball, 1998) Plenty of national and state education organisations, university faculties, independent organisations and schools have also been using video data in the PD context.



*Video preserves classroom activity so that it can be 'slowed down' to enable detailed examinations of teaching and learning from multiple perspectives, reveal alternatives through comparative analysis, and stimulate discussions about choices related to teaching and learning.*

Whether research or PD, a variety of methodologies have been used to collect, store, retrieve, code, navigate and analyse classroom video data. New technologies from CD-ROM, DVD and web streaming to dedicated software platforms like vPrism and Studicode and tools like LessonLab's Visibility platform mean research choices when it comes to those methodologies are constantly expanding.

Plenty has been written about the virtues of video data (see for example, Brophy, 2004; Clarke and Hollingsworth, 2000; Stigler and Hiebert, 1999), which focus on the capacity of video to preserve classroom activity so that it can be 'slowed down' to enable detailed examinations of teaching and learning from multiple perspectives, reveal alternatives through comparative analysis, and stimulate discussions about choices related to teaching and learning.

### **USING VIDEO DATA**

How is classroom video data being used to support and improve teaching and learning in Australia? Let's look at several projects.

Classroom video data was an integral component of a research study at Edith Cowan University (ECU), funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training under the Grants for National Literacy and

*ECU developed and trialled a pre-service education unit, 'Becoming a Teacher,' that made use of authentic classroom video data... to make sure that teachers entering the profession came to understand the importance of developing sound professional practices – such as observation, analysis and reflection – and to gain experience with these practices.*

Numeracy Strategies and Projects Program, called 'In Teachers' Hands: Effective literacy teaching practices in the early years of schooling.' With the aim of 'identifying teaching practices that lead to improved literacy outcomes for children in the early years of schooling' (Louden et al., 2005: iv), the study design included the collection, observation and analysis of video of literacy teaching sessions in classrooms where students' literacy performance had been assessed the previous year as 'more than expected,' 'as expected,' or 'less than expected.' Classroom video data were analysed using a Classroom Literacy Observation Schedule for the presence or absence of thirty-three literacy teaching practices considered important to effective literacy teaching. These teaching practices were grouped into six dimensions: participation, knowledge, orchestration, support, differentiation and respect.

Quantitative analysis included a simple descriptive analysis by frequency to provide a picture of the teaching practices demonstrated by each teacher. Researchers used vPrism to do this since the software package enables detailed, time-linked coding of video. Further qualitative analysis provided 'a textured and nuanced account of the application of each of the thirty-three literacy teaching practices' by the teachers videotaped. (Louden et al., 2005: v) ECU is now building directly on the methodology developed in the 'In Teachers' Hands' study in an evidence-based enquiry into the characteristics of effective teaching in Western Australian government schools called 'The Student Growth Study,' which makes use of video data to focus on literacy in pre-school and Year One, and mathematics in Year Eight.

A pilot professional learning program called 'Engaging in Excellence in Mathematics Teaching,' designed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) and the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers (AAMT), uses selected examples of public release classroom video data from the TIMSS 1999 Video Study, which participants interpret in terms of the AAMT Standards. Participants: conduct a self-evaluation against the AAMT Standards for Excellence in Teaching Mathematics; design and undertake a customised, needs-based, workplace professional learning program; and present the outcomes of their program to fellow participants.

The mathematics component of the TIMSS 1999 Video Study examined teaching practices in seven countries through in-depth analysis of videotapes of 638 eighth-grade mathematics lessons. Public release video data from the study is available on a set of CD-ROMs using LessonLab's Visibility technology platform. Each CD contains video and related materials including time-linked transcripts in both English and the native language, time-linked indexes enabling efficient navigation around different segments in the lessons, graphs displaying lesson plans, time-linked images of textbook and worksheet pages, and time-linked commentaries on the lessons. Teachers participating in the 'Engaging in Excellence' pilot program had the opportunity to use LessonLab's cutting edge technology to observe and analyse teaching practices and learning environments from around the world, an experience that stimulated discussion about alternative practices and provoked teachers to reflect on their own practice.

In 2003 and 2004, faculty in the School of Education at ECU developed and trialled a pre-service education unit, 'Becoming a Teacher,' that made use of authentic classroom video data to create links between traditional face-to-face lecturing and tutorials, practicum experience and online learning opportunities. The unit was designed for first-year students in the first semester of their teacher education course. The goal was to make sure that teachers entering the profession came to understand the importance of developing sound professional practices – such as observation, analysis and reflection – and to gain experience with these practices.

The 'Becoming a Teacher' unit used LessonLab's Visibility technology platform, which enabled the design of a tailored, interactive course that could be directly authored by faculty members. Student teachers viewed classroom videos and completed tasks and forums associated with their observations, analyses and reflections. These activities were linked to the theoretical content of the lectures and tutorials student teachers attended, and to their school practicum experiences. That meant that student teachers had a framework and multiple examples to examine and compare through the use of the video data, rather than having to rely merely on one example of practice.

Surveyed student teachers nominated 'Becoming a Teacher' as the most satisfying unit in their first year education program. Tutors reported an improvement in the quality and depth of understanding demonstrated by student teachers involved in observation and analysis of the classroom video data.

The success of this first unit led to the development of additional units using the Visibility platform. Professional learning workshops were conducted for academic staff in the School of Education to assist them to reconceptualise their pedagogy to incorporate classroom video data into their education units. Four units made use of classroom video data in the Visibility platform in 2005, with several more developed for this year.

Video data is also being used with great success in school-based research. Staff at Ballarat and Clarendon College, Victoria, are using a local adaptation of the Japanese 'Lesson study' model of teacher learning. Lesson study, an ongoing professional learning experience, involves small groups of teachers meeting regularly to engage in a collaborative process of lesson planning, implementation, evaluation and refinement. Participants develop hypotheses, essentially about anticipated student responses, then test those hypotheses and refine the lesson design on the basis of those tests. Lesson study groups typically meet once or twice a week for several hours with a focus on only a few lessons over the year – the aim is to perfect a lesson. Once the lessons are judged by participants to be ready – usually after several months or even years – they are shared with other teachers and other schools, complete with development and test information, and expected student responses to questions and problems. Skills gained through the detailed process of observation and analysis in lesson study transfer to teachers' work on other lessons. As Hiebert and Stigler (2000) put it, 'lesson study reverses the relationship prevalent in the US (and Australia) between improving teaching and improving teachers. Working on improving teaching yields teacher development, rather than vice versa.'

