

Professional Educator

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EDITORIAL

The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) finally agreed in April to examine ways to introduce performance-based pay for teachers. Ministers at the MCEETYA meeting also agreed to draft a proposal on rewards, incentives and career structures for quality teachers to take to a meeting of the Council of Australian Governments. MCEETYA last April refused to support performance-based pay. A year is a long time in politics.

Inside insight

DRUG TESTING IN SCHOOLS

Drug testing in schools could be legally risky, is not an effective deterrent, could lead to false readings and would undermine trust. Those are the conclusions of *Drug Testing in Schools: Evidence, impacts and alternatives*, a report from the Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) prepared by the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction at Flinders University. The authors of the report spent the last 12 months looking at all available evidence across the world on drug testing in schools and also calculated the cost, estimating it could cost \$355 million to introduce yearly nationwide saliva tests or \$302 million for urine tests of every child. Random testing of 10 per cent of school students three times a year would cost \$110 million for saliva drug test or \$91 million for urine tests. According to ANCD Executive Member Garth Popple, illicit drugs in schools have been declining over the last decade and the critical issue for teenagers is alcohol abuse. 'What we now also know is that binge drinking and alcohol are the big issues facing teenagers today with latest figures showing that in any given week 167,000 13- to 17-year olds have drunk at harmful levels and one-fifth of 16- to 17-year olds regularly binge drink at harmful levels,' Popple said. 'Young people are constantly being bombarded with messages in the community that tell them very clearly that drinking is *the* thing to do. Drug testing in schools is not going to address this issue.' The report was launched at Merrylands High School in Sydney's south-western suburbs in March, a fortnight before an alleged attack at Merrylands by five teenagers accused of a violent rampage through the school.

DREAM DEGREE?

Buckinghamshire New University, one of Britain's newest universities, began offering tailor-made degrees in the management of, um, selling beds in April. The retail management foundation degree, developed in partnership with bed company Dreams, appears to be the kind of collaboration between industry and higher education the British government wants to encourage.

MONOPSONY

Teachers face a problem, according to *Age* staff writers Josh Gordon and Tim Colebatch. It's what economists call a monopsony, and, no, it's not a typo. Unlike a monopoly, when a producer who controls the whole market has control over prices, monopsony is a bit less common. 'Monopsony,' Gordon and Colebatch explain, 'is...when one buyer dominates the market for a good or service and therefore can pay less, forcing producers to take what the buyer offers. In teaching, the state runs a monopsony. For decades, it has held down the growth in teachers' wages below the community average to make it easier to balance its budget.' Teachers, they point out, used to earn twice the average wage, but rises in the real wages of teachers have lagged in the last few decades behind rises in the real wages of everybody else. Of course, some states are currently experiencing an undersupply of teachers, and so can't hold down the growth in teachers' wages too much. The top of the salary increment for a Victorian state school teacher, by the way, is \$65,414 a year. In Queensland it's \$69,225; in Western Australia it's \$71,067; and in NSW it's \$75,352. It's not hard to imagine which way the traffic runs in Albury-Wodonga.

A NEW ADVOCATE FOR MUSIC EDUCATION

Music in schools got a boost when Australian opera singer, David Hobson, agreed to take on the newly-created role of Schools Ambassador for Musica Viva. Hobson has good reason to advocate for music education, says Musica Viva's Mary Jo Capps. Research summarised by the Australian Music Association shows that active participation in music can help children improve their capabilities in reasoning and problem solving, mathematical and language ability, memory and time management. Those of you with the time-management skills and in Melbourne can catch Hobson in one of Musica Viva's Coffee Concerts on 16 September.

LINKS: http://www.mca.org.au/mpfl/research1.htm#_ednref1

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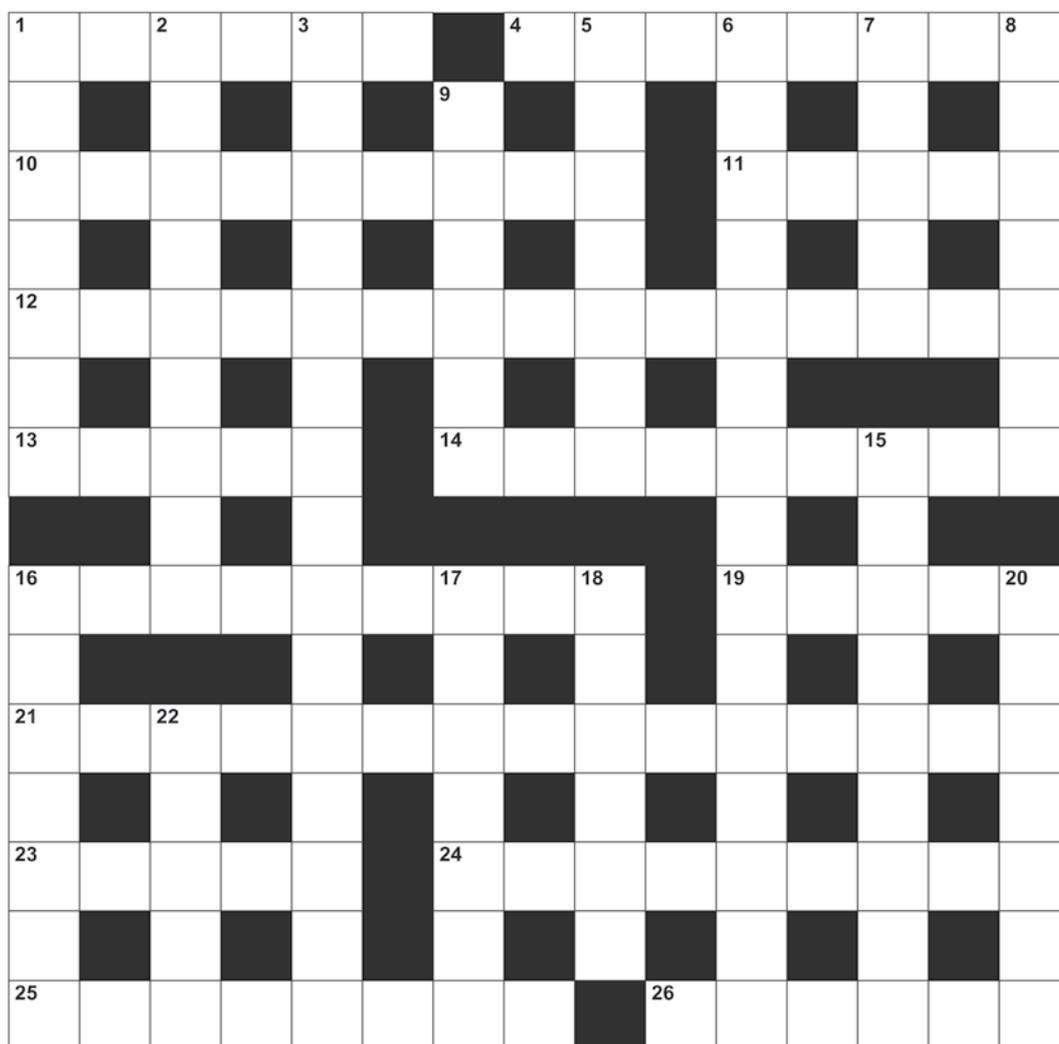
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SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS

- Decide whether a meeting is actually required. Will a memo do the job?
- Plan your meeting goals. It sometimes helps to identify colleagues who might assist you.
- Make sure crucial decision makers attend, so that decisions can actually be taken.
- Make sure you have previous minutes, notes, action and follow-up items from earlier meetings and that you take minutes, notes, and action and follow-up items from the meeting.
- To maximise efficiency, avoid scheduling a meeting on the hour or half hour. A meeting scheduled for 20 minutes before lunch concentrates the mind.



Across

- 1 Live in structures I designed (6)
 4 After slow start, fairy reduction is generous (8)
 10 I'm in charge; bowl round to draw in (9)
 11 Loose ends likely to have jumped (5)
 12 Dr Tom racks brain frantically for investment opportunity (6,3,6)
 13 Humour an old English council (5)
 14 Wrongly advised about it, producing extra ingredients (9)
 16 Country's leader slips into distorted aperture to get back (9)
 19 What was taken down held gift (5)
 21 Does calibration upset unfair sporting advantage? (8,7)
 23 Banish cross softly in river liver (5)
 24 In debt, pop ragged ends, uncooked, into the cooker (9)
 25 Basic right to hold people in a building (8)
 26 Mate cooked terrapin tail inside (6)
- 3 Belt back round northern relatives – with difficulty for an alcoholic (8,7)
 5 Fixed the last part of 3 before it finished (7)
 6 Game for subordinates (6,3,6)
 7 Raise latex compound (5)
 8 Positive about just even; viewers finish in stitches (7)
 9 Food could prevent the start of a nasty accident (6)
 15 Vote idea out; add novice driver for entertainment (9)
 16 Chemical could partially cure representative (7)
 17 Beast places bent coin in container (7)
 18 Less demanding one replaces the leader in festival (6)
 20 If removed from defined supports, will half spread (7)
 22 Begin a school program enshrining national tree (5)

Down

- 1 Argue about a battered bin seen overhead (7)
 2 Cooking chops; is it misleading? (9)

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RESEARCH CONFERENCE 2008

Touching the Future: Building skills for life and work

10-12 AUGUST 2008, BRISBANE CONVENTION & EXHIBITION CENTRE, QUEENSLAND

Education faces the challenge of equipping young people to effectively participate in, and contribute to, a rapidly changing society. Education and training are recognized internationally as essential to successful workforce participation, individual well-being and national productivity.

- What knowledge, skills, attributes and dispositions do young Australians need for effective participation in society and work in the 21st Century?
- What are common features of the skills needed for engagement in society and work?
- How can educators support students to successfully make the transition from school to work and adult life?
- Does research from other countries indicate effective ways of equipping young people for life, work and citizenship?
- In what ways have attitudes on engagement in public and political life changed over time?

These are just some of the questions to be addressed at this conference.

CONFERENCE SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

Prof. Geoff Masters,
CEO, ACER, Vic

Prof Richard Slaughter,
Foresight, International, Qld

Ms Diana Smart,
Australian Institute of Family Studies

Mr Chris Robinson, CEO,
Department of Education and Children's Services, SA

Prof. Gerald Burke,
Centre for Economics of Education and Training

Dr Wolfram Schulz and Mr Julian Fraillon,
ACER, Vic

Ass. Prof. Jim Athanasou,
University of Technology, Sydney

Prof. Gabrielle Matters and Dr David Curtis,
ACER, Qld University of Adelaide, SA

Prof. Richard Sweet,
Sweet Group, NSW and University of Melbourne

Prof. Stuart Macintyre,
Harvard University, USA

Mr Julius Roe,
President, Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union

Ms Suzanne Mellor,
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SED Consulting, Vic

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Gifted education

Debunking the myths

Detractors of gifted education have fostered more than a few myths, says **Pam Matters**.

Gifted education in Australia has moved a long way forward since 1979, when the first national conference for the education of the gifted and talented was held at the University of Melbourne. 'Not far enough!' I can hear some of you cry. True, but even if we consider only formal education, there have been many widely accepted changes to the teaching, learning and parenting of these students at early childhood, primary, middle years, secondary and tertiary levels, but some obnoxious myths persist. Let me lay some of them to rest.

Myth 1: Regular body mass, good health and appealing physiognomy are prime indicators of giftedness.

Fact: Gifted students come in all shapes, sizes and chronologies, from diverse locations and ethnic origins. All educational institutions harbour one, some or many gifted students. Their marked difference from others is their ability, developing or sustained, to do something extraordinarily well, with passion, vigour and a relentlessness that the cynic might see as obsessive. In reality, they are searching for increased depth of understanding and practice in their areas of interest and ability. They are most at risk if their marked ability is not publicly demonstrable.

Myth 2: Gifted students are usually from middle to higher socioeconomic levels.

Fact: Gifted students are more likely to draw attention to themselves and be recognised in middle to higher socioeconomic levels in our society because that's where we expect them to be. Identifying gifted students is easiest if people are looking to find someone obviously brighter than their peers, but gifted students are typically conforming, academically-oriented and fit with their

educational institution. They immerse themselves successfully in their institution and satisfy the intellectual requirements of its academic fraternity. So they stand out, but doubt creeps in. Are they gifted? Some are, some aren't. Shouldn't every student in every classroom everywhere be given individual attention on a regular basis?

Myth 3: All students should be IQ tested formally to ensure that they are gifted.

Fact: Mandatory IQ testing is one of those issues in education that generates a lot of heat, if not much light, but the debate might cool down a little if we remembered that IQ tests delineate potential not achievement. Reliable tests administered by reputable professionals on a case-by-case basis can be useful. They provide one means of support to the subsequent advice given to parents and teachers concerning the behaviours, advanced programming and educational strategies appropriate to an individual student. They are not, and should not be, the only point of reference. Professionals, real or otherwise, who conduct IQ tests, write superficial reports, invoice large consultancy fees and walk away without follow-up for students, parents and teachers should be avoided.

Myth 4: Parents join national and state groups to ensure that their own children are advantaged by being recognised as gifted by association.

Fact: State and national associations for the gifted and talented convene and meet to support anyone who is interested in the welfare and progress of gifted and talented people. Although the interests of children of compulsory school age is the major focus of their work, they don't restrict their activities to support of this group. They provide advice for parents, activities for pre-

schoolers and career information sessions for tertiary students. They also help adults find sought-after networks relating to particular disciplines of inquiry as well as locate suitable mentors. It's not all conferences and topical workshops.

Myth 5: Public school teachers don't recognise gifted students within their own classrooms and are not politically inclined to do so.

