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JUGGLING ACT

Members say no to dual-mode teaching

Uluru Statement from the Heart

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from 'time immemorial', and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.

This sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature', and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last two hundred years?

With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood.

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are aliened from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. *This is the torment of our powerlessness.*

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a *rightful place* in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: *the coming together after a struggle.* It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

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Editorial

As this edition of *Independent Education* goes to print we've just seen the result of a federal election in which a major issue for Australian voters was the increasing inequality between the wealthy and the working class.

It is timely then to reflect on the achievements of the union movement in narrowing the inequality gap and using our collective strength to make changes in our workplaces, communities and society.

Our commitment goes beyond industrial matters like wages and conditions.

Fundamentally, unions are about diverse groups of people working together and supporting each other to improve their lives.

Social justice is a recurring theme underpinning the articles in this edition of *IE*.

We speak to union activist and charity CEO John Robertson about how he is giving a voice to the powerless and helping those less fortunate (p7).

An excellent new documentary, Women of Steel (p9) tells the incredible story of how women overcame discrimination in the workplace and is a must-watch for students and staff in schools.

Teacher members from all around Australia discuss the impact of teaching dual-mode lessons during the pandemic and how they are pushing back against the unsustainable expectation of employers and parents to continue this practice (p10).

Another article explores how the war in Ukraine is affecting education and the extraordinary lengths teachers inside and outside Ukraine are going to ensuring children remain engaged with education (p12).

Our journalists investigate why some children are prone to school refusal and how to help them overcome this (p14) and speak to experts about why school belonging improves students' mental health and academic performance (p16).

We unpack the results of the latest Australian Principal Health and Wellbeing Survey (p28) and investigate new research about how teachers can measure creativity in students (p32).

Enjoy this edition of *IE*, which we hope sparks conversation and inspires union members to continue working towards a fairer world.

Terry Burke Secretary

IEU Queensland and Northern Territory Branch

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AUS WIDE

NSW/ACT

Members take to the streets

Thousands of Catholic systemic school members stopped work and hundreds took to the streets throughout NSW and the ACT to press their demands on 27 May.

The union's claim for new enterprise agreements (covering members in 600 Catholic diocesan schools in NSW and the ACT) includes:

- Pay teachers what they're worth (an increase of 10-15% over two years)
- Give support staff a fair deal
- Let teachers teach – cut paperwork
- Allow time to plan
- End staff shortages.

Rallies across the state and territory garnered extensive media coverage, sending a clear message to employers that members would keep fighting until their claims were answered.

Victoria

College co-operates on claims

It's not every day a school pays for staff to develop a log of claims.

In an act of good faith bargaining, Xavier College Principal William Doherty agreed to pay a full day's salary to 10 staff representatives to spend a Saturday developing their claims with IEU organisers.

The day began with the drafting of a shared mission statement: "To work with collegiality, honesty, and integrity to create a friendly, compassionate workplace where *cura personalis* is at the heart and centre". (*Cura personalis* means 'care for the entire person'.)

Each item in the log of claims is intended to underpin that mission statement and guide staff during negotiations on behalf of 120 members and other staff at the two-campus Catholic secondary school in Kew, in Melbourne's east.

In a gesture of solidarity, staff are pushing for all teaching allocations to be set at 18 hours and 30 minutes per week.

The meeting also united in support of primary and secondary teachers being treated equally and declared war on job insecurity, insisting that no part-timers have their year-to-year teaching allocations reduced without mutual agreement.

Given that many part-time staff are women and/or single parents, it was held that the existing clause fails the 'care of the whole person' test.

South Australia

Vaccine mandate: Yes or no?

The current SA health advice is that vaccine mandates for school staff are no longer necessary. The Chief Public Health Officer advised that vaccination is not essential in schools, but it is still recommended.

This leaves three options for schools to consider:

- allow unvaccinated staff to return with no restrictions
- allow unvaccinated staff on site but with some restrictions
- allow only vaccinated staff on site.

There is evidence that unvaccinated people are more contagious, but the IEU is also concerned about the risk unvaccinated students would

pose to staff (vaccinatedor not).

Where school management considers a policy to be more restrictive than the health advice, genuine consultation with employees and the IEU is vital.

The IEU will engage with all employers to balance the health advice with local risk tolerance.

Northern Territory

Catholic agreement under consideration

At the time of publication, a 2.3% wage rise per annum over four years is being considered by members employed in Catholic schools against the context of the government's wage position of one-off payments totalling $10,000 over four years.

However, the offer is less than the current wages achieved by Lutheran members in collective bargaining negotiations.

The employer wage position does not ease the burden of rising cost of living or inflation pressures.

Another key concern relates to hours of duty provisions, some covered in the collective agreement and others in employer policy.

The school officer review materials have been finalised, with all the school officer provisions and classifications being consolidated.

As a result of the review, most school officers in the Catholic sector will now have a 37-hour work week, reduced from a previous 37.5-hour full-time work week.

The laptop hire program for non-remote schools has ceased, with the clause removed from the collective agreement.

Under this program, teachers had to pay $10 per week in fees over a period of three years to the employer to hire a compulsory work laptop.

Queensland

Action to stop undermining of teacher librarians

IEU teacher librarians and school officer members working in school libraries are taking action to address concerns about the degradation of their professional status.

Staff employed in school libraries are highly skilled and their roles are crucial to the effective functioning of schools and provision of quality education to students.

There are fundamental misunderstandings about the nature of school library work, often exacerbated by the invisibility of that work.

Libraries and their staff are often seen as expendable during tough times.

Additionally, access to qualified staff, a well-developed collection of resources, physical facilities and infrastructure is inequitable.

To address this, the IEU-QNT Education Committee, along with several members working in school libraries, are undertaking research to identify solutions.

Their aim is to develop a 'Vision Statement for the 21st Century School Library' that will articulate resource and staffing allocations consistent with quality library services.

It is hoped that the 'Vision Statement' will assist in negotiations with employers during upcoming collective bargaining.

Tasmania

Bargaining process needs reform

The recent experience of bargaining in Tasmania has exposed a major flaw in the system governing the negotiation of agreements.

Under current laws, only employers can apply for a single interest suthorisation (SIA) that enables the Fair Work Commission (FWC) to issue bargaining orders forcing a party not bargaining in good faith to behave reasonably.

Because employees or their unions can't apply for an SIA, there is little they can do legally when employers refuse to meet at reasonable times or try to rush the process. Faced with a poor multi-employer enterprise agreement, employees have few options other than voting 'no'.

In Tasmania, where many IEU members are covered by such agreements, a group of employers put up a proposed enterprise bargaining agreement with a timeline of meetings which made it impossible for meaningful discussions to occur before a scheduled vote. The employers didn't apply for an SIA, so the FWC couldn't issue orders forcing the employer to bargain in good faith. Two of the five schools involved voted 'no'.

The IEU strongly believes the system needs to be fixed. If employers can apply for single interest authorisations, unions should be able to as well.

Australian Capital Territory

PD program boosts practice

High Impact Teaching Practice (HITP) is well known to teachers in ACT Catholic systemic schools.

It is a four-to-five day professional learning course that focuses on four phases: theory, demonstration, practice and coaching. The program supports teachers to implement research-based instructional practices in the classroom that improve student engagement and outcomes.

HITP is based on Barak Rosenshine's 17 'Principles of Instruction' that 'master' teachers often employ, including: begin a lesson with a short review of previous learning; present new material in small steps with student practice after each step; limit the amount of material students receive at one time; give clear, detailed instructions and explanations; ask a large number of questions and check for understanding; provide a high level of active practice for all students. For all 17 points: futurelearn.com/info/courses/early-career-teachers/0/steps/164331

Teachers agree that the program is beneficial, although it requires many hours of additional work.

InFocus

JOHN ROBERTSON

Former NSW Labor Leader and unionist John Robertson has turned his considerable organisational skills to helping those who struggle to put food on the table, writes Sue Osborne.

The best teachers in the world will fail if students turn up to class hungry every morning.

John Robertson believes education is critical to a child's life and, as CEO of Foodbank, having the School Breakfast 4 Health program under his auspices speaks to his core beliefs.

"Some kids come from families where they don't have the opportunity to have breakfast, and Foodbank can stop them being left behind," Robertson says.

Robertson is a former NSW Labor Opposition Leader (2011-2014) and former Secretary of Unions NSW (2001-2008). He is currently President of the NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS), which advocates to alleviate poverty and disadvantage.

But Robertson admits education hasn't always been such a priority in his life.

"I remember going to a parents' evening at my high school where the principal said, 'if your son or daughter doesn't want to stay on for the HSC, don't make them'. Dad would have been shuddering through that one.

"But to his credit, he didn't try to stop me when I wanted to leave at 16."