Ballarat and Clarendon College formed two lesson study groups in 2004, with a third formed in 2005, using video data. Each of the collaborative group meetings is videotaped, so that teachers can reflect on the group discussions, and also to provide a record of the group's progress for evaluative and training purposes. Each of the group's research lessons is also videotaped, so that teachers can observe and analyse them, and refer to specific examples in them for discussion in the lesson study meetings. Participants have reported that the process has had a significant positive impact on their teaching of literacy and numeracy. In particular, they consider that the opportunities to reflect on their own and others' practice, become aware of new alternatives, engage in serious questions and discussions about content and pedagogy, and develop observational and analytical skills, have led to improvements in their teaching.

As part of the whole-school strategic approach to PD, Ballarat and Clarendon College staff also participate in a performance management program utilising

## ASK YOURSELF

- *How do you currently collect and analyse teaching and learning in your educational institution?*
- *How do you identify and share good teaching practices in your educational institution?*
- *What would the use of video data for research and PD add to the teaching and learning program in your educational institution?*
- *What would it take to get research and PD going, using video data, in your educational institution?*
- *Would the collection and use of video data on teaching and learning fit usefully with the PD or performance management programs in your educational institution?*

video data of their own classroom teaching. Each member of the academic staff is videotaped teaching a lesson at different stages in the year. The video is viewed by the teacher and a colleague who is a designated performance manager. The video is then used as a point of specific reference to discuss teacher performance, and to provide feedback focused on improvement. The use of each teacher's classroom video data in this way provides real evidence of teaching performance and of improvement in teaching performance over time. It also contextualises performance management as part of the ongoing learning process of teachers within the learning community of the school.

### PROMISING OUTCOMES, CHALLENGES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

There have been some promising initial outcomes regarding the use of video data, reported through formative evaluations. In the context of research, classroom video data are highly valued because they enable rich and detailed studies of the complex activities of teaching and learning, and because they can be reused, allowing for examination from different perspectives for different purposes. The report of the 'Negotiation of Meaning Project' conducted through the University of Melbourne and edited by Clarke (2001) demonstrates the value of such multi-perspective analysis of research video data.

Classroom video data also offer a plethora of opportunities for teacher professional learning. Video data provide new avenues for teachers, schools, universities, professional developers and professional organisations to engage in rigorous and serious observation, and analysis, of classroom activity to support and improve teaching and learning.

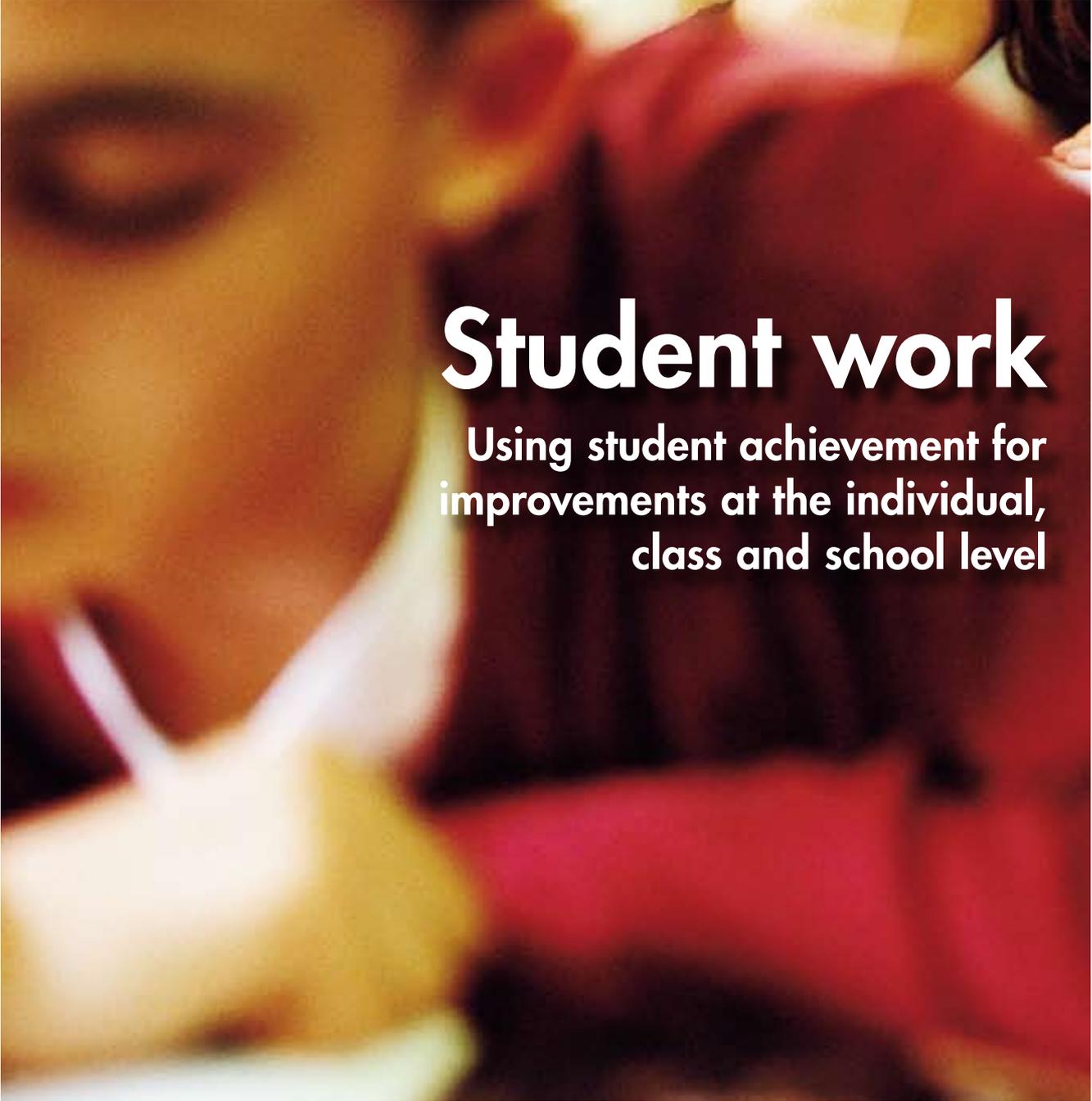
A number of challenges have also emerged. There are practical and logistical challenges associated with the collection, analysis and use of video data, including cost, time, quality of video production, ethics, copyright and technology constraints. (Brophy, 2004; Clarke and Hollingsworth, 2000; Jacobs et al., 2004) None of these, however, are insurmountable. Perhaps the most pertinent challenge associated with the use of video data in Australia relates to developing a culture among teachers and teacher educators that values and embraces the collection and use of video data.