Fact: Most teachers in Australia are able to identify conforming bright, high-achieving students who may be gifted. Some are not. There are really good kids doing what is expected of them, developing their potential and working to the limits of their abilities. Teachers across public and private systems have not been provided with the articulated training in each year of their courses at undergraduate level that will enable them to recognise giftedness in all its different guises. Why not? No government, Commonwealth or state, has seen this as a priority, so experienced graduate teachers have to rely on professional learning activities through online modules, such as those funded by the Commonwealth government and prepared by the Gifted Education Research Resource and Information Centre, as a lead-in to more advanced work at universities.

Myth 6: Parents of students attending public schools are less interested and involved in the education of their children.

Fact: Let's be blunt, some parents don't help their kids at all, but this occurs across all systems; however most parents, wherever they are, want their kids to do well in life, enjoy career success and become happy, productive, active citizens. Parents of students attending public schools require information in order to assist their children to make good choices about their lives. The comments of one parent I interviewed still haunt me: 'It's okay for the teachers who send their kids here. Their kids do well afterwards. They have parents who know the pathways that will lead them to good jobs and better lives. Teachers just know, we don't.' Poverty, ill health and an unreliable family infrastructure often discourage involvement. As educators, this is a challenge we can eradicate in our own communities.

Myth 7: Specialised educational settings isolate gifted students from their peers.

Fact: Inclusive, mixed-ability education suits the majority of students, including those who are gifted, but there are several types of giftedness

and talent – such as accelerated, compacted academic programming in select-entry high schools and master classes in the performing arts – that demand specialised teaching. Is there proof that children in specialised programs are automatically isolated from others?

Inclusive schooling provides a range of programs – from literacy activities to leadership courses, subject electives to computer training – to suit the needs of individuals. By structuring electives to provide in-depth knowledge or activities not usually available in a school, like palaeontology, say, or astronomy, it's possible to recognise giftedness within the school population that may not have been recognised. Students in such electives often display capacities unnoticed in mixed-ability or special-purpose classes. They rejoin friends and classmates with more not less self esteem, and no one applies labels to anyone. They are not suddenly gifted or bright, they're into fossils, or stars.

Myth 8: Australians value education and educational diversity.

Fact: That's actually true much of the time, but despite all the political talk about an education revolution, the silence is deafening.

To really get that revolution rolling we need to demand that:

- all undergraduate teachers in training be provided with articulated subjects in each year of their courses that train them to identify and teach gifted students with confidence, and
- an Australian Research Centre for Gifted Education be up and running by 2010 in order to draw together past, current and future work in this area.

Associate Professor Pam Matters teaches in the Faculty of Education of the University of Canberra, where she is the convenor of the Master of Educational Leadership (Australia and China). She is also a research associate at the National Centre for the Education of the Gifted and Talented in the United States.

Teachers across public and private systems have not been provided with the articulated training in each year of their courses at undergraduate level that will enable them to recognise giftedness in all its different guises.

Top End technology



There are many challenges facing education in remote communities in the Northern Territory: low literacy rates, high staff turnover... and the need to deliver new computer equipment in a tinnie down the river when floods make the roads impassable. **Rebecca Leech** reports.

When Hewlett-Packard (HP) devised a project to donate computer equipment to St Francis Xavier School in the remote Northern Territory community of Daly River, the idea was to provide the school with an information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure that could withstand the harsh environmental conditions of the area and help the school forge connections despite its geographical isolation. The idea seemed simple enough – until the abstract concepts of harsh conditions and isolation became the realities of floods and crocodiles.

HP's project to donate ICT infrastructure to a remote school is an offshoot of the company's international aid work. In recent years HP has supplied ICT equipment and infrastructure to a range of schools in Africa and Asia, including tsunami-affected schools in Thailand and earthquake-affected schools in Indonesia. About 12 months ago a team from HP's Australian branch, working with the idea of using technology to create a global education community, conceived the project of providing an Australian school with a world-class ICT facility.

Working closely with the NT Catholic Education Office (CEO) and the Australian Council for Educational Leaders (ACEL), the HP team set out to find the right school for the project, and on a hot tip took a trip out to the school at Daly River.

Daly River, population 468, is 220 kilometres southwest of Darwin, a three-hour drive when the roads are accessible or a half-hour light-plane flight when they're not. St Francis Xavier School at Daly River, run by the CEO, had 59 students enrolled last year. Most of the students take classes in Prep through to Year 9 – students interested in completing high school typically transfer to city boarding schools.

There are two seasons in the Top End – the wet and the dry. For Daly River, this means humidity, monsoonal rains and flooding from November to April, followed by dry heat and dust from May to October.

Despite these challenges, St Francis Xavier School is thriving, and the HP team found, if not what they expected, certainly what they needed to make the project a success.

Says HP's education marketing manager Kyiha Harris, 'I can say wholeheartedly, it was not what I ever expected in the middle of the outback. You drive into town and everything is green and lush and there are people standing in the street waving

to you. Kids run up to you and ask you your name and what AFL team you like. I've travelled quite a bit around the world but I have never been in a place where I have experienced such welcoming people. That's part of what makes Daly so special.'

One of the welcoming committee was then-principal of St Francis Xavier, Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann, a Daly River local whose résumé includes being the first fully-qualified Aboriginal teacher, and a member of the Order of Australia for her services to Aboriginal education and art.

Says Harris, 'The school really stood out because Miriam as principal and the teachers and the Indigenous teachers aides were so conscious of integrating 21st-century learning with traditional cultures. In addition to sitting in the classrooms learning Maths and spelling, the kids are out learning how to hunt for native food. They are learning all about their own culture and how to keep that alive in today's society. The children learn in dual languages, so they will speak to you in English and then tell you the words in their native tongue.'

Jenny Lewis, the chief executive officer of ACEL, was similarly impressed. 'The school has benefited from the experience of community and educational leaders, such as Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann,' says Lewis. 'She believes that education is a matter for the whole community and must be adapted to suit contemporary Indigenous needs. Her approach has had an extremely positive effect on the children and the community.'

Having recognised that St Francis Xavier had the qualities likely to make the project a success, HP then worked closely with the school to figure out exactly what ICT was required, and what would survive the rigours of the location. A classroom at the school was renovated to house the hardware, which comprised 15 compact desktop computers with 19-inch LCD monitors and integrated work stands, a workstation with a 30-inch LCD monitor for teachers, a colour laser-jet printer and a ProCurve switch. Power surge adapters were installed to

'There are crocodiles in the river. They sometimes walk through the school. I asked the kids what I should do if I saw a crocodile. They told me, "Run, miss. You don't mess around with crocs!"'



protect the technology from storms and lightning strikes. New desks and chairs were ordered and new locks were fitted to windows and doors.

'Flooding is a reality for six months of the year in Daly River, so we chose deliberately the dc7800 ultra-slim desktop PC, which is a little machine that sits neatly on the back of the monitor, on a desk well off the floor, so when the floods do hit the school, the computers won't get damaged. In the dry season, it's very hot, very dry and very dusty. All the school rooms are equipped with air-conditioning units but we don't want to be sucking too much power so we chose an energy-efficient model that has a more efficient power supply,' Harris explains.

While a lot of thought went into choosing the equipment, the team could not have anticipated the difficulties of delivering it to the school.

The desks and chairs were flown from Darwin to Daly River, but it was a struggle to get them off the plane given that the town's runway was flooded. The computers came via truck from Darwin but couldn't get through because parts of the road were more than two metres underwater.

'The road was cut at the tidemark, which means we had to get in a tinnie. This meant our lovely dc7800 PCs, our lovely monitors, our workstations, our huge flat-panel screen for the teachers, all came in a tinnie, down the floodwaters,' Harris says.

'At one point I was trying to get the printer into the tinnie, and I slipped in the mud – someone grabbed me from above and was holding me,

holding the printer, yelling for someone to catch the printer or else it was going straight into the water. This is what we've been going through to get out here.'

Even once in the tinnie, staff were not exactly safe, with very little between them and various forms of NT wildlife. 'There are crocodiles in the river. They sometimes walk through the school. I asked the kids what I should do if I saw a crocodile. They told me, "Run, miss. You don't mess around with crocs!"' says Harris.

All staff and computers survived the ordeal, however, and once the computers were set up, the teachers were trained in their use.

SchoolKiT, a provider of online professional development, provided initial face-to-face training for the teachers at St Francis Xavier School, and will also provide ongoing online support and curriculum materials, including the company's own edClass and pdPoint software.

Darwin-based ICT company CSG has offered to provide ongoing equipment maintenance, including routine servicing every six months.

This provision of ongoing support is an integral part of the project, says Harris.

'We are really looking forward to seeing what is going to happen at Daly River over the next few years. This is not a drop of equipment from HP and then we walk away. This is a long-term, sustainable project. We will be working with the NT CEO and the school going forward to actu-

Pictured: page 8 information and communication technology en route to St Francis Xavier School at Daly River; this page, Kyiha Harris with students at St Francis Xavier School, says education is about integrating 21st-century learning with traditional cultures.

ally learn more about how the students are using this technology and how the teachers are using the technology. We want to know how it is truly affecting the kids' learning,' she says.

Staff from HP, the NT CEO and St Francis Xavier School likewise say that monitoring outcomes and maintaining professional relationships are the keys to the project's success.

The current principal at St Francis Xavier, Maj O'Neill, just started at the school this term following Ungunmerr-Bauman's retirement last year.

'I feel so privileged to be able to lead my school into the future,' says O'Neill. 'This is such an exciting time to be starting at the school. I can already see the huge difference this is going to make to the students, the school and the Daly River community as a whole. The project has my full support and we will continue to work closely with HP to ensure we get the most out of this wonderful opportunity.'

Michael Avery, Director of the NT CEO, agrees. 'There are very specific challenges asso-

ciated with remote education, which need to be addressed. Throughout 2008, we will be working with HP to monitor factors such as school attendance, participation and academic success to measure the impact the new ICT infrastructure has on the students at St Francis Xavier School, and where adjustments might need to be made,' he says.

'I would like to see an ongoing relationship between the NT CEO, HP and the Daly River community because I believe that these kids will engage with the technology in a really special way. We would like to look at expanding such a program to the many Indigenous schools run by the NT CEO. We have an opportunity and a responsibility to lead the way.'

Rebecca Leech is a journalist at the Australian Council for Educational Research and winner of the prestigious Writer of the Year trophy in the 2007 Bell Awards, staged annually by Publishers Australia. She travelled to the NT as a guest of HP.

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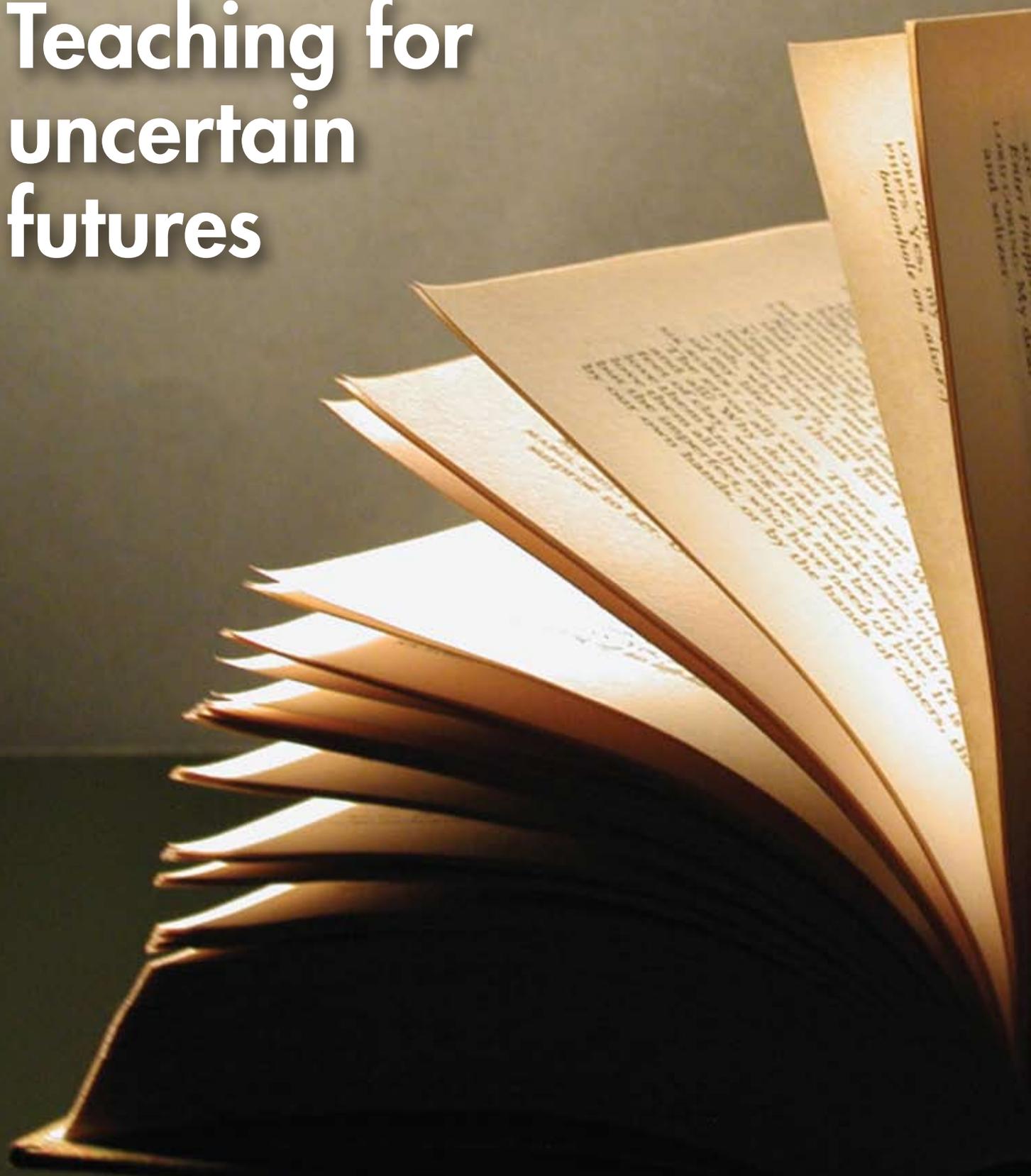
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Open book scenarios

Teaching for uncertain futures





What are some of the possible futures for teaching in Australia through to the year 2030, and what kinds of practices and skills will teachers need for such futures? **Peter Fuller** imagines the possibilities.