Sparking an interest

Robertson attended Denistone East Public School in the 1970s, and credits Year 6 teacher Peter Jones for sparking his interest in politics.

"It was the time we went to Parliament House in Canberra," Robertson says. "I remember he engaged me and allowed me to explore the subject further. It was a very balanced conversation that we had."

This teaching was supported by an active interest in politics at home. Politics, social justice and unionism were regular topics around the Robertsons' dinner table. Robertson's father was a union official for the Australian Workers Union (AWU).

When Robertson was a child, his father also stood for ALP preselection and came fourth out of as many candidates.

This taught the young John Robertson just how brutal politics could be – his father was dumped from the position and left unemployed for four months.

"The phone went from ringing off the hook to not ringing at all," Robertson says.

Robertson became an apprentice electrician at age 16, studying for his trade certificate at Meadowbank TAFE. He regularly sat next to two other young apprentices, one who would go on to be Mayor of Penrith, and the other an MP in the Northern Territory.

"If you'd said to our teacher at the time, 'those three are

"All my work has been about giving a voice to the powerless."

going to become politicians', he would have laughed you out of the room," Robertson says.

Due to his father's influence, union membership was not optional for Robertson, and he joined the Electrical Trades Union (ETU) at the start of his apprenticeship.

Employed by a contractor, he worked on construction sites all over Sydney, including the extension to NSW Parliament House.

Returning to that very building many years later as an elected member, Robertson would allow himself a wry smile moving through his former building site.

Youthful organiser

At the ripe old age of 23, Robertson was asked to fill in for an ETU organiser who was taking leave. His boss wouldn't give him time off without pay so he resigned to fill the union position. As luck would have it, the organising role became permanent, and Robertson never went back on the tools.

His experience on construction sites gave him credibility with the workers, despite his tender years.

"I was the only organiser who had ever worked on construction sites," Robertson says. "Most of them came from the railways or were linesmen. But I knew about construction when there was a lot going on. Sydney's Darling Harbour was being built and it was no walk in the park."

In 1991, he became an industrial officer with the NSW Labour Council (later Unions NSW) and decided it was time to go back to study. He undertook a Diploma of Human Relations at the University of Technology Sydney.

"My attitude was I that needed a trade certificate to do my electrical trade, so I better get the piece of paper for my new position," he says.

NSW Labour Council Secretary Peter Sams "hit him up" to be Assistant Secretary to then Unions NSW Secretary Michael Costa, who also went into politics, becoming NSW Treasurer under Premier Bob Carr in 2006.

Robertson was Secretary of Unions NSW for seven years, until ALP Premier Nathan Rees (2008-09) asked him to join the Labor Party. "I never had any plans to go into politics. I said 'no' at first, but he asked me again," he says.

"But it's not every day the Premier of the state asks you to come and join the team, so I jumped.

"Dad was so proud. I think he was living vicariously."

NSW Opposition Leader

In 2011, Robertson became state MP for Blacktown, in Sydney's west, then quickly became Opposition Leader.

It was a difficult time. Labor was coming off the back of one of its worst election defeats in history.

"I took the view that 25 percent of the population had voted for us, and we owed it to them to rebuild the Labor Party and convince the rest of the population who might vote Labor that they should."

Robertson says his leadership was marked by highs and lows, but his proudest memories include the three by-elections wins, with historic swings back to Labor.

The new standards introduced for MPs' behaviour on the front bench, some of which were adopted by the government, were also highs.

But it is the small things, achieved for individuals at electorate level, of which Robertson is most proud.

"When someone asks their MP for help, that means they're desperate, they've tried everything else," he says. "I like that I was able to give a voice to the voiceless."

He claims to have no regrets about not becoming Premier.

"I watched Gladys Berejiklian [NSW Premier, 2017-21] go through the bushfires and COVID and thought 'that could have been me' – and it's always with a sense of relief rather than regret," he says.

"I took my position very seriously and felt the responsibility to my colleagues in the party and the electorate. It's an all-or-nothing job, and I think my wife and children missed out during that time."

Finding Foodbank

Throughout his time in Parliament, Robertson volunteered for Foodbank, helping pack meals in the warehouse, or engaging his extensive network to lobby for funds.

"I think it was good for my mental health to do that volunteer work while I was in Parliament," he says.

When his parliamentary career was over, Robertson says he was blessed to be offered the opportunity to run Foodbank.

He likes that Foodbank is self-sufficient, free of government influence, although it did receive some government support during the COVID lockdowns.

Most importantly, Robertson says the organisation gives people dignity.

"People get to choose their food with Foodbank and that's important because a lot of people find themselves in a situation where they can't put food on the table through no fault of their own," he says. "They shouldn't be denied dignity."

Foodbank describes itself as the "pantry for Australian charities". It's Australia's largest food relief organisation, providing more than 70 percent of the food rescued for food relief organisations nationwide.

John Robertson assists with the distribution of food parcels to regional areas; and volunteers at Foodbank's Glendenning warehouse

Voice for the powerless

"I feel like I'm continuing the work I started with the ETU all those years ago," Robertson says. "All my work has been about giving a voice to the powerless."

Grocery retailers, manufacturers and farmers donate to the charity, often when items are nearing their use-by date. Foodbank also purchases food to distribute.

Volunteers at a large warehouse in Glendenning, in Sydney's west, sort food into hampers. The organisation spends $1.5 million trucking food out to rural and regional areas. Last year, it was providing 660,000 meals a week, a figure that just keeps growing.

During the height of the pandemic, Foodbank provided hampers for people who were in quarantine in large apartment blocks and unable to afford online deliveries.

In 2020, Foodbank also supported 1500 international students who could no longer find work in tourism or hospitality and had no support from the social security system.

Doing it tough

"It's very hard to believe there could be 20 percent of the population in Australia in this situation, but people get thrown a curveball by life," Robertson says.

The casualisation of the workforce and the gig economy have meant many workers never know if they have a shift the next day, he says.

"There's a medical incident, their work dries up or they run out of sick leave. All these sorts of things have an impact on workers, let alone those living on social security. There's a growing cohort of working people who are struggling."

In 2020, 38 percent of residents in NSW and the ACT were accessing food relief at least once a week compared with 16 percent in 2019.

"People will make choices like two meals a day rather than three, or mum and dad will choose not to eat dinner, feed their kids and tell them they had a big lunch at work, so the kids don't feel guilty."

No shame in struggle

Robertson is keen to get the message out that there is no shame in asking for help when it's needed.

"There's a significant stigma associated with having to admit you can't afford food," he says. "It stops people reaching out. I had an email from someone who said, 'if it hadn't been for your hamper, I was contemplating stealing just so I could put food on the table'."

Robertson says teachers and support staff in schools were frequently in touch with their communities and could direct families to Foodbank if they sensed a need.

The School Breakfast 4 Health program also provides students with a nutritious breakfast at school. Hungry students cannot concentrate, so a good breakfast has a big impact on their education.

Foodbank now provides food to more than 300 schools across NSW and the ACT and is looking to expand.

Before the pandemic, school student volunteers, many from non-government schools, were a big part of the workforce at the Glendenning warehouse. Robertson is hoping this will resume soon.

"I am very lucky to have had all these experiences and still be in a position to do good and help people," he says.

"There's a growing cohort of working people who are struggling."

More information

For more details about School Breakfast 4 Health or to donate to Foodbank: foodbank.org.au

Let's get **Women of Steel** into schools

***Women of Steel* is a fascinating, feisty, funny and inspiring story of extraordinary 'ordinary' people facing down discrimination and changing the world through their determination and solidarity, writes Will Brodie.**

Having premiered on ABC TV Plus in March this year, *Women of Steel* is an award-winning documentary about the historic 14-year battle fought by women to gain the right to work at the Wollongong steelworks.

It is a story which has the power to inspire and influence younger generations of women and future unionists.

No jobs for women

After being told "there's no jobs for women" at the local steelworks in 1980, a group of Australian and migrant women began a campaign against Australia's most powerful company, AIS/BHP.

There was high unemployment in Wollongong during this period and the city's major employer, AIS/BHP, employed more than 20,000 men but refused to give jobs to women.

With the backing of local unions, the women took them from the factory gate to the highest court in Australia, setting legal precedents for the industrial rights for women – and men.

The women's political and legal battle for the right to work changed the rules for all Australians forever.

"We started to realise that discrimination wasn't just a personal thing, it was a systemic thing," one of the 'Gong pioneers said.

Another says a slogan of the time was, "A woman's place is everywhere".