The ideas and examples presented here represent only some of the possibilities for using video data to support and improve teaching and learning. Other educators are working with video data in different ways, and knowledge and expertise in the area is growing. It's possible, and in some cases planned, that some projects can be scaled up to extend to schools, universities and professional organisations across the country. As skill and efficiencies develop in the capture, storage and use of video data, and as the teaching profession embraces the collection and use of video data, even more options will open up. But as the field grows, so does the need for a summative evaluation of projects. As Brophy (2004) contends: 'Along with continual developments in the state of the art of both the technology itself and its applications for teacher education (and research) purposes, the field now needs systematic research designed to provide summative evaluation of the effectiveness of video-based programs and assessment of the trade-offs involved in alternative approaches.' (Brophy, 2004: 304)

Video data offer a tremendous opportunity for authentic learning about teaching and teaching about learning, and provide a rich resource for helping identify future directions for improvement.

For references go to [www.acer.edu.au/professionaleducator/references.html](http://www.acer.edu.au/professionaleducator/references.html)

*Hilary Hollingsworth is an education consultant and researcher. Her current interests which focus on the use of video cases for teacher professional learning were generated through her work over several years at LessonLab in Los Angeles, California, as the representative for ACER working on the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 1999 Video Study. She also worked with school systems, school districts, universities, professional development organisations and textbook publishers across the United States as a Director for the Teacher Learning Division of LessonLab. This is a version of her paper presented at the ACER Research Conference, 'Using data to support learning,' held in Melbourne in 2005.*



# Student work

Using student achievement for improvements at the individual, class and school level

**TEACHING** is about improving the learning of particular students, which affects the way educators gather and analyse data in some pretty distinctive ways. For a start, the methods and results of what Ragin (1997) calls the variable-oriented researcher are not useful – there are too few students, too many facets to consider and the students interact with each other, with the teacher and with their wider socio-cultural contexts – a fact that many teachers understand intuitively. For a finish, teachers know that students bring their complete selves with them when they interact with school – so that John’s ‘dunno’ might mean he’s resentful, defensive, uninterested, diversionary, intentionally misleading – or just that he doesn’t know.

This is as much as to say that when you’re looking for data about what actually happens in school, your best bet is to look for direct and indirect data. Direct data includes student work in the widest sense – potentially the most valuable outer sign

If you really want to improve the learning of students you need to find out what actually happens in school, as **Reg Allen** explains.



*Teachers can find the task of looking at student work itself both difficult, because they want to re-mark it, and troubling, the result of concerns about territory, of privacy and perhaps being judged and found wanting.*

of internal activity – and structured classroom observations. Indirect data includes student and teacher reflections, through conversations, say, or surveys, and test results. Such reflections are indirect because they're statements about what people think is happening as mediated through their ways of seeing the world. Our statements about enacted practices, in particular, often represent what we think ought to be happening. Tests provide indirect evidence about what is happening – an estimate of the ability and propensity considered to underpin particular knowledge and skills – as an indirect indication about aspects of what has happened. Tests are, of course, coloured by their sample nature and by the varying ways students choose to respond to them – or not. Tests, obviously, provide diagnostic evidence, so that a teacher knows what needs to be done for the student to learn more, but in practice it's a bit more complex. Most teachers seeking to improve student learning find student work is more easily accessible than structured classroom observations. It provides more direct, visible and complete evidence of both student and teacher repertoires of practice than do test scores and it supports the types of analysis needed in the classroom and in the typical school situation where numbers are relatively small and causality is complex.

There are some key issues that educators need to address if they want to use student work to improve learning. Using student work:

- depends on expert facilitation and carefully designed protocols, and teachers can find the task of looking at student work itself both difficult, because they want to re-mark it, and troubling, the result of concerns about territory, of privacy and perhaps being judged and found wanting
- requires teachers to look for the attitudes, values, priorities and ways of doing things that are evidenced in the work, as well as the presence or absence of teacher comments and other signs, rather than apply a 'deficit' model
- requires teachers to identify and see beyond what is being taken for granted by the teacher and the student.

Let me tell you about the development and piloting of a resource for Queensland senior secondary schools seeking to review their practices, which I led in the late 1990s. (Allen and Bell, 1999) This involved a skilled facilitator using a structured process centred on student work. The project sought to use a set of collected work of individual students as the direct evidence for asking questions about the enacted values, priorities and practices in the set of subjects experienced by a student. To make the task as straightforward as possible, the chosen sets of student work were, for the first stage of review, from students who were generally successful and not 'resistant' to the enacted culture of the school, who knew how to 'play the game.' An initial focus on the surface, obvious features of the evidence, including any evidence of teacher comments, codes and signs, was followed with closer examination of the activities that seemed to be emphasised and not emphasised in practice – using the assumption that the students whose work was being looked at would seek to maximise their return for effort and thus enacted attitudes, values and priorities could be inferred from the evidence.

Taking a student focus rather than a subject focus was often a particular challenge for participating teachers, as was seeing the implicit enacted priorities rather than the intended or designed ones.

At the end of the process, teachers' findings included that:

- some generally desired behaviours such as clear and accurate written expression, say, or clear mathematical argument would in practice be rewarded, encouraged or required in only one subject, indicating that knowledge and skills did not transfer from one situation to another

- in some schools, there appeared to be greater reward for effort for careful presentation than for serious intellectual rigour – these schools often started the process because of concerns that their students performed relatively less well in higher order thinking tasks than they expected
- what was declared to be the official intention of an assessment task was not necessarily what was rewarded or favoured in practice
- a school's view that there was effective use of technology across the curriculum was not supported by sets of student work that showed that computers were merely being used as electronic typewriters
- across one school's curriculum, the enacted variety and complexity of 'problem-solving' was less than individual subject areas believed it to be – the sort of result that only comes through when teachers take a whole student rather than an individual subject perspective
- across the curriculum of individual students, there was a narrower range of extended writing than expected
- this sort of review enabled educators to draw useful interpretations of the patterns in the Queensland Core Skills (QCS) Test score data they had.

While these findings are not surprising, they do illustrate the potential of this sort of technique for developing teachers' understanding of the impact of practices rather than intentions and of the importance of seeking to understand school from a student perspective. Once teachers were familiar with the practice and techniques of this sort of study, there was real additional value in a successful follow-up review using the work of students who did not experience success – which, as you'd expect, is a more challenging but very fruitful task, as demonstrated by Cooper and Dunne's (1999) exploration of the varied reasons students had for giving 'incorrect' responses to mathematics test items.