A host of questions present themselves when teachers turn their minds to the future of their profession. What kind of society will schools function in, and what will families, politicians and business expect of its educators? What kinds of education will people need? How will technology change the ways that people learn? And what can teachers do to equip themselves for the challenges ahead?

It was to help teachers and principals grapple with such questions that Teaching Australia launched its extensive futures-thinking venture, the Open Book Scenarios project, in March 2006. As a new organisation charged with strengthening the quality of teaching and school leadership, Teaching Australia was keen to examine ways in which the teaching environment might change over the next 25 years, and to provide a tool to help teaching professionals with skills they would need to meet the 'uncertain futures' coming their way. Scenario building, a management technique that helps people step away from their daily routines and see different possibilities, offered the means to do this. Teaching Australia and the Neville Freeman Agency started the scenario-building process rolling early in 2006.

The scenario-building process finished in September 2007, and Teaching Australia has now embarked on the next stage of its program to bring the fruits of scenario building to Australian teaching professionals with a public call for experts to develop suitable training activities and materials. In March it launched the 58-page scenario book, *Teaching for Uncertain Futures*. To follow up, it is exploring the possibility of running a series of workshops designed to give teachers and principals additional skills to lead scenario-building activities in their own schools.

Did scenario building work? Most of the 55 education professionals from around Australia who took part in the Open Book Scenarios project were enthusiastic about the results. Sue Fox, a scenario builder from Queensland, was typical in finding it 'an exciting journey.' She and team members were, she says, 'taken outside our comfort zones, our often narrow classroom boundaries.' And future action? 'We all go back to our educational institutions energised, with tools and strategies to plan, collaborate and empower those around us – students, parents, fellow teachers and leaders.'

There is a strong core of requirements in key areas – teacher education, professional practice, community engagement, and professional learning, leadership and identity – now and in the future.

What factors struck the team members most forcibly when they met to create four imagined but plausible alternative ‘scenario worlds’ which serve as the reference points in scenario-building? Global warming and climate change ranked high among the large-scale influences. So too did the nation’s economic health and the impact of new technology. All have the potential to affect the physical and financial condition of schools, and the ability of teachers to work effectively.

In the social picture, the team identified immigration and the increasing fluidity of family relationships as challenges for education professionals. There was concern at potential political interference and the ill effects of widening disparities between haves and have-nots. All those concerns, in different combinations, helped to shape four scenario worlds, from utopian to dystopian: one harmonious and tolerant, one highly competitive, one where society is polarised and one world which is fractured and violent.

Although the scenario worlds differ widely, the scenario builders found that some practices and skills would commonly be needed in all of them. That conclusion suggests that there is a strong core of requirements in key areas – teacher education, professional practice, community engagement, and professional learning, leadership and identity – to ensure the success of individuals and the profession as a whole, now and in the future.

For example, according to the scenario builders, quality teacher education will remain critical to good teaching and effective schools. Tomorrow’s teachers will need to be well grounded in technologies, especially those for learning and teaching. They will be advocates for pluralism and democracy, besides being equipped to meet the needs of students with very different backgrounds and abilities.

The scenario builders rate motivating students to learn and enjoy learning as major goals of future professional practice. Teachers and principals will need to be messengers of hope and optimism, instilling a sense of pride in students and helping them develop their personal and interpersonal skills, and their capacity for cooperative action. Then, as now, teachers will need to interact

with the communities in which they work, and strike a rapport with families.

Principals have a pivotal role to play in helping teachers to understand and adapt to change in every scenario created. School leaders do best by concentrating on collaboration with peers, fostering creative approaches within their schools and sharing responsibilities with leadership teams. Finally, the scenario builders have seen that the teacher’s role will remain important in society, even though lifelong careers are likely to become the exception rather than the norm. It means that the profession may have to be clearer about its values and inculcate newcomers quickly.

How can teachers and principals make best use of the knowledge developed during the project? *Teaching for Uncertain Futures* discusses the project in depth and is designed for use by schools when planning for the future. It discusses the value for schools and school communities in using scenario building to identify issues which might affect them and analyse the steps they can take to achieve the best outcome for the school – and the students. As the book’s authors say, ‘Engaging with the future creates the capacity to anticipate it, raise awareness about it, avert it and change it.’

Using scenarios means learning to think differently. As Oliver Freeman, principal of the Neville Freeman Agency explains, scenario building aims ‘to get people to see that there is more than one worldview, and that those worldviews have equal validity. That’s the thing that makes people change.’ He gives the example of someone buying a new car. ‘If you’ve been driving a Holden all your life and you buy a Volvo, you’ll be amazed how many other Volvos there are on the road – and you’ve never noticed them before – because suddenly your worldview has changed. That’s the kind of “Aha!” (perception) we like people to get.’

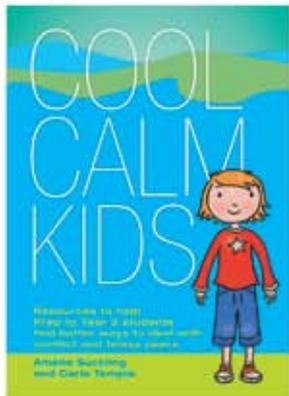
Peter Fuller is a freelance journalist based in Canberra. He was a former chief sub editor of The Canberra Times.

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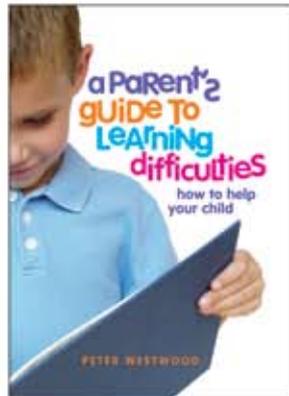
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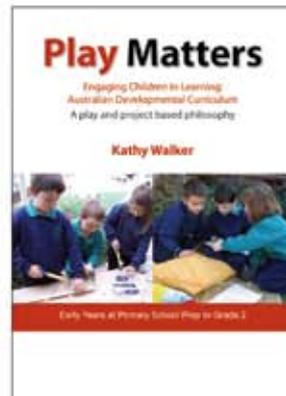
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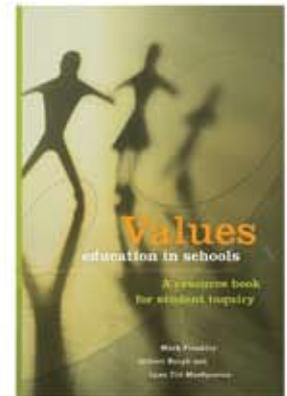
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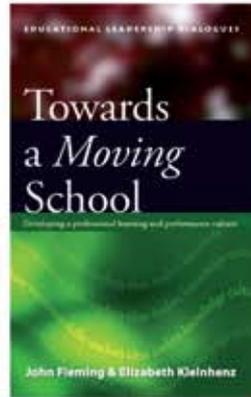
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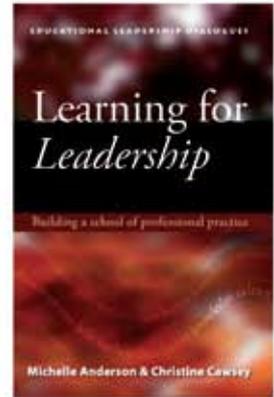
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Imagining school

School leaders work in a rapidly-changing and challenging world, so where can they look for inspiration to imagine a new school leadership for the future?

Neil Cranston and **Lisa Ehrich** have some answers.

School leaders now work in a rapidly-changing and challenging world. Where can we look for inspiration to imagine a new school leadership for the future? One place is in our educational institutions, but there are some other quite different worlds that can also inspire us.

We interviewed 10 prominent Australians, published in *What is This Thing Called Leadership?* which was reviewed in the October 2007

edition of *Professional Educator*. We invited Tim Costello, Christine Nixon, Michael Kirby, Linda Burney, Peter Doherty, Jim Soorley, Fiona Wood, Ian Kiernan, Sarina Russo and Maggi Sietsma to offer their thoughts about leadership, and to reflect on some of the experiences that shaped their thinking. We used James Kouzes and Barry Posner's *The Leadership Challenge* as an organising framework to help us to synthesise the leadership



leadership

stories of these Australians in terms of five key leadership practices: modelling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act and encouraging the heart.

Each of the 10 leaders we interviewed model the way, through words or actions. Each one is very clear about what they stand for, what they expect of themselves and what they expect in, and of, others. All 10 demonstrate considerable modesty, given their achievements, but they certainly model the way, whether among, and for those with whom they work closely, or others less directly associated with their work. All demonstrate levels of excellence in their own endeavours, providing clear and unambiguous models of their

values, their beliefs and their visions. As Fiona Wood puts it, 'I know quite clearly in my mind where I want to be – where my skills are – what gets me up in the morning.'

Inspiring a shared vision is, for some of the 10 leaders, possibly the most significant of all the five practices. They are strongly and overtly committed to a vision, pursuing it with belief and considerable enthusiasm. Their visionary drive is coupled with an awareness that they need to enlist others to it. Ian Kiernan, for example, recognises the importance of leaders engaging others if they wanted to achieve their goals.

Each of these leaders also challenges the process, seeking innovative ways to change and

improve, experimenting, taking risks and learning from mistakes. Peter Doherty likens this practice to a journey of discovery, of seeking answers to challenging questions. Christine Nixon certainly created new paths for women leaders in an organisation long dominated by a strong male culture. Ian Kiernan's leadership story is replete with challenges and obstacles, requiring persistence and risk taking to find ways to tackle challenges. Providing a sobering reality check for this leadership practice, Linda Burney reminds us that in the quest for achieving one's vision, there may be a personal cost.

She also argues strongly that leadership is not a sole activity. It draws on, and develops from, others. Enabling others to act is the fourth leadership practice. Here, leaders need to understand that achieving one's vision is a team effort, and that teams are built on collaboration, trust and strong relationships. As Burney puts it, 'leadership is about the people that have coalesced around you; the people that you coalesce around yourself. What happens is only a reflection of your capacity to build people's confidence and build things.'

Fiona Wood likewise says leadership requires a team-based approach, where the collective skill sets of the team are harnessed to solve the problems and meet the challenges at hand. Peter Doherty similarly believes that genuine collegiality among, and respect for, all team members is critical in achieving desired outcomes. As he explains, true leadership creates mutual respect. 'The best directors...go and have coffee with the cleaners and the professors and it's about communication and about really valuing everybody at every level in an organisation for what they do, and it doesn't matter whether they're the people who clean the floors and wash the glassware or the people who run the research programs.'

The fifth leadership practice, encouraging the heart, requires that leaders recognise the achievements and contributions of others – that people are valued and successes are celebrated. Of all the five leadership practices, this one is less evident, at least in an overt sense, among the 10 leaders. Certainly it's there in some ways in the comments of some of the leaders, such as Fiona Wood, but it's clearly embedded more broadly in the strong relational focus the leaders identify as critical to successful leadership.

There are a number of things we can learn from the leadership stories of these outstanding Australians. They are presented here as challenges for school leaders to reflect on as we seek new learnings for the future.

Leadership is not a concept to be considered simplistically nor in isolation. We can neither define it by a formula nor propose a recipe for its development. It takes many forms, is understood in different ways and is enacted in different contexts. Despite this, there are a number of commonalities that can be brought to our understandings.

How leaders talk about leadership, how they understand its nuances and its practice is deeply embedded in their own life forces and experiences, their personal values, beliefs and driving principles and the fields of endeavour in which they work.

Leadership must be about something! It must be vision driven, it must enliven commitment and passion not only within the leader as an individual, but also among those with whom the leader works. It's ongoing, and not easy, since leaders are constantly confronted by challenges and barriers. Risk taking and creativity are often required to overcome these in order to achieve the vision. Commitment and conviction are mandatory. It occurs with and through others, balancing accountability and compassion in the drive to do better tomorrow than today.

There are clear and strong resonances here for those of us working in education, despite the fact these learnings are drawn from non-education sectors. Perhaps one of the significant challenges they offer is that we, in education, need to increasingly look beyond the education sector for new ideas as well as for confirmation of our own contextualised thinking.

How do the learnings identified above align with the education literature and research? In our major review of the literature, with Leanne Morton, published in 2007 as part of one Australian system's review of its leadership framework for principals, we came to the following conclusions.

LEADERSHIP NEEDS TO BE CONTEXTUALISED

The complex, changing and challenging local, national and global contexts within which schools now operate are leading to new ways of learning and of schooling. This in turn is affecting the

ways educational leaders operate. Educational leaders today need:

- a sound understanding of emerging local, national and international developments in education and related disciplines or areas of interest in order to take a global view of where their school and their students' learnings are located and where these might need to be positioned for a socially sustainable future, taking account of key trends and developments
- the capacity to use such understandings to engage and lead their school communities in discussions about schooling and learning for the 21st Century – which, in part, requires a futures orientation
- the capacity to work well with different individuals and groups locally and more broadly to establish networks and alliances with various educational, community and other bodies, and to engage relevant individuals and groups in the life of their schools
- the capacity to lead effectively in a time of discontinuous change and uncertainty, drawing on deep understandings of the organisational culture of their schools to effect change, and
- to take an advocacy role for their school communities by offering input to policy development systemically and by maximising resources for their schools.