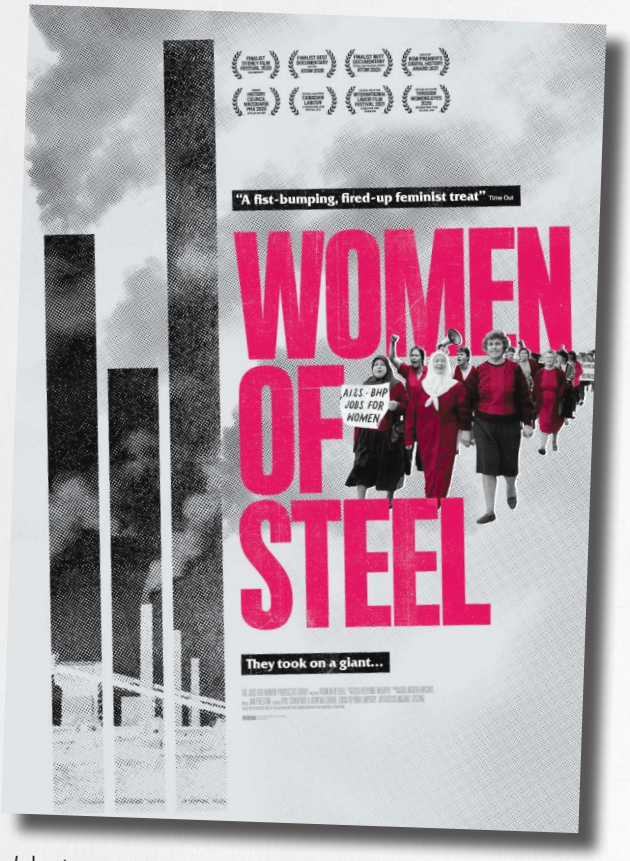
Fight for equality

These were revolutionary concepts at a time when a woman still couldn't get a loan or enter some parts of a pub without a man.

The documentary sets out how ideas that emerged from the women's liberation movement and anti-discrimination legislation informed the stalwarts who fought for equality in the male-dominated industry.

Award-winning film

Completed in November 2020, the film has been awarded several history awards. It was a finalist in the ATOM (Australia Teachers of Media) Best Documentary Social Political and Best Documentary History category; winner of the History Council of NSW Macquarie PHA Applied History Award and is shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Digital History Award.



The film's makers are keen for you to watch *Women of Steel*, but they also want to get the documentary into schools and on to curricula.

"We have made an Education Study Guide to accompany the film and are keen for you to both watch *Women of Steel* and to get it to other teachers, schools and into the curriculum as soon as possible," they said.

Some suggestions:

- include information about the film on your noticeboards and websites and in your newsletters
- seek to have the film used as part of your professional development
- put the film forward as a component of your school's curriculum.

How do I watch *Women of Steel*?

For schools: following the broadcast school libraries can access the film using their Screenrights license through services such as Click-view, TV4Education and infoRMIT. You can also purchase a DVD at https://womenofsteel.bigcartel.com

- online: https://www.fanforcetv.com/programs/women-of-steel?categoryId=32196
- create a screening in cinema or venue: https://fan-force.com/create-screening/
- watch the trailer at https://youtu.be/-22E8ltWs-M

The Study Guide is available at the Education Shop: https://theeducationshop.com.au/downloads/women-of-steel-atom-study-guide/

For further information, visit the *Women of Steel* website: www.womenofsteelfilm.com

Dual mode teaching here to stay?
Members say 'no way'

IEU-QNT Assistant Secretary Brad Hayes looks at what's been a hot topic for members since the pandemic started: dual mode teaching.

Initially offered during the pandemic when the majority of students were learning from home, parental and employer expectations that it continues post-lockdowns and post-pandemic remain.

Lack of professional understanding

With teacher workloads at an all-time high – the expectation that one teacher can be asked to do the work of two permanently is unsustainable and disrespectful to the profession.

Facing a crisis unlike any experience in their lifetime, members did what was needed to enable students to continue to receive a quality education.

For those who provided dual mode teaching – the majority of students were learning from home.

Now there seems to be a growing expectation from some parents and employers that a teacher can continue to provide such dual mode teaching for a student who may be home unwell or who out of the physical classroom and travelling with their parents.

Media stories and images have perpetuated this idea – with the thought being that this is an "easy" thing to do given today's technology.

Uniqueness of classroom learning remains

As IEU members know, nothing can replace the physical classroom and onsite learning. The ability to use one's professional judgement within the classroom and interact directly with a student cannot be replicated online.

No matter what advances in technology, our classrooms remain unique spaces for learning and we need the resources and the time for teachers to be able to focus on what they do best in the classroom – not having to juggle on-site and online delivery of curriculum simultaneously.

Ongoing COVID-19 impacts

The ongoing expectation by some parents and employers of dual mode teaching comes at the same time schools continue to be impacted by staff and student absences due to COVID-19.

While staff and student absences probably peaked in late Term 1, we continue to experience COVID-19 disruptions in our schools and kindergartens.

As always, school staff are handling this situation with incredible resilience and professionalism.

Employers for their part though need to be focused on addressing the workload issues stemming from these disruptions, rather than adding further workload pressures on teachers.

The long-term solution is to better recognise and reward teachers, both in terms of improved salaries, and even more importantly a reduction in the workload pressures that are forcing many teachers to leave the profession they love.

Member action will make the difference

With workloads at an all-time high and the expectation of the continuation of dual mode teaching in many schools, IEU members must unite to make it clear that employers need to be focused on addressing the workload issues stemming from these disruptions, rather than adding further workload pressures on teachers.

The long-term solution is to better recognise and reward teachers, both in terms of improved salaries, and even more importantly, a reduction in the workload pressures that are forcing many teachers to leave the profession they love.

These issues are and will be the focus for IEU collective bargaining negotiations Australia-wide this year.

Together we can have our voice heard and make a difference to protect quality education in our schools.

What you said

IEU members throughout Australia share their experiences of the ongoing expectation for dual-mode teaching at their school

We were initially asked only to stream lessons online for students who had COVID-19 or who were isolating as close contacts. Within three weeks we were asked to stream lessons for a student who had been externally suspended.

Some parents are expecting this to be the norm, and the expectations of support provided to students at home for any reason has increased massively.

Some negative implications:

- students who are sick feel like they need to be working online
- teachers feel chained to their computers, and teaching quality, relationship building and behaviour management in the classroom suffer considerably
- increasingly a feeling that all the teaching you do has to be duplicated and recorded for accountability – little room for the magic of classroom teaching and adaptability and flexibility based on the students in the room.

Teacher, Queensland

Our (current) expectation is single mode; however, some middle leaders (house deans) have expressed to staff that if work can be supplied it would be appreciated during absences.

While in some subject areas this would be no extra effort as they may be teaching using other online platforms such as Google Classroom already.

However, it inadvertently puts the focus/pressure on other subject areas to conform, which has the potential to increase workloads. It may then not be understood by parents why some subjects provide work and others don't.

This creates an opportunity to draw conclusions about the professionalism of teachers.

Teacher, Queensland

We are expected to provide online PDF learning packs that are put on the parent portal for our class to access. This is a demand from the school leadership – I have had no parent or student requests for schoolwork.

These packs must be uploaded weekly regardless of student absences. Any parent can access these.

These have been uploaded every week since the start of the school year, the only child in my class that has completed the work is a child who has not been absent!

It is a time-consuming task. My non-contact time is used on this task instead of my normal admin work.

As the packs are to align with our weekly plan, we must make a new one up each week.

Given how time-poor our profession already is, adding two hours of content creation each week for packs is unrealistic and unsustainable.

Teacher, Queensland

It is the expectation at my school that every lesson can be magically converted into an online format for ANY student who is absent for any reason including suspension, sick, school refusal or on holidays.

It is then up to the class teacher to keep track of each student and where they are up to, what work they've completed – but no support is given to discipline the student if the work is not done.

Teacher, NSW/ACT

We have been expected to provide work for students at home as well as teach in the classroom. This is tricky when teaching a practical class as in-class work is often hands-on, so work-from-home resources have to be created by the teacher with little or no notice. Work at home is meant to be work students can complete with minimal assistance from the teacher. The problem now is when students are at home on a normal sick day or can't make it to school for another reason (not COVID-19) they are contacting teachers asking for work for their lessons.

Teacher, NSW/ACT

We already had to do this pre-COVID-19 due to the structure of the school timetable etc. You need the right camera, microphone, and to ensure that everyone has appropriate expectations.

Teacher, NSW/ACT

More modifications of work are being asked of me at the moment. I am constantly sending work home to students isolating/quarantining so I'm actually teaching two lessons – one in the classroom and one remotely. This is starting to take its toll and I'm starting to question my profession.

Teacher, Victoria

Despite our school stipulating we won't run dual-mode teaching, in practice we do.