This technique looks at all the evidence in the student work, including teacher and student marginalia, the 'unofficial' as well as the official. There's much potential value in taking as complete a view as possible. A look at the marginalia of students' responses to some items on a QCS Test showed, for example, that there were many students who have in effect learned that anything that looks at all 'mathematical' is not for them. A study of Queensland Year 10 Mathematics folios included a revealing 'problem,' which was not actually a problem, since the answer was obvious on inspection. The student response and teacher marginalia indicate that the student wrote down the obvious answer, remembered that 'working' had to be shown, and constructed some semblance of it; the teacher attempted to follow the working, couldn't, gave up and then marked the response as correct, giving full credit.

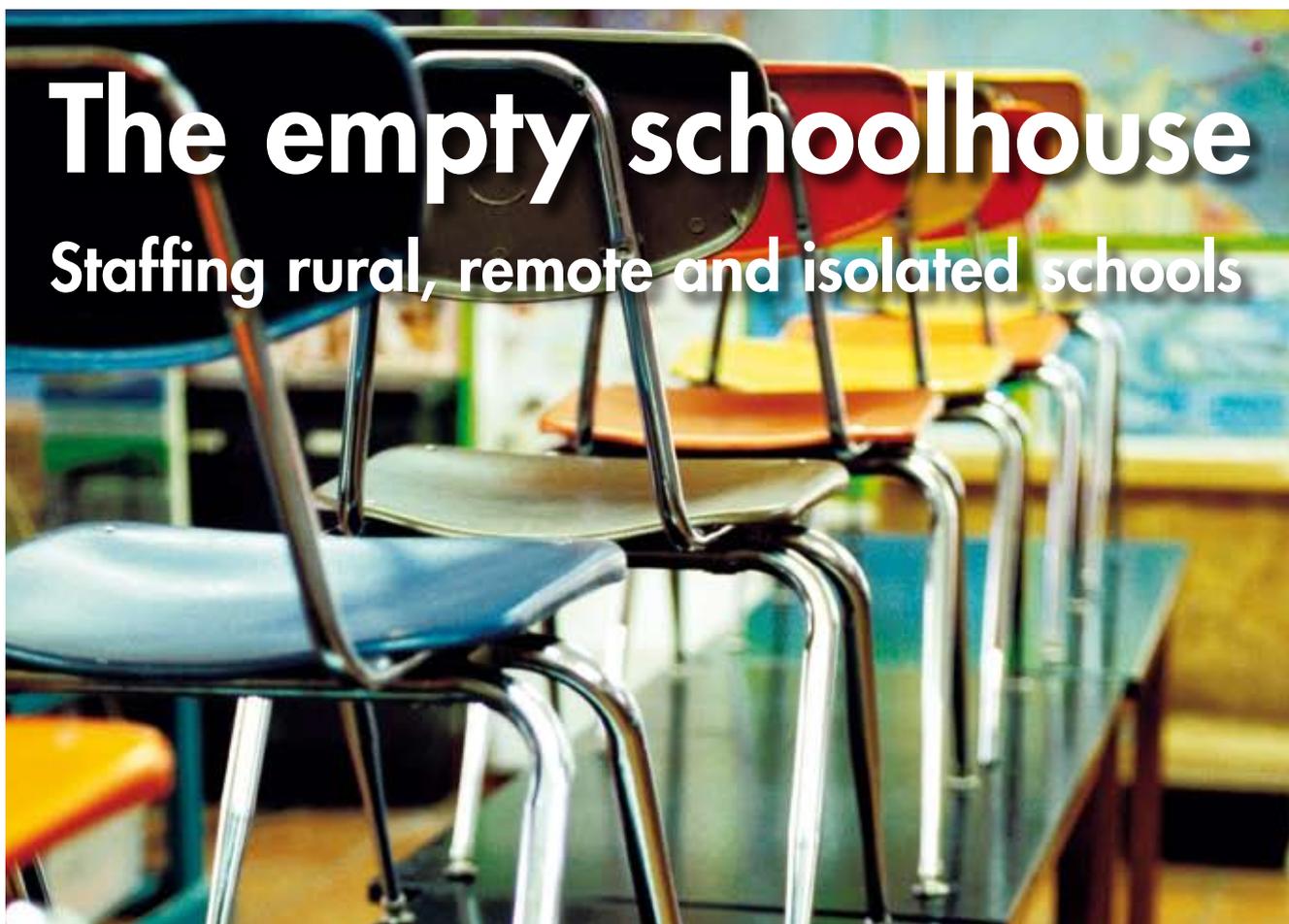
Teachers need data gathering and analysis techniques that work in the here-and-now, providing some ways to improve matters for their students. Avoiding not only deficit models but also both an emphasis on intentions and too restrictive a focus, the use of student work provides a practicable basis for identifying key aspects of *what is* and *what might be*, at an individual, class and school level. Starting at the school level builds the skills to look at what is, rather than what is intended, and the consensus building involved in working at this level supports the individual teacher in looking at student repertoires of practice at the class and the individual level. At the same time, teachers develop their understanding of the range of teacher repertoires of practice.

To improve student learning, the direct and comprehensive evidence of achievement in the point-at-able form in which it appears in student work provides a data source that can be used to generate rich analyses.

*To improve student learning, the direct and comprehensive evidence of achievement in the point-at-able form in which it appears in student work provides a data source that can be used to generate rich analyses.*

*Reg Allen is the Chief Executive Officer of the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority. This is a version of his paper presented at the ACER Research Conference, 'Using data to support learning,' held in Melbourne in 2005.*

For references go to [www.acer.edu.au/professionaleducator/references.html](http://www.acer.edu.au/professionaleducator/references.html)



# The empty schoolhouse

## Staffing rural, remote and isolated schools

What would it take to make sure students in our rural, remote and isolated communities get the best possible education? Make sure they get the best possible teachers, says **Phil Roberts**.

**MANY** issues affect the quality of education received by students in rural, remote and isolated communities, as various Commonwealth and state government inquiries and reports have found over the last eighty years. Most reports refer to high staff turnover and suggest incentives would attract and retain staff, yet they rarely explore the causes of staff turnover or identify which ‘incentives’ would work. Exploring these issues was the exact aim of the research on which this article is based.