In a broad sense, educational leaders need to be managers of meaning, providing a key interface between the rest of the community and their more immediate school community. Educational leaders have a key role in the development of the vision for their schools – understanding where their school fits in the bigger picture, now and in the future.

MANAGEMENT IS IMPORTANT

Competent and accountable management is a vital element of the broad role of educational leaders. Educational leaders today need:

- human, financial and resource management skills
- a sound knowledge of system-level expectations, policies, pedagogy, legislation, the law and so on
- management skills in relation to external interests, and
- a sound knowledge of accountability requirements – in order to meet system requirements in terms of policy implementation, assessment and reporting of student learning and the like.

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT LEARNING

The fundamental emphasis in educational leadership must properly be on learning and development, which is what distinguishes educational

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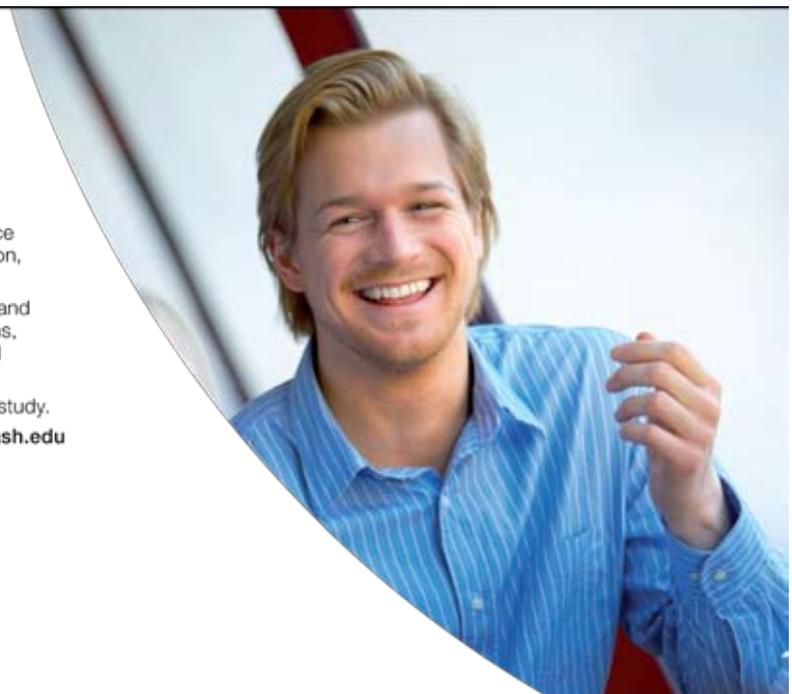
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leadership from leadership in other contexts. Educational leaders today need:

- to ensure that student learning, including the academic and social development of the whole person, remains the fundamental focus of their schools' endeavours
- to be critically reflective lifelong learners
- to be able to make links between theory and practice
- to be leaders of learning in their school communities
- to be champions for their colleagues, particularly aspirant principals, as they move through their careers, and
- to engage in quality formal and informal professional development, including formal tertiary programs, one-off targeted sessions, mentoring, peer coaching, professional reading and research.

The vision to be fostered by educational leaders here is on developing the learner-centred school that values learning for all by fostering the development of learning communities, seeing the school as a learning resource and hub for the community.

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IS A PURPOSEFUL VALUES-DRIVEN ACTIVITY

Educational leaders need to be aware of their own values, beliefs and principles as well as those of their school, system and community, and be driven to develop their schools as socially just and inclusive institutions.

Educational leaders operating in such a way understand their schools' community-service and social responsibilities to develop young people as mature individuals who are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to create a better, more just and sustainable future. Educational leaders today need values that enable:

- a learning-centred focus that addresses tolerance in their schools
- equity, social justice and compassion in their schools
- inclusiveness that enables the development of the whole person in their schools, and
- empowerment in their schools.

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IS A DISTRIBUTED ACTIVITY

Educational leadership is typically a form of distributed, shared or, as Frank Crowther and others

describe it, parallel leadership, empowering by working with and through others.

Collaborative, inclusive and co-leadership notions require educational leaders to operate in non-hierarchical, trusting and mutually respectful ways. To do so, they need to know their staff and their communities, and need to be able to communicate effectively with them in order to maximise the leadership capabilities in their schools.

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IS A RELATIONAL ACTIVITY

Educational leaders need excellent interpersonal skills in order to develop sound relationships with diverse individuals and groups within and external to their school communities. Managing meaning for themselves and others, visioning, gaining commitment and developing collaborative partnerships are core responsibilities. Educational leaders also need to be astute managers of the micropolitics of their communities, especially as these relate to key leadership teams, such as senior management and executive teams.

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND DISPOSITIONS

The literature on educational leadership is replete with lists of the skills, knowledge, attitudes and dispositions required for effective educational leadership. Those that have emerged as the more notable in recent years are listed here, but the list is not exhaustive.

One of the most significant capabilities to have been identified in research on educational leadership in recent years has been that of self awareness, in some areas of the literature referred to as emotional intelligence, which some researchers say is fundamental to educational leadership. The argument is that it's only with self awareness, maturity and wisdom that educational leaders can lead and manage others in their communities.

Other capabilities required by educational leaders include:

- modelling the way, particularly when it comes to challenges and risk taking
- influencing others, particularly in terms of optimism and confidence
- being adaptable and responsive
- having commitment

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Dr Lisa Ebrich teaches in the School of Learning and Professional Studies of the Centre for Learning Innovation at Queensland University of Technology.

They are the co-authors of What is This Thing Called Leadership? This is a version of their paper presented at Imagination, Inspiration, Innovation: the national conference of the Australian College of Educators, held in Hobart in April.

- being creative and open to innovation
- having courage
- having resilience
- being tough-minded but also compassionate and fair
- having integrity combined with political astuteness and legal awareness
- managing diversity, and
- leading and managing change.

One underpinning capability is the capacity to bring the wisdom gained from life experiences, observation and knowledge to complex decision making – wisdom that contributes to sound ethical decision making. Patrick Duignan, writing in ‘Forming capable leaders: From competence to capabilities,’ argues that leaders need confidence, commitment, character and wise judgment if they are to lead others in unfamiliar and changing circumstances.

The National College of School Leadership (NCSL) in England recently released a summary document of their work across the past five years, including commissioned research, practitioner enquiries, seminars, think tanks and literature reviews. This succinct summary of the NCSL’s substantial leadership research identifies seven key findings:

- context matters
- learning-centred leadership is critical
- distributing leadership matters
- leadership in schools is changing
- the core tasks of school leaders are clear
- school leadership is hard work and rewarding, and
- leadership development and succession planning has never been more important.

PARADOXES, TENSIONS AND DILEMMAS

Look at the real day-to-day operational context of educational leaders and you’re likely to find them experiencing a number of paradoxes, dilemmas or tensions. They include the need to:

- respond to local and system-level demands and priorities that are not necessarily compatible
- act as the leader while empowering others in a model of distributed, shared or parallel leadership
- achieve work-life balance while fulfilling the professional and personal demands of being an educational leader

- drive a future-oriented, sustainable vision for their schools in discontinuously changing and challenging times while managing the reality of their schools right now
- continue their professional learning journey, keeping abreast of educational and related developments and trends, while meeting significant competing management demands, and
- allocate limited resources in effective, efficient and equitable ways to maximise the learning of all students.

Doing these things is not simple or easy. Indeed, principals frequently say they walk a tightrope of tension as they struggle with such dilemmas, but working with and through others, learning with and from each other formally and informally remains one of the most effective keys we have if we are to unlock the door to better leadership practices in our schools.

Learning is at the heart of the challenges we face in schools and in school leadership. Leadership takes many forms, is understood in different ways and enacted in different contexts. One of our ongoing challenges as educational researchers, writers and practitioners is to continue to explore ideas from the usual – and less usual – sources. That journey has only really just begun in these early years of the 21st Century.

For references go to www.acer.edu.au/professionaleducator/references.html

AUSTRALIAN LEADERSHIP PACKAGE

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 Jim Varghese, Director-General, Primary Industries and Fisheries & President, IPAA (QLD)

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The arts Time for an overhaul

The creative and performing arts need a whole-of-system and a whole-of-school overhaul, says **Seamus O'Grady**.

'I can't really explain it, I haven't got the words.

It's a feeling that you can't control.

I suppose it's like forgetting, losing who you are,

And at the same time something makes you whole.'

So sings the aspiring Billy Elliot in 'Electricity,' the song that takes Lee Hall and Elton John's *Billy Elliot: The musical* to its climax.

'Billy Elliot has taken Sydney by storm!' proclaims the billboard above Sydney's Anzac Bridge. On the north side of town, meanwhile, *As it is in Heaven*, a movie celebrating the joys of singing, has been playing solid for over a year. There are more musicals playing across our cities than most of us can remember in the last 20 years.

The New South Wales Schools Spectacular has been going strong since 1984. Billed as 'the world's biggest youth variety event,' the Schools Spectacular brings together 3,000 talented students. They form a 1,200-voice choir, an 80-piece orchestra, a 1,500-member dance troupe, rock, jazz and brass bands. They and talented soloists from more than 250 NSW public schools rehearse for months in preparation for four shows over two days and nights at the Sydney Entertainment Centre.

Likewise, the Sydney Catholic Schools Performing Arts unit brings together more than 300 students to rehearse choral, orchestral and other performance pieces every Monday night for three hours over 20 weeks of the year. Similar events occur in other states.

On speech night principals count on a great musical performance from their students – and they rarely fail to deliver.

Meanwhile, back in the classroom, literacy and numeracy and the external testing regime continue to dominate the time available to teachers and students. Have you ever visited a primary classroom and asked the children to sing a song for you like in the old days?

I can tell you that sometimes they can't get past a rendition of 'Advance Australia Fair.' Most primary teachers tell me that they can, with resources and support, manage to teach the visual arts, but music and dance? Teachers say they find both difficult themselves. And we want them to teach music and dance?

The paradox is that kids love their music – I hear them singing along with their iPods, oblivious of the other passengers in the bus – and are

desperate to have a school social where, too often, their limited dance repertoire is on display.

What to do? We'll never have enough specialist trained teachers for the school system, a fact recognised in 2005 by the Commonwealth government's National Review of School Music Education, tellingly subtitled 'Augmenting the diminished,' which concluded that 'music education is at a critical point where prompt action is needed to right the inequalities in school music.' It then proposed a seven-point plan for action – none of which appear to have been acted upon as far as I can see.

Adding to the proposals, here's mine: take a whole-of-school approach for the creative and performing arts and a whole-of-system approach for systems of schools. I know this is not entirely new – witness the performing arts units of various state education authorities – but there are some important principles to explore and adopt.

The whole school community needs to engage in promoting the performing arts because everyone in a school can play a part, parents, students, the community, performing arts teachers, industry professionals, local musical societies. You'd be surprised just how many rich resources you'll find in schools and school communities. It needn't be left to the few teachers with expertise, and the whole school owns the performing arts. I guess it's a bit like an extension of the school musical where oftentimes every teacher ends up with a job.

At a system level there needs to be an opportunity for all students to participate in perform-

ance events that go beyond the limitations of their own school's resources, to join with students from other schools, to collaborate and learn from others and experience the thrill of large-scale performance. Most system administrators agree in principle with this, but many balk at the financial implications.

When you consider that large-scale performance can be something that makes you whole, that's a shame.

LINKS:

For more on systemic ways to promote and support the performing arts along the lines of Sydney's Catholic Schools Performing Arts program, visit <http://www.ceo.syd.catholic.edu.au/cms/Jahial/site/curriculumonline/pid/54>

For more on the NSW Schools Spectacular, visit www.schoolspectacular.com.au

For more on Queensland's State Schools Onstage, 'Creative Generation,' visit <http://education.qld.gov.au/community/events/creativegeneration/onstage/index.html>

For more on the Victorian State Schools Spectacular, 'Joining the Chorus,' visit www.education.vic.gov.au/about/events/jtc/spectacular.htm

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Seamus O'Grady has been the Director of Curriculum in the Catholic Education Office, Sydney, for the past 10 years. Previously he was a consultant for Sydney Catholic Schools after 16 years as principal of colleges in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales.

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Wellbeing

Shelley Thornton reports on her research on the way teachers' attitudes, values and beliefs affect children's social and emotional wellbeing.

This story began in 2007 when I recruited a small group of teachers who wanted to make a difference by engaging collaboratively and actively on the matter of children's social and emotional wellbeing.

I'm a teacher who is conducting an action research project into teachers' attitudes, values and beliefs regarding children's wellbeing across three schools in northern New South Wales. The research seeks to identify how teachers presently support children's mental wellbeing and then, through action research processes, examine the changes that occur in primary classroom practices when teachers focus on developing social and emotional competencies in their children.

My early research shows that teachers have concerns regarding children's mental wellbeing and the way issues to do with wellbeing manifest in their classrooms. They're concerned about things like students' anxiety, lack of resilience, parental neglect and indifference to education, and students' lack of motivation to learn, as well as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and similar disorders, and bullying.

They also talk about the kinds of social and emotional skills they hope to see in children: 'knowing when they have a problem'; 'taking on board positive comments'; 'being realistic and knowing they're not great at everything'; and 'understanding and listening to themselves and to others.'

Such comments reflect surprisingly clearly the types of social and emotional learning that promote student wellbeing identified by Jeffrey Kress and colleagues, namely: self awareness and awareness of others; positive attitudes and values; responsible decision making; and social interaction skills.