Uploading lessons and checking in with students isolating is taking a massive amount of time but must be done for reasons of equity and to keep these students engaged. This is over and above the added burdens of NCCD, reporting etc – all of which are worthwhile but add more work!

Teacher, Victoria

There is a need for guidelines around expectations for remote learning. The difference in workload between schools is huge!

Teacher, Victoria

UKRAINE
Keeping education alive

Courageous teachers both within and outside Ukraine are doing all they can to stay connected with their students and offer hope amid chaos, writes Katie Camarena.

The war in Ukraine is having a devastating impact on the country, its children and those who have fled to other countries.

There are now 5.8 million Ukrainian refugees while another 7 million are displaced within the war-torn country. UNICEF reports that about half of those who have fled are children.

Despite these overwhelming circumstances, teachers are doing whatever it takes to keep education alive no matter where their students are.

Underground but not out

The Vice President of the Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine, Olha Chabaniuk, raised the impact of the war on the teaching profession at a meeting with international organisations. "Because many Ukrainian teachers are women, a significant part of the profession has fled to neighbouring countries," she said. Many men have had to join the army to defend the country against the Russian invasion.

Yet whether they are in Ukraine or neighbouring countries, dedicated teachers are doing all they can to provide some sense of stability and hope for their students. With the education system upended by Russia's war, lessons have resumed where possible though they continue to be interrupted by the wailing of air sirens.

In Kharkiv, a city in north-eastern Ukraine, teachers have established makeshift classrooms in the underground metro station. Trains are providing relative safety, having been transformed into homes for thousands of civilians sheltering from shelling on the streets above.

In the western Ukraine city of Lviv, teacher Yulia Kuryliuk meets some of her students in person a few times a week, and she reads to them via Zoom in the evenings. They tune in from Italy, Greece and Poland where they have sought refuge.

In Borodyanka, just 25 kilometres from the town of Bucha where Russian troops killed hundreds of civilians, Viktoria Tymoshenko taught students in a basement where they sheltered for a week without electricity.

She then helped some escape. One of her students described how they fled under shelling to a nearby village before moving further away to greater safety.

Tymonshenko says one school in Borodyanka was partially destroyed by Russian forces who had used it for a base. Classrooms were left ransacked and graffiti on the walls read "Russia, our beloved country!!!"

Support for refugee students

In May 2022, education unions joined with Ukraine authorities and international organisations for a policy dialogue on how to meet the needs of Ukrainian students and ensure access to education for all refugees.

"Education unions are working tirelessly with all stakeholders to ensure that every student displaced by the war in Ukraine has access to quality education while abroad, that every refugee teacher receives the support they need to navigate this crisis," the General Secretary of Education International, David Edwards, said.

The First Deputy Minister for Education and Science of Ukraine, Andriy Vitrenko, said the Ukrainian government is supporting the education of refugees through online classes and developing books in Ukrainian.

Experts agree that education can play a positive role for children affected by war, and teachers who have fled Ukraine say distance learning helps their students feel a sense of connection, purpose, and routine.

The intergovernmental Safe Schools Declaration states that education can "alleviate the

psychological impact of armed conflict by offering routine and stability".

Help from other countries

Sharing a border with Ukraine, Poland has welcomed an enormous influx of refugees. But its school system is struggling to cope and there is an extreme teacher shortage.

In March, the head of the Polish Teachers' Union (ZNP) Sławomir Broniarz, warned that up to 50,000 new teachers could be needed to cope with the influx as more than 85,000 Ukrainian students had registered at Polish schools.

"We are heading for an education tsunami," he said. "Regardless of teacher shortages, the persisting issue of unattractiveness of the profession, lack of state support and heavy workloads, teachers are doing everything possible to support refugee students."

In Ireland, Ukrainian teachers will be fast-tracked through registration to ensure schools are ready to meet the needs of refugees. The UK may follow suit with Secretary of State for Education Nadhim Zahawi saying his team is looking for ways to recognise the qualifications of Ukrainian teachers.

In Germany, the Ministry of General and Vocational Education said Germany is drawing on lessons learned from welcoming Syrian refugees. Measures put in place in 2015 are now helping accelerate the response to the current crisis.

Meeting with refugees in Romania, United States First Lady Dr Jill Biden said, "teachers are the glue that help these kids deal with their trauma and deal with the emotion and help give them a sense of normalcy".

Anti-war oppression in Russia

Russians who speak out against the war face serious consequences. Harsh new laws have been introduced, with speaking out against the war punishable by up to 15 years in jail.

Thousands of anti-war protesters have already been detained and even school children have been arrested for placing flowers and 'No war' posters outside the Ukrainian Embassy in Moscow.

Geography teacher Kamran Manafly lost his job after an Instagram post opposing the war. "I have my own opinion," Manafly posted. "These views clearly do not coincide with the state's opinion. I don't want to be a mirror for state propaganda."

Returning to school to collect his things, Manafly was barred from entering. He was called a "traitor to the motherland" and the principal of his school said she would "do everything in her power to have Kamran thrown in prison for 15 years".

Amid concerns for his safety, he fled Russia, abandoning his beloved teaching profession.

"Education unions are working tirelessly to ensure every student displaced by the war has access to quality education."

In Moscow, Russian teacher Kamran Manafly holds a protest sign saying "I want to live in peace" before being forced to flee, above; and standing among the rubble of the war in Ukraine

Calling Australia home

Since 23 February, more than 3500 Ukrainian nationals have arrived in Australia. One student who is settling into school life in Sydney is 14-year-old Denis Oborskyi.

Denis fled Ukraine with his mother and siblings in late February. He now attends Xavier College in Sydney's west.

IEU member and principal of Xavier College, Michael Pate, said Denis started at the school after his aunt contacted the parish priest seeking assistance. "Our Executive Directors made it clear that our doors are open to kids that have fled a war-torn environment," Pate told the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

With the help of his teachers, classmates and a little Google Translate, Denis is settling well into his new school.

The people of Ukraine will bear the horrors of this conflict for many years to come. An end to the war is the only way to give them back even a fraction of what they have lost.

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School refusal

'I don't want to go!'

It takes a team effort to get a reluctant child back to school, writes Will Brodie.

A scooter, a cute dog, and a drone. These are just some of the tools of trade used at Bayside School Refusal Clinic in Melbourne by family therapist John Chellew as he battles the rising incidence of school refusal.

His 'walk and talk' outdoor sessions aim to engage kids in activities they enjoy so they feel more comfortable discussing why they're anxious about attending school.

Up to 30 percent of students experience school refusal at some time in their education, but Chellew says the incidence of refusal has tripled since pandemic lockdowns. In 2021, Monash Health's Associate Professor Michael Gordon reported a 40 percent increase in referrals.

School refusal is not 'wagging' or truancy. Rather, it's non-attendance related to worry or anxiety about going to school.

"Students who refuse to go to school don't typically engage in the antisocial behaviours usually linked with truancy (such as lying, stealing or destruction of property)," Dr Gordon says. "Unlike truancy, the absence isn't usually hidden from family. In fact, families may have attempted many strategies to reduce the child or young person's anxiety to help them attend school."

School refusal is not a formal psychiatric diagnosis, it's a title for an emotional and/or behaviour problem. However, there can be serious mental conditions underlying refusal, which must be assessed when return to school planning is considered.

Refusal can jeopardise a student's relationships, create conflict within families, and even affect income if parents or carers are forced to stay home with a child. They have been associated with mental health problems, relationship issues, and unemployment later in life.

Most advice on the topic understandably focuses on parents, but schools and teachers are a crucial part of dealing with school refusal. It takes a team effort to get a reluctant student back to the classroom.

Signs of school refusal

If a student has missed school two or three times over a two-week period, they could be developing a pattern of school refusal. Dr Gordon suggests if a child misses class six times, it should automatically trigger a follow-up from school.

Dr Kathleen Tait, Associate Professor at Macquarie School of Education, says changes in non-verbal behaviours of students can denote possible issues. Increased fidgeting, avoidance of eye contact, wriggling restlessly, and asking to go to the toilet more often than usual are all potential pointers to a child struggling with anxiety and at risk of school refusal.

She suggests teachers have a quiet one-on-one chat with students who sit by themselves during break times. They can also install a 'Friday Fun Day' where students can bring their favourite toy if they are 'brave' and attend throughout the week.

Parents or teachers who notice the following behaviours need to meet to discuss the child's issues:

- tearfulness before school or repeated pleas to stay at home resulting in frequent lateness or absences
- tantrums, clinginess, dawdling or running away before school or during drop off
- frequent complaints of illness before or during school such as stomach aches, headaches, dizziness, or fatigue

- difficulty attending school after weekends, holidays, school camps or sports days
- long periods spent in sick bay or in the principal's office.