The research involved a literature review of available research related to the staffing of rural and remote schools; a study of the policies and practices of Australian education departments; an analysis of the rural and remote area staffing policies of the various state and territory public education unions; interviews of both education department staffing officers and education union officials in each state and territory; and an online survey of teachers in rural and remote areas.

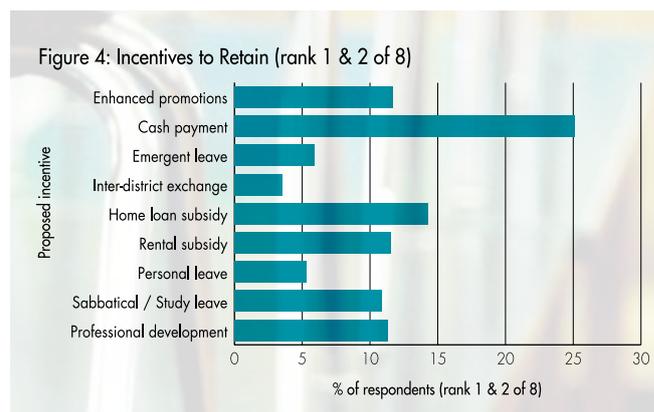
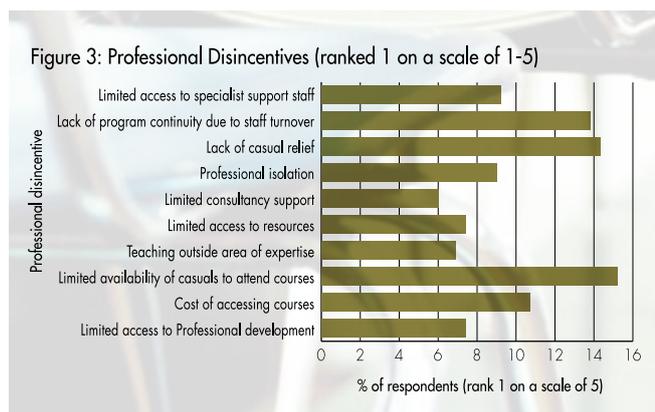
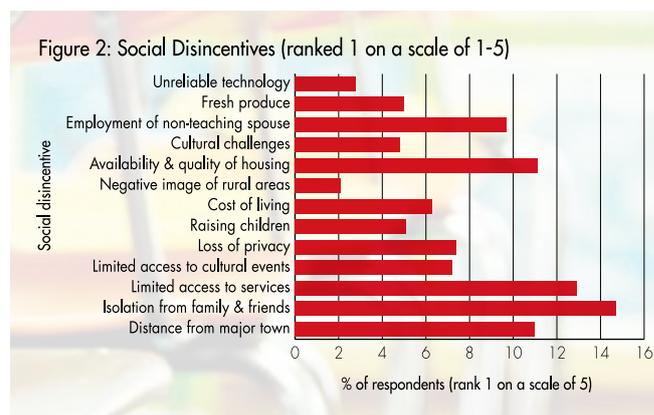
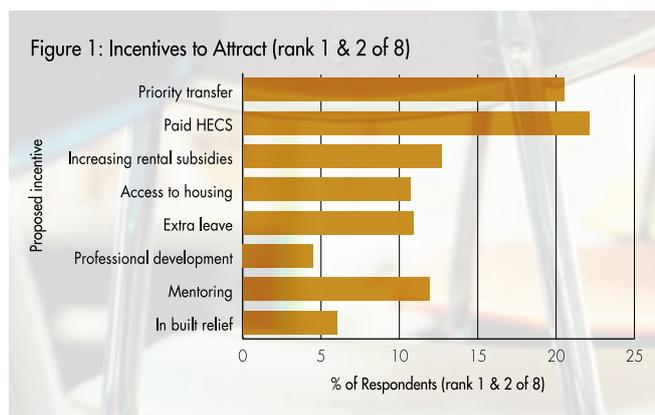
What did the research find? First, the most significant factor in educational quality for schools in rural, remote and isolated communities is the provision of appropriate, quality and stable staff; and, secondly, that teachers for these settings need to be aware of the rural context as well as personally suited for it; they need to be of the highest quality, not just appointed because they’re the only person prepared to go ‘out there’; and they need to be encouraged to remain for a number of years.

Teacher satisfaction is an important determinant in both attracting teachers to rural, remote and isolated communities and retaining them: satisfaction can influence teachers to accept a position that may otherwise appear to be a challenging one. More importantly, teacher satisfaction strongly influences a person’s decision to remain in an appointment and to remain after the minimum service period.

Attracting teachers is often the first obstacle in adequately staffing rural, remote and isolated schools. Jurisdictions with a centralised appointment system often report difficulty in staffing these schools since those offered an appointment often decline. No job, it seems, is better than a job away from a metropolitan centre. Systems need to better understand what is influencing such decisions and implement strategies to overcome the bias against rural appointments. Previous studies have shown that a significant number of teachers who accept and stay in positions in rural, remote and isolated schools went to similar schools or studied at a rural university. While recruiting teachers from a rural setting won't solve the problem, supporting students aspiring to be teachers from these communities would certainly help. Similarly, university pre-service training about the specific rural context of teaching and programs like 'beyond the line' – where pre-service teachers spend a few days visiting a number of rural communities – and rural placements have all shown to have a positive impact on teachers' perceptions about rural appointments.

Besides provision of accommodation, most respondents listed professional issues like a reduced first-year teaching load, and induction and mentoring programs as important in attracting teachers. (See Figure 1) Payment of HECS for appointees was listed by 22.1 per cent as very successful in attracting teachers. When coupled with a bonded scholarship that would also pay HECS, this was identified as a very significant incentive. Issues around housing and leave remained important while the traditional priority transfer after a minimum service period was ranked second. A priority transfer, however, is clearly an incentive to leave rather than remain, and this reflects the fact that many attraction initiatives presently used in Australia aim to get someone into the classroom in the first instance, rather than keep them there. In order to be effective in improving education quality they need to be combined with an improvement in general conditions and effective incentives to retain teachers in these communities.

*Policies like improved leave conditions and sabbatical leave after a period of service could reduce the longterm impact of social disincentives in order to improve retention.*



**SOCIAL MEASURES**

Increase paid personal leave, medical leave, leave with period of service; pay sabbatical or study leave; support rural community development; provide community programs to support new teachers; provide effective induction programs; provide quality housing; limit shared accommodation; provide travel time at beginning and end of terms; improve staffing formulas; increase incentives to support families; guarantee transfer; provide increased transfer points with period of service.