Table 1 gives shape and substance to that social and emotional learning framework, drawing on the work of Kress as well as Joseph Zins and colleagues, and on the 'Excellence and Enjoyment: Social and emotional aspects of learning' primary national strategy in England. Such a framework aims to help teachers to think about the skills and actions that children call on to communicate and to build relationships. It explains what these skills look like for both teachers and children, thereby

Defining social and emotional learning	What is it?	We recognise it when children can say...	It is important in children because...
Self-awareness and knowing one's emotions	Self-awareness and knowing one's emotions enable children to know how they learn; how they relate to others; what they are thinking and what they are feeling.	I can predict how I'm going to feel in a new situation or meeting new people.	It helps children raise their consciousness of self so as they are empowered to make choices.
Motivation and responsible decision making	Motivation and responsible decision making enable learners to set themselves goals and work towards them, to focus and concentrate on learning, to persist when learning is difficult and to develop independence, resourcefulness and personal organisation.	I can set a challenge or goal, thinking ahead and considering the consequences for others and myself.	It contributes to enhancing children's health through drug prevention and citizenship or service learning. It assists in developing perseverance and resilience.
Self management and managing emotions	Self management and managing emotions enable children to use a range of strategies to recognise and accept their feelings. They can use this to regulate their learning and behaviour, for example managing anxiety or anger with protective behaviours.	I know what triggers my anger and how our bodies change when we start to get angry. I understand that the way I express my feelings can change the way other people feel.	It helps children to develop safe behaviours and practices. It teaches children about delayed gratification.
Empathy and social awareness	Empathy and social awareness enable children to understand others, and anticipate and predict their likely thoughts, feelings and perceptions. It involves seeing things from another's point of view and modifying one's own response, in the light of this understanding.	I know how it can feel to be excluded or treated badly because of being different in some way.	It contributes to enhancing children's meta-cognitive processes. It enhances resilience when children understand the behaviours and emotions of others.
Relationship management and social skills	Relationship management and social skills enable children to relate to others, take an active part in a group, communicate with different audiences, negotiate, resolve differences and support the learning of others.	I can accept and appreciate people's friendship and try not to demand more than they are able or wish to give. I can recognise 'put downs' and know how they affect people, so I try not to use them.	It enhances interpersonal communication for lifelong friendships. It encourages assertive behaviour. It allows children to make positive attachments.

Table 1. Aspects of social and emotional learning

peers and their administration they can survive periods of uncertainty.' For yet another, 'if an intervention provided by the teacher fails to have an impact on the child, the teacher's mental wellbeing can suffer.' Clearly, the mental wellbeing of students can have a significant impact on the mental wellbeing of teachers.

Teachers also say that schools are limited in their capacity to support the mental wellbeing of children. For many, time is the resource required most. 'It sounds terrible..., this year has been incredibly busy, and I have so many ideas of things I'd like to do, but have not done them.' It was considered by one school that the nature of classrooms had changed. 'Once upon a time children used to gather around the desk and the teacher would listen to their stories, but now listening and talking with children has today been replaced with busyness.'

Besides time, teachers say changing professional expectations have led to some ambiguity and consequent tension in their counselling role and level of involvement. As one put it, 'sometimes it's not our place; sometimes you open up a bigger can

of worms; sometimes you have to get on with the lesson.' Teachers also say that a lack of expertise as well as the possible legal implications of intervention may cause some teachers to act cautiously.

Such comments suggest that teacher confidence and teacher efficacy is a barrier to supporting wellbeing. Having the knowledge and strategies to deal with problems and 'having to cope with the whole class at one time where curriculum expectations create pressures in allowing the teacher to monitor individual needs and wellbeing closely' is a typical concern.

There's a fundamental question that lies at the heart of all this: who is responsible for children's mental wellbeing? Most teachers believe a child's family plays the main role in developing that child's mental wellbeing, and many say parents have the major role to play as they are the primary educators.

For some children, including children in this study, however, home is not always happy and supportive. That's one reason why teachers believe that school must be a safe haven. 'School

for some students is a sanctuary,' as one teacher put it. While some teachers believe a child's mental wellbeing is fundamentally a family responsibility, most acknowledge that responsibility also lies with the school, the classroom teacher, school peers and the child.

My research has followed teachers as they focus on a particular area of practice in their classroom or school, tracking interactions to gain further insights into social and emotional learning in schools. These focus areas range from whole-of-school strategies to individual classroom practices.

An action-research approach means principals and teachers are actively engaged in the examination of whole-of-school strategies and classroom practices. Teachers are focusing on individual children, by implementing changes in their classroom environment. It's a multifaceted approach that enables research and professional learning to better understand children's mental wellbeing on many levels. Because teachers are co-researchers they're deeply engaged in monitoring their own

learning and in maintaining ongoing research and professional learning in their respective schools.

The research thus far shows that teachers recognise the importance of understanding differences in the way children approach social situations. It also shows that teachers have a fundamental belief that children can develop the competencies, particularly empathy, to be positive social members of a group. It shows, further, that some teachers are hesitant to take responsibility for children's mental wellbeing, but also that most do believe they have a role to play in building relationships and in the identification of mental wellbeing issues. Finally the research shows that overcoming limitations such as time and teacher efficacy in supporting children's mental wellbeing is desirable. We need to recover precious moments so that teachers can listen to children and their stories as well as reflect and act appropriately on emotional situations.

For references go to www.acer.edu.au/professionaleducator/references.html

Shelley Thornton is undertaking doctoral research at the Centre for Children and Young People at Southern Cross University.

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Complex, not simple

The VET pathway from welfare to work

Vocational education and training can help welfare recipients to pursue pathways that lead to paid employment, but there needs to be collaboration between sectors to ensure that potential barriers are overcome, say **Kate Barnett** and **John Spoehr**.

The policy underpinning the Australian welfare-to-work initiative is driven by a perceived need to reduce dependency on income support payments by moving those who are considered able, or potentially able, into paid employment. This has been part of a wider process of 'welfare reform,' which is evident in a group of nations, including Australia, Canada, the United States, Great Britain and New Zealand, and has been pursued by both liberal and conservative governments, as Peter Saunders has previously noted in 'What helps the welfare to work transition?' Welfare-to-work programs require a fundamental shift in the traditional relationship between the vocational education and training (VET) sector and the welfare sector, necessitating the establishment

of policies, structures and processes designed to support cross-sector working relationships.

In Australia, the welfare-to-work policy took effect from 1 July 2006. Income support recipients are expected to pursue pathways that lead to paid employment through work experience, training or community work. Parents of children over the age of six receiving the Parenting Payment, long-term unemployed people, mature-age people on the Newstart Allowance and people receiving the Disability Support Pension are the groups targeted by this policy.

The majority of people in these four groups, according to the Australian Council of Social Service, have relatively low levels of formal education, which means that the VET sector can

play a critical role in increasing their employability. Increasing the skills and employability of people in the groups targeted by this initiative brings benefits to them, while addressing the need for a skilled workforce and skill shortages. Consequently, as Chandra Shah and Gerald Burke point out in a paper prepared for the National Training Reform Taskforce in 2006, the VET sector is a key pathway for those on the welfare-to-work journey.

The activities most linked to labour market success are education and training, effective job searching and paid work. As Peter Saunders points out, longitudinal research identifies a strong relationship between type of training and quality of employment, with short-term programs being likely to lead to low-wage, low-quality work and a higher likelihood of returning to the welfare system.

Although the Australian income support system acknowledges that training is a pathway to employment, the emphasis of the welfare-to-work policy is on moving unemployed people into work as soon as possible. It does not adequately acknowledge that high-quality employment needs to be distinguished from low-paid, insecure employment, and that the length of training and a recognised credential needs to be distinguished from 'quick-fix' training. Here the difference is between training that increases skills and provides a work-relevant qualification leading to long-term employment and short courses that may neither increase skill levels nor provide a credential, and that may lead to poor-quality employment and a return to unemployment.

Our research explored the role that VET can play in assisting the transition from welfare to work, using the following research questions to guide the project.

- What are the issues faced by the welfare-to-work target group, especially parents, older people and those with a disability, in making a successful transition into employment?
- What do we know about what makes training effective for these groups?
- What is the existing state of training provision for people in receipt of welfare in Australia? Are there any examples of where this is working well?
- What are the relevant findings from international research regarding welfare-to-work education and training programs?

- What do VET providers require to ensure they deliver the most effective training possible for these specific groups of people? Are some providers better placed than others to respond to these needs?
- How can VET programs be designed to dovetail well with non-VET programs to give a complete package of assistance to the affected groups?

The project was structured according to five interrelated research methods: a review of national and international research on transition from income support to paid employment, with an emphasis on the role played by education and training; structured interviews with key stakeholders to explore the issues facing people with complex needs in accessing VET and the paid labour market; two case studies of good practice, focusing on the lessons learned at the delivery level, when assisting Centrelink recipients in the transition from welfare to work through the VET pathway; a telephone survey involving a sample of 130 students enrolled in Technical and Further Education South Australia (TAFESA) preparatory programs who were also current or recent recipients of Centrelink payments; and five focus groups involving a total of 31 people, each group structured to allow for more in-depth exploration of issues emerging from the telephone survey findings.

Our findings indicate that VET can provide a pathway to employment for disadvantaged students, if the training: addresses students' needs

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in a holistic way, rather than focusing on training-specific needs; and includes, where necessary, a preparatory pathway prior to engagement with mainstream VET programs to assist the achievement of effective training outcomes.

The education and training pathway to employment is neither simple nor direct for most people with low educational attainment and other

disadvantages. The need to integrate preparatory with 'mainstream' VET has been confirmed by Karin Martinson and Julie Strawn, as well as by Demetra Smith Nightingale and colleagues, and is demonstrated in the second case study in our research.

The VET sector, particularly the TAFE component, has a tradition of providing initiatives that promote access and equity, but it cannot be assumed these will automatically meet the needs of the group targeted by the welfare-to-work initiative. Our findings from the case studies show that TAFESA staff have needed to develop three specific

strategies to address the challenges faced by the welfare-to-work target groups:

- the development of collaborative working relationships outside the VET sector with Centrelink, rehabilitation and Job Network providers, social workers and psychologists; and inside the sector between teaching and support staff, and between preparatory and mainstream teaching staff
- the provision of personal and learning support services to accompany VET studies, and
- the flexible design and delivery of preparatory vocational programs.

These strategies are seen very positively by the students we interviewed and their impact has been significant, not only in terms of learning outcomes, but also in the form of personal and social outcomes. The welfare-to-work initiative has had its own impact on the VET sector – an increased workload for teaching and support staff, which arises both from the numbers and the complex needs of this group of students.

Consultations with VET sector stakeholders identified a number of Centrelink eligibility requirements that reflect a lack of understanding of how the VET system operates and which can have a negative impact on students. For example, prior to the implementation of welfare to work, disadvantaged students were able to attend a preparatory course, but VET staff report that they now see more of this group of students entering programs directly, since the students believe they must get a job as quickly as possible in order to meet Centrelink requirements and that therefore they have no time for a preparatory course.

Previous research, coupled with feedback from students, VET stakeholders and our case studies suggests a model which can be described as good practice. Features of good practice include:

- case management and coordination of support services
- an individualised approach, including individual training plans
- collaboration and linkage across and within sectors
- links between VET staff and local employers
- a systems-based structure for collaboration, that is, collaboration that's built into the system rather than being ad hoc and relying on the goodwill of individuals
- flexible delivery, including flexible timetabling
- professional development of VET staff
- targeted induction and pre-enrolment assessment processes
- reduced costs for disadvantaged students, for example, with books and transport
- assistance with child care for disadvantaged students
- assistance with transport for disadvantaged students
- a range of learning and support services, integrated with studies
- creative combinations of work, study and support – a 'one-stop shop,' and
- provision of work-study-life balance.

Consider these features of good practice and two key implications are obvious. The first is about the need for resources, in terms of additional VET provider time, professional development and the provision of individualised services and support. The second is about the need for collaboration at both policy and delivery levels

The welfare-to-work policy does not adequately acknowledge that high-quality employment needs to be distinguished from low-paid, insecure employment, and that the length of training and a recognised credential needs to be distinguished from 'quick fix' training.

across sectors, which brings with it a requirement for new protocols and agreements, new methods of accountability and reporting, and an accompanying commitment to working in a genuinely collaborative way.

Photo by Nick Winchester courtesy stock.xchng

LINKS: For the full report, *Complex not simple: The vocational education and training pathway from welfare to work*, by Kate Barnett and John Spoehr, visit <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1987.html>

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Themes

- Teaching, learning and assessment
- Literacy, numeracy and ICT
- Student leadership and perspectives
- Learners and learning spaces
- Local/global citizenship
- Capacity building
- School and community
- Sustainable futures

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Government of South Australia

Department of Education and Children's Services

National perspective

Steve Holden reports on tragedy in New Zealand, a turnaround on performance-based pay and a 10-point training plan.

Six students and a teacher from Auckland's Elim Christian College died on 15 April after they were caught in rapidly rising water in Mangatepopo Stream near Turangi, beside Lake Taupo on New Zealand's North Island. Five people survived. They were taking part in a canyoning expedition in a gorge near Tongariro National Park run by the Sir Edmund Hillary Outdoor Pursuits Centre (OPC).

The dead were teacher Anthony McClean, 29, and 16-year-old students Natasha Bray, Floyd Fernandes, Tara Gregory, Huan (Tom) Hsu, Anthony Mulder and Portia McPhail.

NZ Minister for Education Chris Carter immediately ordered a review of excursion or field trip guidelines to address the adequacy of current risk assessment and safety equipment requirements as well as staff-to-student ratios and weather report procedures.

The incident is being investigated by NZ police for the Palmerston North Coroner and by the NZ Department of Labour. The OPC is undertaking its own investigation. Those investigations are likely to focus on a severe weather warning issued on the morning of the incident.