At home, such children might:

- cry, throw tantrums, yell, or scream
- hide or lock themselves in their room
- refuse to move
- beg or plead not to go
- complain of aches, pains, and illness before school, which generally get better if you let your child stay at home
- show high levels of anxiety
- have trouble sleeping
- threaten to hurt themselves.

School refusal is most prevalent when a child faces transition or disruption such as:

- family and peer conflict
- starting or changing schools
- moving home
- bullying or teasing
- problems with a teacher
- poor school results.

Chellew says refusal happens most among intelligent students who are "sensitive, creative, shy, introverted, and risk-averse". The difficulty for parents and teachers is that many kids who can't adequately express or understand their anxieties act out – their behaviour does their talking for them.

What can teachers do?

If mental health issues have been ruled out, parents, school and teachers should convene to organise a return-to-school plan. It is suggested that the adults meet first, then the student should be involved and consulted throughout subsequent meetings.

Educational and Developmental Psychologist Kelly-Ann Allen says if the student has missed a lot of school days, the process might be gradual, with the student returning to class for small increments of time then lengthening their time spent in the classroom.

"The plan should include strategies that outline what will happen if the young person starts to feel stressed at school to help them feel secure and safe, like taking brain breaks or meeting with the wellbeing team," Allen says.

She says "consistent collaboration between parents or primary caregivers, the school, and external professionals" is effective in addressing school refusal.

Once you have a clear idea of the return-to-school timeline, the family can begin to 'mirror' old school day routines by establishing standard school wake-up times, mealtimes and sleep schedules. Younger children can benefit from refamiliarising walks around the school perimeter and along their former route to school.

Advice for parents

According to raisingchildren.net.au, the best way to get your child back to school is by working as a team with your child's school. It's a good idea to start by talking with your child's classroom teacher, home-room teacher, or year coordinator.

Here are some things you could cover:

- Explain what's going on for your child and why your child is refusing to go to school – for example, bullying, learning difficulties and mental health problems.
- If your child is experiencing bullying, talk about how this is affecting your child. You could ask the school about their strategies to manage and prevent bullying.
- Ask whether other support staff, like the student welfare coordinator, school psychologist or counsellor, can help your child. Ask whether you can have regular updates on your child's progress and support needs.
- If your child has a learning difficulty that makes it hard for them to enjoy learning, ask what support the school can offer.
- If your child needs ongoing support to stay engaged in school, ask the school about forming an attendance support group.
- Talk with the school about a gradual start back at school for your child. For example, your child might be able to start with a shorter school day or with their favourite subjects and build up from there.

Chellew says parents and teachers dealing with school refusal need to be 'detectives', because it's tough for kids to understand and communicate their issues and there's a different solution for every child. He suggests making the child feel they are the "captain of their team", and parents, teachers, psychologists, and counsellors are fellow team members there to support them.

And it doesn't hurt to have some toys and a cute therapy dog on that team.

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School belonging

‘I can’t wait to go’

School belonging is crucial to student mental health and academic performance. That requires adequately resourced teachers, writes Will Brodie.

Sometimes it takes an expert to point out the obvious.

It’s accepted that a sense of belonging is a powerful force, but it’s taken Kelly-Ann Allen, a Senior Lecturer and Educational and Developmental Psychologist at Monash University, to emphasise that “schools are the epicentre of belonging for many students”.

She says school belonging is linked to improved “academic motivation, mental health, wellbeing, and positive youth development”.

“And we also know that low school belonging is linked to a range of outcomes at odds with a successful school experience such as violence, vandalism, drop-out rates, and truancy.”

School belonging can also impact the mental health of students long after they leave school and influence their further education and employment prospects.

School belonging is defined as “the extent to which children feel individually welcomed, respected, included, and supported by others within the school social environment”.

The OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment has shown that since 2003, one in three students feel they don’t belong at their school. And pandemic isolation has contributed to an alarming rise in mental health issues for young people.

Belonging is ‘hardwired’ into our brains, and it’s more than just being part of a group, or having friends, writes Tracy Brower.

She says belonging is a “feeling of connectedness to a group or community. It’s the sense that you’re part of something”.

We need to feel unity and a common sense of character with and among members of our group.

Scientific basis

The science backs up the observations: we crave interactions in the same region of our brains where we crave food; and we experience social exclusion in the same region of our brain where we experience physical pain. When people lack a sense of belonging, it is a stronger predictor of depression than feelings of loneliness or a lack of social support.

Early childhood teaching specialist Michael Dunlea has worked in an “inclusion classroom” since 2003. He

makes building a culture of belonging his priority to counter social anxiety, which prevents students from taking necessary academic risks.

He says belonging doesn't just mean fitting in, because "students' individuality and uniqueness should always be valued".

"Belonging in the classroom means ensuring that all students feel welcomed, comfortable, and part of the school family."

But how is that achieved?

Relationships with teachers

Kelly-Ann Allen believes the most important factor contributing to a sense of school belonging for students is their relationship with their teachers.

"Students need the opportunity to feel accepted, cared for, and affirmed in their school. There is no greater way to achieve this than by utilising the school personnel that they are around the most: teachers.

"When young people feel liked and cared for by teachers, and think their teachers are likable and fair, they are more likely to report feelings of school belonging."

Allen says that following pandemic lockdowns, students "want their teachers to know their name and genuinely know who they are as people".

Students also reported that their sense of belonging was strengthened when their teachers were approachable and understanding, offered them encouragement, and believed in their abilities.

She noted that students are ahead of adults in their understanding of respect and equity and want their teachers to "acknowledge diversity and inclusive practices", including using preferred pronouns.

Students also want assistance from adults to "interact or reconnect with their peers" and appreciate "school-based activities that helped them interact and build friendships".

Students want "emotional support as well as learning support" from teachers and they want to feel they can go to their teachers when problems arise.

The catch is that teachers' sense of school belonging predicts their students' sense of connection.

"The teaching profession faces numerous struggles," Allen says. "Teachers are reporting higher feelings of stress and burnout. Many are leaving the profession, and new graduates are most at risk. Teachers are also reporting that they don't feel valued.

"We know that feelings of being valued, accepted, appreciated, and respected relate to the very heart of what belonging means for people.

"How can we expect teachers to focus their energies on positive student relationships and getting to genuinely know their students when they simply don't have enough time during the school day to deliver the curriculum?"

Allen says teacher wellbeing needs to be "urgently evaluated" and teachers must be asked directly what would assist their own sense of belonging.

"School leaders who take an interest in staff feelings of belonging are also helping students to belong," Allen says.

"Teachers need autonomy, competency, and relatedness in their work. They need to feel like they have a say over key decisions that impact them. What I also see from the research is that teachers want a focus on wellbeing but not mandatory time-consuming activities that add more work time."

"How can we expect teachers to focus on positive student relationships when they don't have enough time during the day to deliver the curriculum?"

Hints and tips

Allen suggests three simple ways to improve student belonging:

- a teacher who greets students at the door can increase student engagement by 20 percent
- finding five similarities between student and teacher can improve relationships and close achievement gaps by 60 percent
- learner-centred teacher practices, which honour student voices, promote higher-order thinking, and align teaching with individual needs are associated with positive student outcomes.

Dunlea says schools can "reinforce existing divisions or provide students a safe community that feels like a second home".

His suggestions for primary school age students include:

- Celebrate something special about every student.
- Encourage passion projects five times a year to allow students to share more about who they are with their classmates.
- Leave one desk empty for new students, and welcome them to their first class with a card from each student: "Seeing an empty desk when they arrive signals that our class has been waiting for them all year – and reminds other students that our class could grow and change at any time."
- Find out which students are not being included. "I ask my students to anonymously write down the names of three students they want to sit with or work with. I go over the results to see who is being selected and who is not." He then create opportunities for those not chosen to build relationships with peers.

Dunlea believes fostering belonging is crucial because "as educators, we really can help change the world, one child at a time".

Allen has a similar view of the importance of school belonging beyond the classroom.

"In what has been called a 'loneliness epidemic', the past decade has brought an alarming rise in loneliness for people worldwide, with adolescents and senior citizens particularly at risk.

"Schools are essentially micro-societies that represent our broader societies," she says.

As such, if we can learn how to build a sense of belonging within our schools, perhaps these lessons can be applied across other communities, including assisted living facilities and nursing homes.

"Further, if young people develop the skills and capabilities to connect well with others, perhaps we can cultivate a more connected community within a currently disconnected world."

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TEACHING CLIMATE JUSTICE

The School Strikes 4 Climate are a "reckoning" for education, according to the editor of a journal devoted to teaching about the environment, writes Will Brodie.

The editor of a special issue of the *Australian Journal of Environmental Education* (AJEE), Dr Blanche Verlie, says teachers and scholars must "pay attention to what we might learn about (climate) education from school strikers".