**ECONOMIC MEASURES**

Provide pre-service teacher education scholarships; pay HECS; pay removal costs on initial appointment; offer acceptance payments to cover the cost of setting up a home; provide vehicle allowances; increase cost-of-living allowances; provide bonuses which increase with length of service; provide rental subsidies which increase with length of service; subsidise utility and food freight costs; increase paid travel; pay for removals on transfer; subsidise home loans.

Such initiatives need to overcome or reduce the social and professional disincentives reported by teachers in these communities (shown in Figures 2 and 3 respectively). These factors work together to reduce the professional satisfaction of teachers and encourage them to leave, rather than remain. The social disincentives that many teachers experience have a significant impact on their ability to perform their duties by undermining their general happiness. Considering that professional happiness has been linked to teacher motivation, it's clear that both professional and social satisfaction should be the primary goal of educational bureaucracies. Research into long-staying rural teachers also links teacher retention with enjoying the job and enjoying the lifestyle of rural communities. Given that the most significant factor in education quality for schools in rural, remote and isolated communities is the provision of appropriate, quality and stable staff, it's clear that they need appropriate and quality teachers in the classroom, who want to be there and enjoy being there.

It's tempting to argue that social issues are not the realm of governments or government departments. Indeed, it's not possible to use government policies to change a number of the social disincentives, such as isolation from family and friends, and distance from a major town, which were two of the three highest ranking social disincentives identified by respondents, illustrated in Figure 2. Even so, policies like improved leave conditions and sabbatical leave after a period of service could reduce the longterm impact of social disincentives in order to improve retention. (See Figure 4.) Some social disincentives, like poor access to services and employment opportunities for non-teaching spouses, are themselves a product of government economic policies over the last fifteen years.

A consistent theme throughout the data is a concern about the quality and availability of housing. Most states address this concern through a government housing service for public sector employees or a specific teacher housing authority. Clearly, however, these services are not delivering on their charter if the issue of housing remains such a big concern. There is evidently a need to increase the availability, quality and rental attractiveness of housing.

Education departments can also have a direct policy impact in overcoming the professional disincentives illustrated in Figure 3. Education bureaucracies are clearly capable of implementing initiatives that increase the staffing allocation, support professional development and encourage collegial networks – provided they are willing to pay for it. If teachers are unable to attend professional learning courses and have no access to support staff or professional support, the high rate of teacher turnover will continue.

There are four broad areas in which the attraction and retention of teachers in schools in rural, remote or isolated communities can be improved. Put these areas together and you have a model of rural staffing which encourages professionalism, recognises rural difference, compensates for economic loss and limits social isolation. It's a model of rural staffing that recognises that attraction and retention are interlinked. It recognises, in other words, that the conditions and professional value of rural teaching should be such that they both attract and retain teachers.

**SOCIAL**

Teachers in rural, remote or isolated locations typically live away from their family and friends, and spend significant amounts of time travelling to seek social support. Issues related to this have consistently been highlighted as significant disincentives to accepting positions in these locations. Similarly, the conditions under which teachers are forced to live are often in stark contrast to the conditions under which they would choose to live if they were working in a large metropolitan centre.

## ECONOMIC

Living and teaching in rural, remote or isolated locations has significant economic costs that include the cost of living, transport, travel and access to services. Many allowances don't extend to the initial appointment and many teachers only become eligible after a period of service, by which time other limitations have already persuaded them to leave. Retention in a rural, remote or isolated location also prevents them from entering the economic cycle, through home ownership.

## RURAL DIFFERENCE

Teaching in a rural, remote or isolated location is a professional challenge. Many teachers operate in isolation from colleagues and mentors as well as being forced to assume significant responsibilities in their first years. There are often large cultural differences to be overcome in their schools and communities for which they have had no formal preparation. In addition to these challenges, their schools often operate on a limited resource base, with an unusual staff mix and perennial vacancies in key subject areas.

## PROFESSIONALISM

Teaching in rural, remote or isolated locations needs to be recognised as the rewarding professional experience that it is. Many teachers in these areas highlighted the lack of accessible training and development, limited collegial support in their subject area or area of expertise, and the high turnover of staff, especially leadership, as negative influences on their satisfaction. In deregulated staffing systems, these same issues put teachers in an uncompetitive position when it comes to promotion and transfer. Their relative isolation also precludes teachers from further study, joining and becoming active in professional associations, and gaining access to a range of resources.

What's to be done? The challenge is this: governments need to ensure they develop a system that is professionally rewarding for teachers that is supported by measures that address the social, economic, rural difference and professional issues outlined here. Such initiatives need to operate over the period a teacher is serving in a school in a rural, remote or isolated community, otherwise they are just another short-term way to attract, rather than retain, teachers.

Clearly, a number of the issues which discourage teachers from accepting positions in schools in rural, remote or isolated communities are beyond the control of education departments. What's needed, therefore, is a coordinated, whole-of-government approach to address the staffing needs of such schools. If that doesn't happen, they'll continue to compete with schools in more favourable – read, 'metropolitan' – conditions and continue to struggle to attract and retain quality teachers.

It's worth remembering that the accounting in implementing such initiatives should recognise the social dividend, since they would go a long way to overcoming educational disadvantage in rural, remote and isolated communities. If education is a way to break the cycle of disadvantage and dislocation experienced by many of these communities, then it's clear we need to ensure the schoolhouse isn't empty.

*This article draws on 'Staffing an Empty Schoolhouse: attracting and retaining teachers in rural, remote and isolated communities,' Eric Pearson Study Report for the NSW Teachers Federation, by Phil Roberts (2005).*

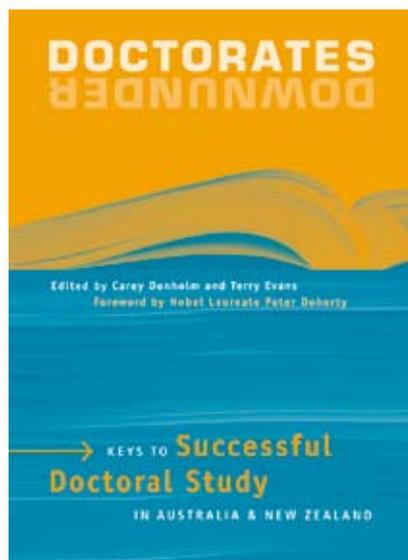
*Phil Roberts is Head Teacher HSIE at Bowral High School, NSW.*

## MEASURES TO ADDRESS RURAL DIFFERENCE

Recruit teachers from rural, remote and isolated areas; increase recruitment of Indigenous teachers; provide specific pre-service training on rural, remote and isolated teaching; support a pre-service practicum in rural, remote and isolated schools; increase resources for rural, remote and isolated schools; develop a staffing formula so all subjects are taught by appropriately trained teachers with the appropriate number of face-to-face lessons; select appropriate teachers; include specific standards for rural teaching in any standards developed by a teaching institute; guarantee transfer for professional growth; maintain a statewide staffing system so that rural service is not devalued; increase inbuilt district relief.