According to Radio NZ News, the OPC says it did not receive a weather forecast for heavy rain. OPC chief executive, Grant Davidson, told Radio NZ News a MetService fax at 6.15am on 15 April that was used to brief staff had no indication of heavy rain warnings for the area. The MetService says it issued a severe weather warning for the area at 8.29am, forecasting steady rain and sudden heavy downpours.

OPC chief executive, Grant Davidson, told Radio NZ News that the instructor leading the group was fully qualified and experienced, and that all those in the Elim Christian College group were equipped and were wearing wetsuits, lifejackets and helmets.

A message from Elim Christian College principal Murray Burton on the school's website read, 'There has been a terrible tragedy. Everyone at Elim has been or will be affected in some way.'

The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs

(MCEETYA), meeting in Melbourne in April, has agreed to research effective ways of rewarding the nation's best teachers, with the Commonwealth government to foot the research bill to the tune of \$400,000. State Labor education ministers last year opposed performance-based pay proposals by former Coalition Minister for Education and now Deputy Opposition leader Julie Bishop. When MCEETYA met in April last year, it released a statement refusing to support performance-based pay for teachers, noting that the findings of an Australian Council for Educational Research study was inconclusive about the benefits and wider impact of performance-based pay for teachers. A year and a change of Commonwealth government later, New South Wales Minister for Education John Della Bosca agreed to draft proposals for rewards, incentives and career structures to attract and retain quality teachers to take to the productivity agenda working group of the Council of Australian Governments, chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Commonwealth Minister for Education Julia Gillard.

The National Skills Policy Collaboration – the Australian Council of Trade Unions, the Australian Education Union, the Australian Industry Group, the Dusseldorp Skills Forum and Group Training Australia – released a 10-point plan in April to address Australia's skills challenges.

The plan includes: a renewed focus on apprenticeship completions; a long-term improvement in investment in education and training; skill infrastructure partnerships between public and private sectors; lifting Year 12 or Certificate III completion rates; national consensus on the future of technical and further education; and a review of the traineeship program.

According to Group Training Australia Chief Executive Officer Jim Barron, 'The Rudd government has called for an education revolution. We need a training revolution as well.' Jack Dusseldorp from the Dusseldorp Skills Forum said a global war for talent meant Australia would have to do much more to educate, train and add value to its workforce in order to compete against the best in the Asia-Pacific region.

In brief

INDUSTRIAL ACTION

Strike action or threatened strike action by teachers in the Northern Territory, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia suggests industrial unrest is likely to continue as unions and state governments continue negotiations over teacher pay, workload and class sizes. More than 10,000 state school teachers in Victoria took strike action in February and March, as well as a campaign of 35 four-hour rolling stoppages from February until April, to put pressure on the Victorian government in negotiations for a new agreement. The Victorian branch of the Australian Education Union (AEU) is seeking an annual 10 per cent wage rise over the next three years. The Victorian government is offering 3.25 per cent.

Western Australia's State School Teachers Union is pursuing a wage increase of 20 per cent for state school teachers over three years. The government has offered a base 13.6 per cent increase – up to 22 per cent, depending on location – over three years.

The Northern Territory branch of the AEU is also considering strike action in support of a pay increase of 15 per cent over two years and more flexible working conditions. The NT government has offered an 11 per cent pay rise over three years and a \$5,000 bonus for remote teachers, and dropped its requirement for teachers to attend three professional development days. Teachers in the NT, SA, Victoria and WA threatened a walkout in April that could affect more than a million students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 sitting national literacy and numeracy tests between 13 and 15 May.

The New South Wales Teachers Federation, meanwhile, promised in April 'a sustained and significant campaign of industrial and political action to achieve a new and improved industrial agreement about staffing,' after NSW Minister for Education John Della Bosca advised public schools in February of changes to procedures for the appointment of staff to 'help us retain our best and brightest teachers' through an 'open advertising option.' 'More schools will now have the option of either having a teacher centrally allocated or choosing their own through open advertisements,' he said.

Teachers Federation spokesperson Gary Zadkovich questioned what he called the dismantling of the statewide transfer staffing system. '(The Minister) fails to understand that increasing some schools' capacity to locally select their teachers will actually reduce the capacity of hundreds of other schools to attract and retain qualified teachers,' Zadkovich said. Jim McAlpine, president of the New South Wales Secondary Principals' Council, in the *Daily Telegraph*, said a balance between local selection by school-based panels and statewide staffing processes would 'bring NSW into the 21st Century.'

SCHOOL FUNDING IN THE BALANCE

Deputy Prime Minister and Commonwealth Minister for Education Julia Gillard wants to redesign government school funding to address funding inequities by applying a similar funding index to government and non-government schools. That means all schools could eventually be funded on the basis of some form of socio-economic status (SES) assessment. It's unlikely that Gillard would simply adopt the existing SES model currently used to assess Commonwealth funding for independent schools, which links students' residential post codes to census data.

That was good news for Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) National President, Leonie Trimper. 'We know from our research, published in our report, *In the Balance*, that some of the schools with the most challenging students end up with the lowest levels of government support,' Trimper said. 'Performance of Australian primary students on the Year 4 (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study), the only international assessment result that applies directly to primary schools, indicates that Australia is mid-placed among developed countries,' Trimper said. 'We are funded on average and performing on average.'

According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Australia's investment in primary education is at about the OECD average. 'The Rudd government has a rare opportunity to make some long overdue adjustments to the school funding arrangements,' Trimper said.



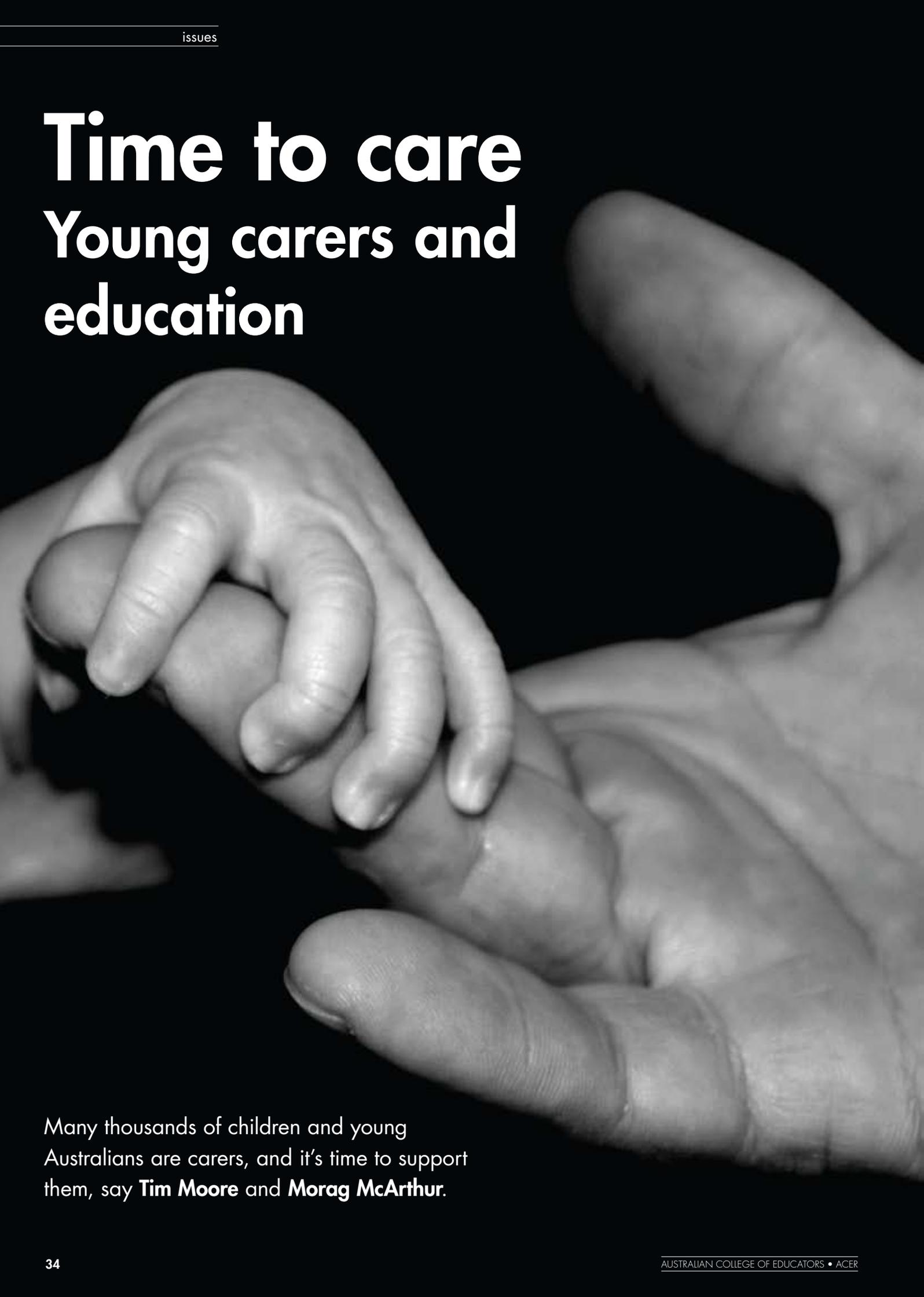
WHO SAID IT?

'State schools should be funded on a per-student basis, with all students entitled to a standard grant, with graduated loadings for students who cost more to educate, such as those with disabilities or from disadvantaged homes.... Ideally, though, both government and non-government schools should be funded under a single system through cooperative funding from the state and federal governments, along with much more encouragement of private investment.'

*Jennifer Buckingham,
the Centre for
Independent Studies, in
the Age.*

Time to care

Young carers and education



Many thousands of children and young Australians are carers, and it's time to support them, say **Tim Moore** and **Morag McArthur**.

More than 388,000 children and young Australians help care for a relative or a number of relatives who have an illness, a disability, or an alcohol, drug or mental health issue, usually caring for parents, siblings or other relatives, and often with little or no supervision or support from others. Each day they assist their families by cooking, cleaning, managing household budgets, providing intimate care such as changing dressings, bathing and dressing, and looking after younger siblings.

Studies have shown some children provide care for up to six hours a day and may be responsible for providing that care for many years. They are most likely to be aged between 10 and 13 although some children as young as five begin to take on care responsibilities.

Young carers often tell us that their caring has had a positive effect on their lives. As the Youth Coalition of the Australian Capital Territory reported in *Reading Between the Lines: Listening to children and young people about their experiences of caring*, many young carers say they develop important life skills such as household management, budgeting, cooking and cleaning, and of course the provision of care. They also say they become resilient, acquire a sense of achievement and value the opportunity to care. As one carer put it, 'I now see how much I can actually do for others instead of just lying around the house.' And another, 'I have a lot more acceptance of people, especially people with a mental illness. I look at them with sadness while before I would have been disgusted.... I think differently about people.'

Despite this, according to Carers Australia, the peak body for carers in Australia, caring can negatively affect young people's lives, particularly when the level of service provided to their family is insufficient. Some of the negative effects include:

- poor physical health – including muscle strain, injury and fatigue
- emotional stress – including anxiety, depression, general stress and feelings of grief and loss
- poor social networks – due to limited opportunities to socialise with friends
- family conflict and breakdown – due to tensions in the family
- poverty or financial stress – due to the increasing costs of treatment, respite and in-home support
- limited access to employment, and

- limited access to, participation and achievement within education and training.

The ACT's Youth Coalition argued that in the most difficult cases, the pressures of caring led young people to leave schooling early and to homelessness.

In 2005, we and colleagues Ros Morrow, Debbie Noble-Carr and Jamie Gray at the Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS) at the Australian Catholic University (ACU National) conducted a national study to explore how caring affected students' education and to inform the development of information resources for schools and teachers.

That study, published in 2006 as *Reading, Writing and Responsibility: Young carers and education*, found that young carers highly value their education and the opportunities that participating in schools provides. One young man described his time at school as 'an island in a sea of chaos' where he could connect with others and recharge his batteries. Others saw school as a place where their personal and social needs could be met and where they could get support and advice from caring and encouraging adults. All young carers reported that school was relevant to them and that they wanted to participate. As one 15-year-old female student explained, 'I go to school (and) it's like a getaway and I like to see my friends and sometimes I don't actually get to get out of the house to see my friends.'

Our study also showed, however, that each of the young carers interviewed felt that they were unable to achieve their potential at school because of difficulties they faced in getting to school and fully participating when they were there. They encountered a variety of challenges.

SIGNIFICANT CARE RESPONSIBILITIES

Young carers in our study cared for an average of 27 hours a week, a responsibility that made it difficult for many of them to attend school or to keep on top of homework and assignments. With little support from the formal care system, young carers felt unable to leave their cared-for relative at home for any extended period of time, and often felt anxious or guilty when they were left alone.

Young carers reported that this made it difficult for them to socialise with their peers, to participate in extracurricular activities such as camps, leadership programs and sporting teams

Issue:	Number	%
Issues affecting attendance at school		
Missing school	19	38
Being late for school	24	48
Missing transport	13	26
Issues affecting participation at school		
Being unable to participate after school	34	66
Feeling like they are the only one who cares	30	58
Finding it hard to make or keep friends	26	51
Bullying and harassment	23	45
Feeling uncomfortable with the way people talk and act	38	75
Take anger out on others	27	52
Factors affecting achievement at school		
Lack of sleep	26	54
No breakfast or lunch	24	47
Feeling tired and lacking energy	40	78
Worrying about home	42	82
Having no time for homework	28	54
Having difficulty keeping up	36	57
Achieving grades that are lower than expected	22	44
Having difficulty in seeing the value of education	13	26
Repeating a school year	6	11

Table 1: Challenges faced by young carers that have an impact on their education

and, when their relatives were particularly unwell, led to extended absences. This has a toll on young people's attendance, participation and ultimately their achievement in education. In the words of one 15-year-old male student, 'Often I just couldn't go. I'd wake up and be determined but then after having to get Mum up, get her in the shower, massage her, clear her lungs, get breakfast, clean up the house, get my brother ready and then make sure that workers who were supposed to be there had turned up – well sometimes it was just too late and I'd miss the bus and I just didn't have the energy to walk the five kilometres to school. I'd get so frustrated but, you know, what could I do?'

PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL STRAIN

Due to the physical nature of caring, young carers often report feeling tired and sore and, in some cases, have physically injured themselves caring for their relative. Some feel stressed, while others experience a sense of loss and grief – for the well-being of their relative, the things that they used to

do together or the death of a family member. These physical and emotional pressures are brought to the classroom by many of the young people who report finding it difficult to concentrate in class. As one 16-year-old female student acknowledges, 'I know sometimes I missed stuff in class because I was worried about (whether) Mum was taking her medication and that sort of thing. Sometimes I wouldn't hear what they just said in class.'

POVERTY

Many young carers live in families experiencing poverty, often because the costs of care for an ill or disabled person are significant and because family members are without an employment income. Young carers tell us this can keep them from fully participating at school – being unable to afford school fees, extracurricular activities such as sports, drama or school camps, and in some cases needing to take on part-time employment to contribute to household finances.

Says one 15-year-old male student, 'We can't afford anything. We don't even have enough food

sometimes – so how can I ask for money to go on an excursion or camp or something? I just tell the school Mum’s too sick for me to go – but it’s really because we can’t afford it.’

BULLYING, HARASSMENT AND FEELING UNSAFE

A large number of young carers are bullied or harassed because of their family member’s condition or because of their caring. This sometimes includes teasing but also physical threats and assaults. Young carers are not always sure as to whether they would have been picked on if they were not caring, but they feel that the caring role makes them more vulnerable. They also say that bullying affects them deeply because of their caring. ‘It was the last thing you need,’ says one 15-year-old male student, ‘after...being up all night and looking after people and you go there to have some time out – just six hours off – and then it’s just as bad... as at home.’

Young carers also say school cultures make them feel uncomfortable, unsafe and unhappy, particularly when students or teachers use derogatory terms or make jokes at the expense of people with disabilities. They say such cultures inhibit them from talking to people at school about their situation – including teachers who had not challenged attitudes or prejudices.

LACK OF FLEXIBILITY AND RELEVANCE

Young carers tell us that they find it difficult to juggle their school work and caring responsibilities and say life would be easier if schools could be

more flexible in their assessment and study programs. Many young carers say they don’t want special treatment, but sometimes need more time to complete assignments and homework and would appreciate assessment tasks that took into consideration the skills and experiences that they had developed at home.

The challenges young carers face are identified in Table 1. These challenges often lead to poor social and educational outcomes as illustrated in Figure 1.

IDENTIFICATION

Young carers say schools are in a good position to identify young carers and to offer support, connect them with others in the same situation and link them with available services and programs. They say identification needs to have this practical outcome if it is to be helpful – many say they have been identified by teachers with no benefit, or, in some situations, dangerous consequences. To be helpful, schools need to ensure that young carers are shielded from bullying and discrimination, and that confidentiality and their privacy is assured – being the target of unwanted attention, they say, is not helpful.

UNDERSTANDING AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Many young carers say their experiences have never been acknowledged and that it’s important to have someone to ‘check in and make sure you’re okay’ and to ‘build you up a bit when you’re feeling down.’ Many say that supportive teachers – who did not necessarily have to do anything except

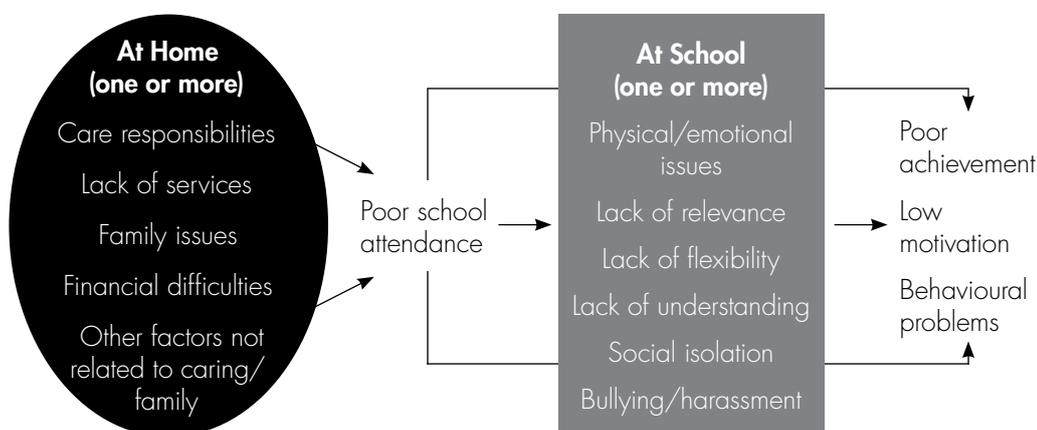


Figure 1: Factors affecting the educational achievement of young carers

YOUNG CARERS AT A GLANCE

Most young carers see the value in participating and achieving in their education but they:

- experience difficulties in gaining access to services so that they can have some time out from caring
- report that it's difficult to fully participate at school because of bullying, harassment or stigma that is attached to illness, disability, mental health issues and alcohol or other drug use
- find it difficult to achieve success at school because of a lack of understanding, flexibility and relevance.

Young carers don't want to be identified or treated differently from other young people, but do want:

- more education about issues relating to illness and caring to increase awareness and provide them with useful and relevant information
- more connections with the local community
- greater flexibility and support for young people who 'don't fit the mould'
- opportunities for young carers to meet.

listen, and offer understanding and encouragement – are an invaluable resource.

As one young carer put it, 'You know they can make a huge difference. They can be like that guardian angel sent to make things better – not to save you but to make a little difference. They can keep you going and it doesn't take much – they've just gotta see you and they've just gotta care.'

FLEXIBILITY

Young carers often feel overwhelmed by their care responsibilities and, regardless of how much planning they do, are sometimes unable to manage their school workload and meet assignment deadlines. A number say they don't want to be excused from assessments but may need extra time and assistance. Young carers sometimes need an advocate or support person at their school who can help them ask for assistance – many are afraid of asking for help from teachers, saying they can't cope with retelling their story or the potential disbelief.

EDUCATION ABOUT ILLNESS, DISABILITY AND CARING

Young carers say it's important for schools to address negative cultures by challenging those who stigmatise or harass people with illnesses or disabilities and those with care responsibilities, and by promoting a positive culture. They say young

carers should be encouraged to share their stories publicly – when it's safe to do so – and teachers should identify strategies to respond more appropriately when issues emerge. 'Diversity days,' inspirational guest speakers and a disability-friendly curriculum – try texts like *Saving Francesca* and *About a Boy* – are strategies that can help to dispel myths, promote strengths and encourage discussions about people with illnesses or disabilities and those who care for them.

LINKS TO EXISTING SERVICES, SUPPORT AND INFORMATION

Young carers say schools can play an important role in linking them with available services and support, since schools are in a strong position to know what types of programs are available and to refer young carers when appropriate. They also say schools can help them find information about their relative's illness or disability – through the library or internet – and help them understand what might be happening. Having access to information about safe caring – lifting, personal boundaries and how to seek help – would also help young carers. They say such resources should be made easily available so that young carers who have not yet been identified can get the information they need and, where the school is proactive, more readily inform the school of their situation.

Schools, teachers and community organisations need to realise that there are strong links between a young person's family situation, their responsibilities, their participation in schools, their achievement and their overall health and wellbeing. Services need to take into consideration their whole needs and the family situation if they are to have any sustainable outcomes.

Tim Moore is a youth worker and Research Fellow with the Institute of Child Protection Studies at ACU National. Dr Morag McArthur is the founding Director of the Institute of Child Protection Studies and is an experienced human services researcher.

Photo by Benjamin Earwicker courtesy stock.xchng

LINKS: For the report, Reading Between the Lines:

Young carers and education, visit http://www.acu.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/47678/RW_and_R-YoungCarersEducation.pdf

Michael's story

Michael* is 16 years old. When he was 13, he was in a car accident with his mother, Jane.* Both Michael and Jane were rushed to intensive care where they stayed for some months – during which time Michael's father moved to another city to start 'a new life.'

Michael sustained some internal injuries but recovered over time. Jane, however, suffered considerable damage to her brain – leaving her partially blind and unable to walk. After leaving hospital, Michael became her primary carer and helped her around the home or, as Michael puts it, 'became her legs and her eyes.' Though challenged physically, Michael still sees his mother as providing for him 'like all mums do – she still makes sure I'm okay, tells me to do my homework and clean my pigsty room.'

Michael finds it hard at school sometimes. Getting up early and going to bed late has taken its toll on him physically and although he knows that his mum is alright at home by herself, he 'can't help but worry about what's going on, can't stop thinking whether I did everything she needs.'

Michael is a self-proclaimed loner. He says that many of his friends don't understand what's going on at home and shares stories of friends who turned their backs on him when his mother was unwell – 'They called her "retarded" and

just stopped talking to me.' While he thinks he's good at hiding his feelings from people at school, he sometimes feels upset and alone, and gets particularly angry when people talk disrespectfully about others with disabilities or illnesses, because 'It's like they're talking about my mum.'

Michael has had some great teachers who have supported him throughout the years. One particular teacher, Mrs O'Dwyer,* has helped explain his situation to other teachers, has stuck up for him when he hasn't got his assignments in on time, or when he's been in fights because other students have paid out on his mother. Some of his other teachers, however, have just seen his caring 'as an excuse' – believing that he's 'just lazy.' This has kept him from seeking help when he needs it most.

Michael would love to go to a school where people are taught about illnesses and disabilities, and where they are challenged about the way they treat others. He would like teachers to understand his situation, not to give him special treatment but to listen when he needs to talk and to offer some flexibility when times are particularly tough. Some help at home would also take the pressure off and tutoring might help him catch up when he is behind.

**Not their real names.*

Cryptic crosswords

An introduction

Learn how to solve cryptic crosswords and it could be the start of a great obsession, says **Roger Dedman.**

Most staffrooms harbour a small group of cryptic crossword devotees. Typically they gather at lunchtime to work together on the crossword from that day's newspaper. They treat non-cryptic or 'quick' crosswords with disdain. If you're not one of them, if you've never understood cryptic crosswords, or wish you could do them, read on.

The first thing to realise is that it's normal that you can't do them! Nobody can do them without a little patient guidance from an initiate, and in an article as brief as this I won't be able to do more than ripple the surface of a very deep well of potential enjoyment and satisfaction.

Crossword puzzles as we know them date only from 1913, when the first was published in the *World*, a New York newspaper that ran from 1860 until 1931. In the 1920s crosswords became popular in Britain, where the more devious cryptic form of clue developed. Today non-cryptic crosswords are still the norm in America, while to most Britons and Australians a crossword means a cryptic. Once you've caught the bug, it's hard to find much satisfaction in straight definitional clues.

The last edition contained the first of my cryptic crosswords for *Professional Educator*. A good starting point is to visit www.acer.edu.au/professionaleducator where you'll find not only

the solution to that puzzle, but an explanation of each of the clues, designed for those who may never have tried a cryptic crossword before.

There are several basic rules which cryptic crossword compilers are bound to follow. The grid must be symmetrical, in that the pattern of black squares is unchanged if the grid is rotated through 180 degrees. There should also be adequate links between different sections of the grid, to allow you to work word-by-word from one section to another. Nearly all cryptic crosswords are constructed on a grid of 15 by 15 squares, and it should contain no more than about 70 black squares. Each light – that's compiler's jargon for a word within the grid – should have at least half of its letters checked – that is, intersecting with another word.

Of course the problem for newcomers to cryptics is that the clues appear to make no sense at all. Phrases as well as single words are quite acceptable, but the number of letters in each part of the phrase will be indicated in parentheses after the clue, so that if the answer were 'part-time teacher,' the clue would be followed by (4-4,7). There must also be, as part of the clue, a straightforward definition, and conventionally it comes either at the beginning or at the end of the clue.

The remainder of the clue gives an alternative indication of the answer, but this can take any number of forms. The simplest form, although not necessarily the easiest to solve, is probably the double definition, so that TRAIN could be clued as 'Transport guide.' This would, however, be a poor clue, as it could just as easily mean COACH, and one of the accepted 'rules' is that when you find the answer you should be able to feel confident that it's the only possible correct answer.

Anagrams tend to be overused by compilers, especially for long words and phrases. If an anagram is involved, there must be an indication of it in the clue; words such as 'twisted' or 'disastrous' are often used, so that the clue 'broken slate' could suggest any of STALE, STEAL or LEAST. An anagram of part of a word is also often incorporated in a clue: CENSOR could be clued as 'Disapprove credit over broken nose'.

Every word in the clue should be relevant; it's considered unfair to include red-herring words, although 'a,' 'the' and words such as 'of' or 'with' are sometimes thrown in to improve the flow of the clue. 'Censor' in the above example would more correctly be defined as 'Disapprove of' but omitting the 'of' gives a better-sounding clue.

A compiler can use any number of devices to indicate a single letter. D can be 'died' or 'daughter,' as in abbreviated biographies, and M can be 'married' or '1,000.' Roman numerals are commonly used: PIXIES could be 'Tarts holding nine – or eleven – fairies.'

First, last and middle letters of words are also favourites: 'First-fleeter' could be F, 'last month' could be H, and 'central locking' could be K. The letter T is sometimes 'model,' although the first one was made 100 years ago, or 'bone' or 'bar' or 'the first.'