Verlie believes school education fails students by focusing on "the science of the greenhouse effect" at the expense of ethical and political aspects of the climate crisis.

"Young people are learning things like how climate change impacts on the poorest around the world and understanding climate justice, things that aren't taught in our schools."

The journal's articles emphasise the value of student-led climate action, of justice-oriented (social, political) climate education, and of skills development in areas such as communication, organisation, and leadership.

Journal contributor Peta White, a senior lecturer from Deakin University, says the School Strikes movement is a "collaborative, youth-led endeavour in climate education".

She spoke to school strike leader Harriet who said her activism taught her about "advertising, using social media effectively, public speaking, non-violent communication, and de-escalation tactics, how to liaise with police, how to communicate with media, (and) how to be more assertive".

Basic teaching

School striker Madison said, "I think schools do teach the baseline understanding like oxygen, water, we need our ecosystems, but they don't teach about the deeper understandings, like 'hey we might be fine but look at all these people who won't be fine'."

Another strike participant, Lajos, said the strikes taught him "more last year than any other year I attended school".

Students take to the streets in the School Strike 4 Climate, 25 March 2022, Kirribilli House (the Prime Minister's Sydney residence)

"Climate change needs to be taught more comprehensively, holistically, and in justice and action-oriented ways that empower young people to take action."

In her AJEE piece, Verlie and co-author Alicia Flynn say climate change needs to be seen less as a curriculum topic than "a condition in which young people live".

"It also needs to be taught comprehensively, holistically, and in justice and action-oriented ways that empower young people to take action alongside adults. If education does not enable planetary survival, then is it fit for purpose?

"The very notion that young people are driven to strike from school because of widespread climate inaction is a deep challenge to foundational assumptions about the purposes and values of education, including the idea that education has young people's best interests at heart and is helping prepare them to flourish in the future.

"Climate change can no longer be considered an object of the curriculum to be studied from a dispassionate distance … it is a structural violence inflicted on the young."

Critical skills

Verlie and her co-authors want schools to help young people develop "critical, political and ethical skills, to interrogate the power structures that generate the vast majority of emissions and environmental destruction and the ways this is unfairly distributed – just 100 companies are responsible for 70 percent of emissions".

Politically conservative commentators describe the development of such critical faculties as "brainwashing". Schools are "awash in green-left dogma", bemoaned Tony Thomas in *Quadrant*. Sustainability as a cross-curriculum priority enables "direct green/left indoctrination".

Former Prime Minister Scott Morrison wanted "less activism" in schools. NSW Education Minister Sarah Mitchell opposed the strikes in March 2022 by telling students to save their activism for the weekend.

But the climate protest genie is out of the bottle.

Sustainability is entrenched in the Australian curriculum and Verlie says the school strikes denote a critical shift in decades-old youth climate activism, "one that directly enrols education and schools into the arena of climate politics".

What should schools and teachers do?

It is 'climate justice' rather than climate change that motivates students, and what they find lacking in environmental education at school. They want to know how to change things.

AJEE contributor Peta White and her co-authors call for education systems to be reimagined and reformed "to become spaces where young people learn and refine skills for political engagement".

To be relevant, schools must offer ways to "meaningfully

engage student voice" about the climate crisis.

She seeks education where teachers and students work collaboratively to prevent climate injustice from escalating.

Verlie suggests teachers support "young people's complex and intense emotions" about climate justice by listening to them and helping them find meaningful ways of responding.

AJEE researchers propose four big changes to education:

- Recognise that young people are living through climate change right now and it's not something to be studied from a dispassionate distance.
- Take young voices seriously; educators must listen to, support and work alongside their students.
- Reconsider the outdated notion that students can be educated to "manage" the planet; instead, embrace collective responsibility.
- Learn to respond to uncertainty and complex challenges.

Practical solutions

Students told AJEE that education for sustainability programs running outside schools, such as New Zealand's Enviroschools, involve problem-solving and guide students towards practical, project-based learning. They would respond strongly to the inclusion of such programs within schools.

At Cornish College in Melbourne's east, principal Nicola Forrest has won awards for helping to "embed" sustainability in the school's core curriculum. Cornish was set up with the mission and "moral purpose" of "education for a sustainable future". It uses 100 acres of farmland to connect children to nature through hands-on outdoor learning, including tending beehives and working in an EcoCentre that features aquaponics, guinea fowl, geese, ducks, vegetable patches, worm farms, compost heaps and recycling.

Forrest views the official state curriculum through the "lens of sustainability" and defines sustainability at Cornish College as "making a difference for a world where there is enough for all, forever".

Canadian researchers Gregory Lowan-Trudeau and Teresa Anne Fowler support "experiential, place-based teaching and learning opportunities", citing in situ renewable energy installations in Alberta where staff and students can see how much energy they are consuming and saving.

However, they warn that most educators are grounded in one speciality and find it challenging to know all the social, political, ecological, and technical aspects of such projects.

Climate striker Catherine told AJEE authors Maria L Bright and Chris Eames that classroom strategies that motivated students would engage "the head, the heart, and the hands". Strike participant Jake said it was vital students undertook "project-based learning".

The challenge

Author Peta White and her fellow journal contributors say the "children of climate change are more adept at responding to the uncertain and complex challenges of our times than many of us adults".

"School strikers understand better than anybody that they cannot do this alone and are simply saying: please listen to us but do not leave it up to us," the contributors say.

They urge educators to devise "long-term approaches to learning and working alongside young people in non-hierarchical, democratic and multigenerational solidarity".

They say we need to:

- acknowledge that young people are forced into civil disobedience to take political action to generate change about social/climate justice
- welcome the fact that young people may come to climate change activism through humanitarian and social justice perspectives as well as through engaged critical science agency

Directly above: IEU members stand with unionist and author Thomas Mayor (far left), in opposition to the Narrabri gas project (see story, opposite)

- understand that young people appreciate a need to comprehend climate science but only as far as it enables them to take necessary action to generate change
- appreciate that we are experiencing a global phenomenon that involves young people engaging with government and demanding government action.

The AJEE's deep dive into the school strikes reveals that young people do not merely want to engage with the political system, they want to transform it. And that's what they want to be taught.

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Stand with Gomeroi
Push back on Pilliga gas project

Would you want a big corporation drilling gas wells on your land? The Gomeroi people of NSW certainly don't. Here's what's happening and how you can support them, writes Monica Crouch.

In 2020, energy giant Santos gained Federal Government approval for a $3.6 billion coal-seam gas project at Narrabri on the NSW North West Slopes.

It is a huge project. Up to 850 coal-seam gas wells could be drilled on 1000 hectares of land that includes some of the Pilliga Forest.

As part of the federal government's plan for a "gas-fired recovery" from the COVID-19 pandemic, this project was one of 15 slated for fast-tracked approval.

Despite the NSW Government's initial concerns that rushing it through would "undermine public trust", it was signed off by both state and federal governments by November 2020.

During its deliberations, the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment received 23,000 submissions, the *Guardian* reported. Nearly 98 percent were opposed to the project on the grounds it would polute agricultural groundwater, impact pressure in the Artesian Basin, harm biodiversity and emit greenhouse gas.

On Gomeroi land

"Your land, your choice," Santos says in big capital letters on its website. The choice of the Gomeroi people, traditional owners of the Pilliga Forest, is to keep the forest safe. They voted overwhelmingly to reject the gas drilling.

But Santos then launched proceedings in the National Native Title Tribunal, aiming to go ahead regardless.

The Pilliga Forest is an important cultural and spiritual site, Gomeroi woman Suellyn Tighe told the *National Indigenous Times* in March 2022.

"We refuse to allow Santos and the Morrison government to sacrifice the Gomeroi Nation and our sites for the financial benefit of a global conglomerate," she said.

Gomeroi man Raymond Weatherall said, "Every tree, every bird, every animal is part of that beautiful ecosystem that is so special to us. Our land is worth more than money."

Support and solidarity

As proceedings in the National Native Title Tribunal got underway on 11 April, about 200 people demonstrated outside the Federal Court in Sydney in solidarity with the Gomeroi people.

> ***"Every tree, every bird, every animal is part of that beautiful ecosystem that is so special to us – our land is worth more than money."***

Indigenous activists were joined by unions and environment groups calling for Santos to withdraw its application and respect Gomeroi rights and the environment.

Unions including the IEU, the National Tertiary Education Union, the Electrical Trades Union and the United Workers Union stand with the Gomeroi people.

"The fundamental issue here is that the rights of the Gomeroi should be respected," said Maritime Union of Australia National Indigenous Officer and author Thomas Mayor (pictured above), addressing the School Strike for Climate on 25 March. "I was there with the Gomeroi people a couple of weeks ago, and I'm proud to say we all resoundingly said 'no' to Santos.