## PROFESSIONAL MEASURES

Specifically train teachers for the rural, remote and isolated teaching context; increase the professional development budget and time allowance; facilitate interaction across schools; improve information technology facilities; provide incentives for experienced teachers to take up appointments in rural, remote and isolated schools; allow principals a 'trial period' before they accept substantive positions; mentor beginning teachers; improve consultancy support; extend initiatives to and specifically target casual teachers.



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AND Terry Evans

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Pre-service Teacher Education  
at Teaching Australia.*

# Doctorates Downunder

‘**THERE** is a doctorate awarded on average about every two hours in Australia and New Zealand: eventually one of them will be yours!’ That’s the claim of the editors of a new book aimed at supporting doctoral candidates across all disciplines, undertaking both PhD and professional doctoral study. It’s directed squarely at candidates at Australian and New Zealand universities, and joins the ranks of ‘how to’ books that support, cajole and sometimes probably deter prospective and actual candidates. Some guides fit into the category of ‘doctorates for dummies.’ This one is different, and it’s salutary to consider what makes it different, indeed, useful – which it certainly is.

The editors asked a number of successful doctoral supervisors and experienced examiners, and one candidate to provide brief chapters, and to write engagingly, on a very wide range of topics that resonate with candidates at all stages of their doctoral journey, from anticipation to examination and beyond. The chapters are organised into nine thematic sections: beginning candidature; engaging your support systems; being strategic; the graduate research experience; special considerations; communicating your research; preparing the thesis; preparing for examination; and the ‘end game.’

The book addresses some contentious issues and may be a bit close to the bone for some candidates – and their supervisors! However, the contributors have without fail kept their advice practical and direct, and have backed it up with reference to their experiences and those of others. Refreshingly, both the editors and contributors make it clear that doctoral study is no cake-walk, that it’s tough, and sometimes repetitive and lonely work, but that the rewards are great and that even in the work’s monotony can be found satisfaction – which sounds something like *Zen and the Art of Doctoral Candidate Maintenance*.

As a recently graduated doctoral candidate, I related closely to every single contribution, particularly those chapters that discussed the value of peer support groups and personal learning plans, and the special challenges and rewards of part-time candidacy. However, I reserve my highest praise for the section that discusses the role of writing in doctoral research, and provides advice about writing as a research tool, about argumentation, about research skills and writing, and about the relationship between thinking and writing. As a candidate who found early difficulty with the activity of scholarly writing, this section reminded me of my own journey of discovery, a journey in which I discovered my ability to write throughout the entire process, from beginning to end.

As the editors suggest, this is not a book to be read from front to back, especially by doctoral candidates. It’s something like the hypertext we find in a useful website, which takes us from place to place within the whole, dipping in and retrieving that which we need at the time. On the other hand, I did read it from front to back, and found this a useful activity for me as a newly establishing member of a doctoral teaching team. I’ve already recommended this book to a cohort of doctoral candidates, and would certainly recommend it as well to supervisors of candidates.

This book presents as a literary mentor for any person undertaking doctoral study in Australia or New Zealand. I suspect, however, that it will find a happy home far beyond these shores, and will contribute significantly to the confidence and success of many of those two-hourly doctoral completions.

Want to know about professional development opportunities, conferences and just plain useful stuff? **The Diary** tells you what's on.

#### 24–25 MAY

**EVENT Dusseldorp Skills Forum Learning Choices Expo 2006** If you're a teacher, principal, coordinator or youth worker or you're in educational policy or research you're probably working in diverse ways to engage young people in meaningful learning. This conference particularly suits those working with young people whose needs are not met in traditional classrooms.

**PLACE** Twin Waters Resort, Maroochydore, Queensland

**CONTACT** Mikaeli Costello

**EMAIL** mikaeli@dsf.org.au

**WEBSITE** [www.dsf.org.au/learning-choices/expo\\_2006.php](http://www.dsf.org.au/learning-choices/expo_2006.php)

#### 25–27 MAY

**EVENT Australian College of Educators National Conference** 'Teachers Shaping Futures; Futures Shaping Teaching' The conference will address issues that impinge on teaching as a profession in the globalised world of the Twenty-first Century, with the aim of charting the future of the profession.

**PLACE** Holiday Inn, Adelaide

**CONTACT** APAPDC Events Team

**EMAIL** [events@apapdc.edu.au](mailto:events@apapdc.edu.au)

#### 9–11 JUNE

**EVENT The Alliance of Girls' Schools – Australasia 10th Annual Conference** 'Girls to Women: Links of a Lifetime' What about the girls?

**PLACE** Brisbane Girls Grammar School

**CONTACT** Jan Butler

**EMAIL** [jan.butler@internode.on.net](mailto:jan.butler@internode.on.net)

**WEBSITE** [www.agsa.edu.au](http://www.agsa.edu.au)

#### 1 JULY ONWARDS

**EVENT ACE on the road** 'Re-imagining Educational Leadership' Professor Brian Caldwell will be travelling the country to present workshops on 'Re-imagining Educational Leadership,' presented by the Australian College of Educators in association with iNet – Australia to coincide with publication of *Re-imagining Educational Leadership* by ACER Press. Catch the workshops in all capital cities and a number of regional centres in each state and territory. This is the one event in 2006 you can't afford to miss. Dates and locations are on the web.

**WEBSITE** [www.austcolled.com.au](http://www.austcolled.com.au)

#### 12–14 JULY

**EVENT 'No Frills' The National Vocational Education and Training Research Conference**

Register by 31 May 2006.