'Initially' sometimes means just that, so that 'Vermin initially ran about the ship' is RATS. There are also several groups of letters which have earned their own descriptors, so that ENT is sometimes clued as 'specialist' – as in ear, nose and throat, and 'debts' may suggest a word ending in IOUS. 'Company' is often CO, 'soldier' may be GI, 'about' could be either RE or CA, as in circa, and AC could be clued as 'current' or 'account.' 'Returning' or some similar indicator suggests that the letters appear in the reverse order: 'Remove land after bus overturned' is SUBTRACT, although this would be better in a Down clue.

Most crosswords include at least one 'hidden' clue, where the letters appear in the correct order within the words of the clue. An indicator such as 'in' or 'contains' is necessary, for example: 'Removes the ropes holding biblical heroine.' A variation has the letters reversing: 'Rubbish in baskets? Awfully backward!' In general you can ignore punctuation marks; they're usually there only to make the clue read reasonably, although sometimes a question mark may suggest that what precedes it is just one example of the thing you're looking for. 'Perhaps' sends a similar message.

Remember that it's the compiler's job to mislead you. The form of the clue may suggest that you're looking for an adjective or a noun when the answer is really a verb. 'Flower' may mean a river, and 'writer' will often translate into PEN.

If you can't find an experienced solver willing to work through a few crosswords with you, try to find another interested novice in your staffroom to share the adventure. You may get only a few words out at first, but look through the solution when it appears and see if you can understand why those are the correct answers. Have a look at page 4 of this month's edition of *Professional Educator* and try the crossword, then go to the explanations on the website. This could be the start of a great obsession!

Roger Dedman has taught Mathematics in Victorian state and independent schools and tertiary institutions for over 20 years. He is the author of several books, including Mathematics textbooks and The Australian Art Market Movements Handbook.

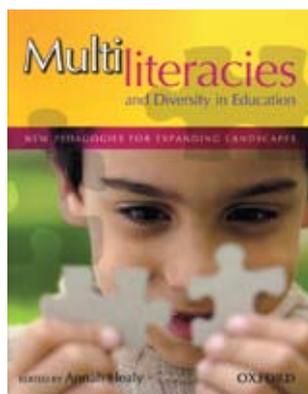
Photo by Steve Woods courtesy stock.xchng

LINKS:

For solutions to the April and June crosswords in Professional Educator, visit www.acer.edu.au/professionaleducator

More experienced solvers can visit Roger Dedman's website at www.drdcrosswords.com

The problem for newcomers to cryptics is that the clues appear to make no sense at all.



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Multiliteracies and Diversity in Education

The authors of the eight chapters in *Multiliteracies and Diversity in Education* contend that the conceptual framework of learning by design offers a theory and pedagogies for addressing multiliteracies in many classroom contexts. Although print remains an essential medium, students in today's world connect 'to a vast digital network that transcends more traditional forms of text.'

The learning by design framework developed by Mary Kalantzis and Bill Cope aims to engage students' life-world interests, and highlights pedagogies that emphasize active knowledge creation. The writers included in *Multiliteracies and Diversity in Education* acknowledge their debt to Kalantzis and Cope, and, in a variety of ways, offer vivid accounts of how the principles of learning by design might be put into practice.

The book has many features of a textbook: each chapter takes the form of a course module, offers a 'chapter foci', a list of key words and a brief overview. A distinctive icon is used to identify tasks that could be used for individual reflection or group discussion.

The first chapter, by Annah Healey, establishes the connections between knowledge and text design in the learning by design framework, and learning and teaching with multiliteracies. She highlights the learning by design principle of teachers and students working as communities of learners. The work of Year 7 students in a multiliteracies project and Year 2 students in a project about koalas are used to demonstrate the nature of learning communities.

There is much to be gleaned from the rich and thoughtful explorations of classroom practices in this book. Each chapter presents a coherent and probing exploration of the potential of multiliteracies in a particular setting, but maintains a close focus on the central issues of the whole book. Descriptions of multiliteracies within health and physical education, and critical arts-based projects with a multiliteracies framework

suggest many possibilities for expanding teaching and learning.

Diversity is a significant concern. Aboriginal students, students learning English as an additional language, students in the early years of schooling, and mobile students are representative of some of the diverse groups of students in Australian schools. Karen Martin provides important contextual information about Aboriginal worldviews and knowledges, and how these relate to some key issues in teaching English literacies to Aboriginal students.

Karen Dooley addresses the complex considerations in planning multiliteracies projects for mainstream classes of students learning English as an additional language. She emphasises that while 'difference' refers to variation among people, 'diversity' refers to what is done with that variation, and reviews research on aspects of difference and diversity. Robyn Henderson bases her chapter around the issues involved in designing a problem-based multiliteracies project for mobile students.

Beryl Exley maps the knowledge processes and design considerations within a project in which five- and six-year-old children in Reggio Emilia were engaged in redesigning the theatre curtain for an historic local theatre. She maps the significant phases of the project, the work of the teacher as learning designer, and the related learning theory and knowledge processes.

Jennifer Pei-Ling Tan demonstrates how a multiliteracies approach can help students from diverse cultural, linguistic and academic backgrounds in Singapore in an engrossing account of a 'school fun-fair project' for Year 6 students who were mostly learners of English as a second language with limited access to standard international English in their home and community environments.

These wide-ranging explorations open up many new perspectives for teachers, and amply fulfil the expectations raised in the opening chapter.

Marion Meiers is a Senior Research Fellow at the Australian Council for Educational Research.

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

JUNE 14

Montessori workshops Workshops on the Montessori Mathematics, Language and Culture curriculum as well as Montessori method and philosophy of education commence in June. Specific dates and venues available on request.

PHONE 08 9321 8830

EMAIL mwei@bigpond.com

WEBSITE www.mwei.org.au

JULY 6-9

Stories, places spaces: Literacy and identity The national conference of the Australian Association for the Teaching of English and the Australian Literacy Educators' Association.

PLACE Adelaide Convention Centre

CONTACT Phil Plevin

EMAIL events@plevin.com.au

WEBSITE www.englishliteracyconference.com.au

JULY 25

Schools Tree Day Help protect the environment and combat climate change by planting a tree on Schools Tree Day. Beautify your school or local community, improve biodiversity, provide habitat for native wildlife and do something about climate change. Schools Tree Day is organised by Planet Ark in association with Toyota and AMP Foundation.

PHONE 1300 88 5000

WEBSITE <http://treeday.planetark.com>

AUGUST 1

Jeans for Genes Day *Denim*strate you care by wearing your jeans to school on 1 August, buying a badge and helping the Children's Medical Research Institute find cures for children's diseases.

PHONE 1800 GENIES (436 437)

WEBSITE www.jeansforgenes.org.au

AUGUST 2-4

Fourth International Middle Years of Schooling Conference 'Global citizenship: connect – work together – walk on' The fourth International Middle Years of Schooling Conference provides a broad conference program that brings together acclaimed international, national and local presenters to inspire, motivate and challenge your thinking about teaching, learning and shaping citizenship in our 21st-century global community.

PLACE Adelaide Convention Centre

CONTACT SAPMEA Meetings Management

PHONE 08 8274 6048

EMAIL middleschool2008@sapmea.asn.au

WEBSITE www.sapmea.asn.au/middleschool2008

AUGUST 8-9

The Education Show 2008 A unique opportunity for pre-primary, primary and secondary school teachers, management and administrative staff to see the latest education resources, products and services from 100 exhibitors. The Education Show features a seminar program on key curriculum initiatives, teaching opportunities, learning technologies and leadership. Entry is free.

PLACE Caulfield Racecourse, Melbourne

CONTACT Tina Tolich

PHONE 03 9596 8881

EMAIL team@resourcesforcourses.com.au

WEBSITE www.educationshow.com.au

AUGUST 10-12

Touching the Future: Building skills for life and work The ACER Research Conference will examine

how education can best face the challenge of equipping young people to effectively participate in, and contribute to, a rapidly changing society.

PLACE Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre

CONTACT Margaret Taylor

PHONE 03 9277 5403

EMAIL taylor@acer.edu.au

WEBSITE www.acer.edu.au/research_conferences/2008.html

AUGUST 22-24

'We're New and We Count' This Australian College of Educators Teaching and Learning Forum for new and accomplished educators will examine ways to provide support to teachers across their careers through the provision of good induction and mentoring.

PLACE Mount Schoenstatt Conference and Retreat Centre, Mulgoa, NSW

CONTACT Jessie Bice

EMAIL jessieb@austcolled.com.au

PHONE 1800 208 586

FAX 02 6285 1262

WEBSITE www.austcolled.com.au

SEPTEMBER 1-7

National Literacy and Numeracy Week Developing effective literacy and numeracy skills makes a big difference to students. Recognise and celebrate schools and individuals making a difference in literacy and numeracy education during this year's National Literacy and Numeracy Week.

WEBSITE www.literacyandnumeracy.gov.au

OCTOBER 8-10

The Australia and New Zealand Education Law Association 17th annual conference

PLACE Christchurch, New Zealand

EMAIL cle@lawyers.org.nz



Life is full of major decisions like choosing a DVD or a pizza or a high school for your child – and it's time to end this choice crisis, says **Danny Katz.**

Against choice

Choices, choices, ahhhhhhhh, my life is all chunked-up with choices AND IT'S CHEESING ME OFF. There are too many choices to make: I go to the DVD store and it's choices, ahhhhhhhh, choices. It'd be so much easier if they just had one or two DVDs. 'Okay kids, it's either Eddie Murphy in *Norbit* or *Zombie Cannibal Massacre II*. Yeah, I agree, *Zombie Cannibal Massacre* sounds funnier.'

Go to the pizza place, and, ahhhhhhhh, choices, choices: why can't they have just ONE type of pizza, and that's all you can order whether you like it or not. 'So you only have "Extra Cheesy Bacon & Prawn Lovers Special"? Alright, I guess I'll have one of those, even though I'm a Jewish vegan with lactose intolerance.'

Now there's a new choice crisis that's really churning up my chakras. Sure, it's not a major life decision like choosing a DVD or a pizza, but it's still kind of important, I suppose: which high school I should send my son to. LORDY-LOO, THERE ARE A WHOLE HEAP O' HIGH SCHOOLS TO CHOOSE FROM. Public and private, close and far away, leafy-green campuses and Birchenau-chic campuses with students who look like extras from *Zombie Cannibal Massacre II*, the badly-lit ones up the back of the crèche-buffet scene.

Choices, choices. Ahhhhhhh: I've fallen into a high-school-hunting hellpit, a hideous place where perfectly nice, normal parents transform into shrieking, flappy, fierce-eyed seagulls fighting over the bones of a KFC chicken wing. There's something about high-school hunting that brings out the worst in a parent. Primary-school picking was easy. You just sent your kid to the nearest one, because primary doesn't really matter; it's just six years of collecting knee-scabs in a matchbox and getting slap-face infection from the Baha'i kid in Grade 4. Kids don't even do proper learning in primary because their parents do it all for them; we finish our kids' homework, complete their Maths sheets, build their end-of-term project – a working 3D model of a human

digestive system with tubes and balloons and one of those new squeazy Heinz Ketchup bottles as a fully-functioning sphincter.

But high school is where proper learning starts, where kids start doing real Maths and Science and History that is too advanced for us average donkhead ma's and pa's, so we'll do anything to make sure our kid goes to the finest school, even if it involves begging, bribing, bonking, ANYTHING. And I hate what I've become, hate being such a peachy-faced over-anxious desperado, going to every high school information night with pad and pencil, hassling high school registrars with twice-hourly update emails, visiting all the high school open days and seeking out anyone who looks vaguely like a principal then making ultra-gushy charming-chitchat with them. Last week I wasted 20 minutes of choice-grade charm on a junior-school art teacher, A JUNIOR SCHOOL ART TEACHER. I should've worked it out from the hemp pants and the lip-labret hole.

I HATE WHAT I'VE BECOME: poring over fancy brochures for schools I could never afford; applying for scholarship tests my kid could never do; filling out enrolment forms and scribbling down all kinds of outrageous fabricated blather. In the box that says NAME, I'm writing, 'Please take my child, he's academic, and sporty, and such nice teeth, you must see his teeth!' In the box that says DATE OF BIRTH, I'm writing, 'Oh, and did I mention he can play Bartok on the viola de gamba?' In the box that says SEX, I'm writing, 'Okay, if it helps, I'm available Thursday after four.'

If only there was NO choice, then there'd be none of this pushy, stressful enrolment competitiveness. If only there was just ONE high school in all the land, and every kid had to go there: 'Here it is son, your new high school! I know the campus looks a bit like a Dickensian workhouse, but they get outstanding results in boot blacking and corn grinding. Oh yeah, here's your bowl of watery gruel for lunch, and if you're still hungry afterwards, best not to bother Mr Bumble.'

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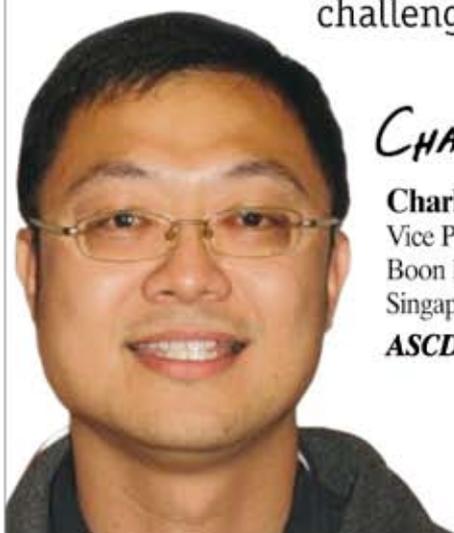
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