"And you know what? In the Northern Territory, Santos is doing the same thing – they're ignoring First Nations. They want to frack our Country and they want to take away our futures. Say 'no' to Santos – shame, Santos, shame."

There are other solutions to Australia's energy needs. "A just transition away from fossil fuels through large-scale investment in renewable energy and sustainable development doesn't require dispossession," Mayor said. "And it provides ongoing, secure jobs."

Read more and sign the petition

gomeroingaarr.org

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"If children and adolescents struggle silently, schools may be discriminatory through a lack of awareness."

Is education inclusive enough?

Fewer than half of Australian teachers feel prepared to deal with the needs of students with an intellectual or physical disability, writes Irina Hochwald-Jones, Project Officer at IEU VicTas.

Governments, schools, and educators have come a long way when it comes to addressing the unique needs of children and students with an intellectual or physical disability.

Since legislative reforms in 1992, schools, their student bodies and the content being taught has been diversified, to the benefit of all. However, there are still students who are being left behind.

The *Disability Discrimination Act* defines 'disability' under Section 4 primarily as a loss, malfunction, disfigurement, disease, or illness of a person's bodily or mental functions.

This limited definition creates three main issues:

- The Act makes discrimination on the grounds of disability unlawful, however, it lacks a positive duty on educational authorities to proactively work against discrimination.
- Treating students with a disability the same way you treat a student without a disability is not enough; equality does not constitute equity.
- When there is a lack of awareness of disability, students go undiagnosed. Many disabilities are 'invisible' or take special knowledge to identify, such as mental health disorders or symptoms. They are often missed but can leave just as great an impact.
- Differences outside of disability give rise to discrimination and affect students. Socio-economic or cultural-linguistic factors help determine whether a person is even diagnosed, and gender identity, sexuality, religion, and race all impact learning outcomes.

Equality versus equity

These terms are often used interchangeably, but they are distinct in important ways. Equality in education is the provision of equal treatment, opportunities and access, regardless of one's background. While a crucial step towards eliminating disparity, equality fails to account for unique needs. For instance, providing each child with a laptop to take home doesn't help those whose home lacks internet access. Even if a school promotes equality, some children are still at risk due to their individual circumstances.

A more difficult but worthier goal is that of equity. Equity in education seeks to ensure that students with disabilities, and other marginalised groups receive educational tools, resources, and assistance that are tailored to their specific needs, rather than providing the same for all individuals.

For example, a framework of equity recognises that a child with a disability might require different physical assistance at school than a peer who does not. It ensures that everyone has access to the resources they need to thrive in their education. Equity is more purposeful, meaningful, and effective compared to equality.

Slipping through the cracks

The World Health Organization (WHO) says mental health disorders are one of the main causes of disability in Australian adolescents. Almost a quarter of Australia's young people are affected, yet they are five times less likely than the rest of the population to seek help at times of psychological distress.

A *Young Minds Matter* survey found that ADHD is the most common disorder, at 7.4 percent of children; however, misconceptions about the disorder persist and girls are continuously underdiagnosed due to variations in presentation and gender biases towards behaviour.

If children and adolescents struggle silently, schools may be discriminatory through a lack of awareness. A child may be punished for their behaviour or academic performance, and denied participation, opportunities or assistance, when their struggle is in fact a symptom of undiagnosed ADHD.

About 50 percent of mental illness emerges in adolescence and the rate of depression increases by more than 300 percent between the ages of 11 and 17. Prevention efforts implemented early in life can successfully avert the onset of mental health disorders and schools, with their access to young people and structured setting, are ideally placed to deliver such interventions.

A view too narrow

We are learning that traumatic events are often precursors to the development of some mental health conditions or learning disabilities. So, it is vital to shed light on the factors leading to an increased risk of trauma at school. For example, victims of peer cyberbullying have been found to experience low self-esteem, withdrawal from school activities, anxiety, depression, and even suicidal thoughts.

Children affected by the continuing impacts of structural inequality that result in poverty, sexism, racism, transphobia, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination are at an increased risk of acquiring a disability, illness or disorder.

If we ignore those structural inequalities and treat students belonging to marginalised groups as no different to anybody else, we perpetuate inequity. Students belonging to marginalised groups deserve to be empowered through an education that celebrates their identity and differences.

The solutions

Fewer than half (38 percent) of Australian teachers feel professional development opportunities adequately prepare them for teaching students with special needs.

Schools and teachers need support to understand evidence-based inclusive practices, address common concerns and misconceptions about inclusion, and develop and apply corresponding policy and practical strategies. Teaching students with special needs requires skills that develop with time and ongoing support, yet less than half of early career teachers work with an assigned mentor.

Ultimately, our legislators must develop, introduce, and maintain laws and policies that address the discrimination at the root of the problem.

It is on our governments to fund education and universities, so educators are trained to deal with differences in a sensitive and proactive way. It is on our governments to provide schools with the resources, specialists, and funds to manage a diverse student cohort. It is on employers to manage teacher workload, provide adequate staffing and robust procedures to ensure responsibility for special needs students doesn't disproportionately rest with individual staff.

Unions have the collective power to push governments and policymakers into doing more. We know that students with complex needs can drastically increase the workload of our members, especially where those students are not receiving the support they need.

Addressing the issue properly would be a win for both students and educators.

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Opinion

Grattan Report

Planning time is of the essence

The Grattan Institute surveyed 5442 teachers to find out what kind of preparation time teachers are getting. IEU Professional Engagement Officer Pat Devery looks at the findings.

The Grattan Institute Report, *Making Time for Great Teaching*, released in January, claims to have "sounded the alarm" on teacher workload and the erosion of teacher time. This would come as a surprise to IEU members who have been tolling that very bell for more than a decade.

Plenty of positives

The Grattan Institute directly consulted teachers in the field, an approach the union always welcomes. The report carefully identifies some of the complexities in teaching that contribute to excessive workloads.

Encouragingly, the report also recognises the fundamental importance of protected planning time. It calls for a reduction in administrivia, and emphasises that teachers need access to "high-quality common resources", especially in disadvantaged schools and when supporting students with complex learning needs.

Similarly, the report pinpoints the constant churn of "new initiatives" or what the union describes as "project mongering". As one survey respondent noted, "Nothing ever drops off, it's just added on top of what we already do."

Teachers are expected to implement a never-ending stream of school-specific or system initiatives with little or no consultation, and with scant regard as to the value of these schemes for their school.

Sifting through suggestions

The Grattan Report suggests a range of options to address these issues, including "buying" more protected planning time through "small increases in average class sizes" and holding "more structured preparation and planning activities in non-term time".

The report also recommends helping teachers to work smarter through access to high-quality common units, plans and assessments that have been quality assured.

Specialist and support staff, the report contends, could assist by delivering effective teaching to struggling students. They add that support staff could assist with yard duty and chasing permission slips, thus freeing up valuable preparation time for teachers.

Cost effectiveness and flexibility are at the core of the recommendations. The report wants its suggestions quarantined from existing industrial arrangements so as to avoid a "one-size-fits-all approach".

Class size counts

Unfortunately, the report's take on class sizes does not stand up to close scrutiny. It would be virtually impossible for many schools in regional or remote NSW to enrol extra students to 'buy' additional time with larger class sizes. The students just aren't there.

On the opposite side of the same coin, many city schools and schools in big regional centres are already stretched to the limit, so "small increases in class sizes" are impossible. With classes in many Catholic systemic schools already sitting at 30-32, more students simply won't fit.

The IEU rejects the assertion that industrial instruments restrict individual school flexibility. On the contrary, the negotiating process for these agreements is exactly where the issue could be addressed, especially any review of staffing ratios.

It is not widely understood that creating flexibility within a school timetable has as much to do with staffing ratios as it does with class sizes, especially in secondary schools.

Most medium-to-large secondary schools would already be structuring flexibility into their timetables by running large class sizes in one area of the timetable to allow for smaller candidature courses that cater to specific student needs. This flexibility is largely dictated by existing staffing ratios.

Paper chase and program churn

The IEU agrees with the report that schools and systems should implement processes to reduce paperwork, particularly around programming, registration, and developing and resourcing of work units.

The IEU has consistently pushed for, where appropriate, centrally developed programs, work units and assessments for teachers to access. An agreed blank template that satisfies the relevant authority requirements, has no added system overlays and is not subject to annual 'formatting churn' at the whim of an individual within a school or system, could be implemented immediately and at almost no cost. NESA's Program Builder is a practical example operating in NSW.

Education authorities and employers play an important role in developing programs that schools can endorse and implement with confidence – this would improve consistency across schools and eliminate the relentless program churn that consumes so much professional time.