**PLACE** Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE, Mooloolaba

**CONTACT** NCVER

**PHONE** 08 8230 8400

**EMAIL** [ncver@ncver.edu.au](mailto:ncver@ncver.edu.au)

**WEBSITE** <http://www.ncver.edu.au>

#### 8–11 JULY

**EVENT The Australian Association for the Teaching of English National Conference**

'Voices, Visions, Vibes'

**PLACE** Darwin High School

**CONTACT** Gaye Messer

**PHONE** 08 8981 1875

**EMAIL** [info@thebestevents.com.au](mailto:info@thebestevents.com.au)

#### 15–19 JULY

**EVENT Australian Primary Principals Association**

**National Conference 2006.** The Association of Northern Territory Educational Leaders, with assistance from APAPDC, hosts the APPA 2006 conference on the melding of leadership styles to meet the demands of a modern educational environment.

**PLACE** Alice Springs Convention Centre, NT

**CONTACT** APAPDC

**EMAIL** [events@apapdc.edu.au](mailto:events@apapdc.edu.au)

#### 13–15 AUGUST

**EVENT Australian Council for Educational Research Conference** 'Boosting Science Learning: What will it take?'

The conference will examine recent research and practice in science education both locally and internationally, asking what it will take to boost science teaching and learning.

**PLACE** Hyatt Hotel, Canberra

**CONTACT** Conference Secretariat

**PHONE** 03 9853 7403

**FAX** 03 9853 7457

**EMAIL** [taylor@acer.edu.au](mailto:taylor@acer.edu.au)

#### 3–6 OCTOBER

**EVENT Australian Secondary Principals' Association National Conference** 'Blooming Leadership: a capital idea,' focusing on student pathways, leadership in Indigenous education, personalised learning, health and wellbeing, and leading learners.

**PLACE** Canberra

**PHONE** 1800 680 559

**EMAIL** [acel@pnc.com.au](mailto:acel@pnc.com.au)

**WEBSITE** [www.aspa.asn.au](http://www.aspa.asn.au)



# School lunch

Something has happened to the modern-day school lunch, says **Danny Katz**, and it's very disturbing.

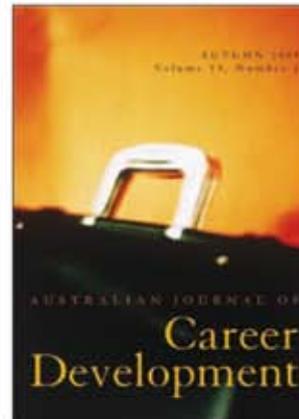
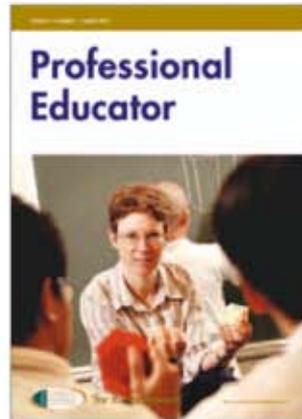
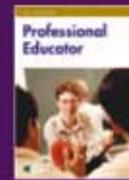
**HERE'S** how I do it, how I complete the long, slow, highly-culinary process of making my two kids their school lunches every school morning. First I open the cupboard and get out a bag of sliced bread – well actually, I get out SEVERAL bags of sliced bread, each containing nothing but a couple of stale, withered, crushed crusts down the bottom, then I mix and match the crusts until I come up with four acceptable slices, with a vaguely bread-like shape and no green fur. Now I lay the slices on a cutting board and cover them with a delicious and nutritious sandwich spread, usually Vegemite, because that's what my kids like, though personally I avoid the stuff, because I don't trust any foodstuff that no other life-form on earth will eat, including bacteria.

Next I close up the sandwiches, cut them neatly in half, wrap them in scrunched-up shredded scraps of clingwrap – because the only thing that cling-wrap actually seems to cling to is itself. Now I throw the sandwiches into their lunchboxes, toss in an apple, maybe some grapes, and sometimes as a special treat, a tub of kiddies yoghurt if I can find some in the fridge and the expiry date is not TOO expired. And there it is: my children's school lunch, filled with goodness and vitality to keep them going the whole day – then my children take their lunch to school, open the lunchbox at lunchtime, wince like they just spotted an infected gall bladder in there, slam the lid back down, and go share lunch with one of their friends, who's sitting on a nearby bench enjoying Tuscan lamb shanks with a pasta dura roll, a couple of mini-polenta cakes, and a glass of chilled riesling.

Something has happened to the modern-day school lunch, something very disturbing: gone are the days of peanut butter sandwiches, old dried-out mandarins, and a caramel Space Food Stick. These days schoolkids are eating tandoori-yoghurt wraps, and Turkish pide-pizzas, and New-York-Style Corned Beef On Rye, kept moist in their Bob the Builder Thermal Lunch Box Humidor. I AM TOTALLY OUT OF TOUCH WITH THE CURRENT LUNCHBOX CATERING TRENDS. Once upon a time, kids ate what they were given, and enjoyed it too: my wife said she used to get sandwiches with Aeroplane jelly crystals sprinkled over them, but she ate it, SHE ATE IT AND SHE LOVED IT – and if she washed the sandwich down with tepid water, she'd have a fully-set serve of Raspberry Razzle in her stomach by bedtime. And I'll never forget my own fearsome school sandwich experiences: Mum would fill my sandwiches with stinky mashed egg and stenchy polish salami and sick-smelling tuna with cucumber, but I ate it, I ATE IT AND I LOVED IT, even though I'd open my lunchbox on a hot summer's day, and it was like breaking the seal on a vat of prawn sambal.

But no longer, no more; schoolkids are all lunchbox connoisseurs now, bringing Thai chicken burgers and marinated tofu blocks and white truffle risotto – and I can't compete with these fancy-shmancy lunches; I don't have the time or the money or the Smeg 24-burner stainless-steel commercial oven. So my kids are just going to have to endure more of the same old-fashioned unremarkable inedible lunchbox fare, and they're not too happy at all – they've already started hanging around me in the kitchen each morning, watching me prepare their lunches, criticising my techniques like Gordon Ramsay tormenting a sous chef. The boy is saying 'Don't use that bread! Can't you give me pumpernickel or San Francisco sourdough?' and the girl is saying 'Hannah gets Kway-teo flat noodles in a thermos, can I have Kway-teo noodles too, with some dried squid?' and the only way to shut them up is to say 'LOOK, I'M DOING MY BEST, I'M WORKING MY GUTS OUT FIVE MORNINGS A WEEK, AND IF YOU DON'T LIKE WHAT YOU'RE GETTING, HERE'S AN IDEA, MAKE YOUR OWN LUNCHES!!!!!!' Then they go very quiet and disappear very quickly, and I can carry on with my work undisturbed, completing the long, slow, highly-culinary process of mixing and matching stale bread-crusts.

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