There are several commercial programming software packages, similar to the reporting and timetabling packages currently used in schools, which could provide teachers with access to appropriate, quality assured resources, including assessment tasks.

Unfortunately, previous attempts at providing an agreed blank template have been unsuccessful, particularly in primary settings. Divergent ideas about the level of detail required in professional documentation have resulted in unwieldy programs.

Pushback on programming excess

Over the years, the union has heard various arguments resisting this request, ranging from "all teachers need to be able to program in order to meet the standards" and "forcing a standardised template on my school will prevent us from maintaining our current 'best practice' approach" through to "teachers need to own the program".

"There is still enormous need for authorities to respect teachers' professional judgement."

The union contends that even with the assistance of an employer-endorsed or commercial programming product, there are ample opportunities for teachers to show evidence they are meeting the standards by using their professional judgement.

Similarly, teachers have no trouble meeting Standard 5.5.2 (Provide timely and effective feedback …) while utilising the commercial report writing packages that operate in virtually all schools.

Modifying resources to suit individual students and cohorts is a core part of teaching and a hallmark of best practice. The union also knows that the 'best practice' claim can often be the cloak behind which hides an inflexible school leader, responsible for excessive program churn.

Some education 'experts' seem to confuse teaching with mere content delivery, but teachers know there is a world of difference. The suggestion that teachers cannot 'own' a program unless they put pen to paper and write it themselves indicates a misunderstanding about what it means to teach.

Support staff and supervision

In most IEU-negotiated agreements, support staff can already undertake supervision duties. The Grattan Report claims this proposal was met with strong approval; however, it appears the survey question was only put to teachers, not the support staff themselves. It would be interesting to survey support staff to see what staffing capacity currently exists.

Support staff wages are typically paid on an hourly basis so any additional hours they undertake would be counted as additional costs, not simply absorbed into their existing pay structure.

Taking up term breaks

The Grattan Report suggests school leaders should be empowered "to schedule more preparation and planning during term breaks" to even out what they endearingly refer to as a "lumpy" workload. But teachers have long been reporting considerable lumps and bumps during their non-term time.

If anyone still believes teaching is a 9-3 job with 12 weeks holiday a year, we really do have a long way to go. Any significant changes to a teacher's work pattern rightfully belong in the industrial arena. This is why so many teachers are in their union.

Food for further thought

The Grattan Report emphasises to both the public and the profession the long-standing difficulties around protected planning time. It has sparked many useful conversations.

But there is still enormous need for authorities to address teacher time issues by respecting teachers' professional judgement and by consulting with those on the front lines through their unions, making sure that any implemented strategies allow for the variety of educational contexts throughout Australia.

More information

Making time for great teaching: How better government policy can help, Jordana Hunter, Julie Sonnemann, Rebecca Joiner; Grattan Institute, 2022 https://grattan.edu.au/report/making-time-for-great-teaching-how-better-government-policy-can-help/

Investing in PD

is in everyone's best interests

New Deakin University research has reaffirmed the importance of employers investing in professional development (PD) for staff, writes Emily Campbell.

The joint report by Deakin University's educational management company DeakinCo. and Deloitte Access Economics, found that every $1 invested in Learning and Development (L&D) per employee is associated with an additional $4.70 in business revenue per employee, on average.

Beyond the obvious financial benefits, investment in PD drives productivity, increases loyalty, staff retention and allows companies to tackle major challenges like rapid digitalisation and skill gaps, the authors wrote.

DeakinCo. CEO Glenn Campbell said measuring the value and performance had been a guessing game for organisations for too long.

"Investing in PD leads to better staff retention, and in the context of the major skills shortages Australia is currently experiencing, this is an obvious opportunity for businesses who are wanting to retain talent and tackle skills gaps."

Although businesses from a range of different industries and regions across Australia were surveyed for the report, the findings are relevant to the non-government education sector.

Key findings

Some of the key findings from the research include:

- Leading L&D organisations reported an average attrition rate of 14 percent compared to almost 25 percent for organisations at the other end of the spectrum – 1.8 times greater.
- 87 percent of businesses in Australia could do more to improve their L&D, with just 13 percent of businesses found to be leaders in the space.
- 74 percent of businesses agree L&D became more of an organisational priority due to COVID-19.
- Investment in L&D is growing, with businesses expecting the amount of training to increase by 19 percent on average this year compared to pre-COVID levels.

PD essential for modern schools

Independent Education Union (IEU) Acting Federal Secretary Christine Cooper said the provision of professional learning and development for all school staff was crucial.

"In a context of constant change and pressure to meet growing social and economic expectations, teachers, support staff and other education staff must be equipped to provide quality education for the students in their care," Cooper said.

"A crucial factor in ensuring the quality of education provision is the maintenance of a highly skilled workforce in our schools.

"IEU members deserve the right to professional learning which meets their needs and equips them with the knowledge, skills and attitude necessary to perform their jobs.

"Professional learning and development should also assist employees to reach their full potential as education professionals and as human beings," she said.

Ms Cooper said professional learning is a lifelong process which aims to develop, sustain and extend professional knowledge and competencies of staff.

"The IEU has always known the value of professional development to our members and we have advocated for the increased provision of quality PD for all school staff.

"Many segments of our membership have problems in common like staff shortages and unsustainable workload, issues which would be helped enormously by employers' investment in PD.

"It's a simple and sensible solution to major problems faced by schools and early childhood education centres across Australia.

"The viability of the entire education sector would be improved with reduced staff attrition, increased revenue and decreased workload for teachers," she said.

Professionalisation of support staff

Allowing non-teaching staff, including school officers and support staff, increased access to PD would have substantial benefits for schools, students and the wider education community.

IEU-QNT Research Officer Dr Adele Schmidt said issues raised by IEU members regarding the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) program were a clear example of the benefits increased PD for school officers would give their teaching colleagues.

"Teachers' capacity to do their core front-facing work, which is being in a classroom with students and preparing to be in that classroom teaching students, is being corrupted by the push down of all these additional NCCD requirements employers are demanding," Dr Schmidt said.

"The IEU has been made aware of situations where teachers are standing in front of a photocopier uploading verification certificates and duplications of evidence for students, which is certainly not the best use of a teacher's time.

"Teachers need to be liberated back to their core work of preparing resources, programs and unit plans from the curriculum they can take into the classrooms and work with students.

"PD has never been more important in schools, because schools need to build a workforce that extends beyond teachers and relieves them of their burdensome workloads.

"Solving the problems associated with increased workload involves a professionalisation of the school officer workforce and ensuring school officers have access to a wide variety of PD and learning opportunities to grow in, and grow with, their role," she said.

School officers deserve better access

Although the number varies between states and territories, Australian teachers are required to complete a minimum amount of professional development every year, as part of their registration.

Because school officers do not have compulsory minimum PD requirements, they tend to receive substantially less opportunity to undertake PD than their teacher colleagues, which can negatively impact career progression.

IEU-QNT Branch Executive member and Chapter Representative Annette Gregory is employed as a laboratory technician at Ignatius Park College, and said she feels lucky compared to some of her school officer colleagues in other streams.

"Schools rarely provide or find PD for school officers, it's usually the school officers who find the PD and request to attend," Annette said.

"I'm fortunate in two ways; my employer has always been very supportive of the PD I request to attend and as a lab tech there are many relevant PD opportunities available during the year."

Annette said lab technicians in schools can access PD through their membership of professional organisations and associations such as Queensland Education Science Technicians (QEST) other state bodies and universities.

"Many science suppliers offer PD too, and all of these are valuable because of the complex knowledge and tasks we are called upon to use."

Teacher aides feel neglected

However, Annette said teacher aides often feel neglected in terms of access to PD.

"PD for teacher aides is very rarely provided by the employer, and most teacher aides don't think to find their own PD, they expect it to be found for them," she said.

"School officers working in the office, library, tuckshop and other areas rarely get access to PD, unless they work in a professional role such as accountant/business manager where those professions have an association.

"Students are pushed to do VET courses and are given the time to do them, yet the VET courses such as Cert III Education Support or Cert III Business Administration courses are something employers could suggest staff undertake."

Annette believes employers should invest in more PD for support staff, which would upskill staff, boost employee morale and increase professional respect and recognition of school officers.

"I feel that provision of PD for staff shows respect for the role an individual performs and demonstrates the employer is committed to assisting staff with their personal development," she said.

"Support staff in specialist roles are not only assisting teachers, but teaching the teacher, providing them with new knowledge, skills and practices.

"For example, the number of students with a disability is increasing and therefore teacher aide assistance is being sought more frequently.

"Students undertaking ATAR subjects are also needing more input from specialist staff in their quest to aim high, and the uptake of VET courses in senior school is requiring hands-on assistance from trade qualified support staff.

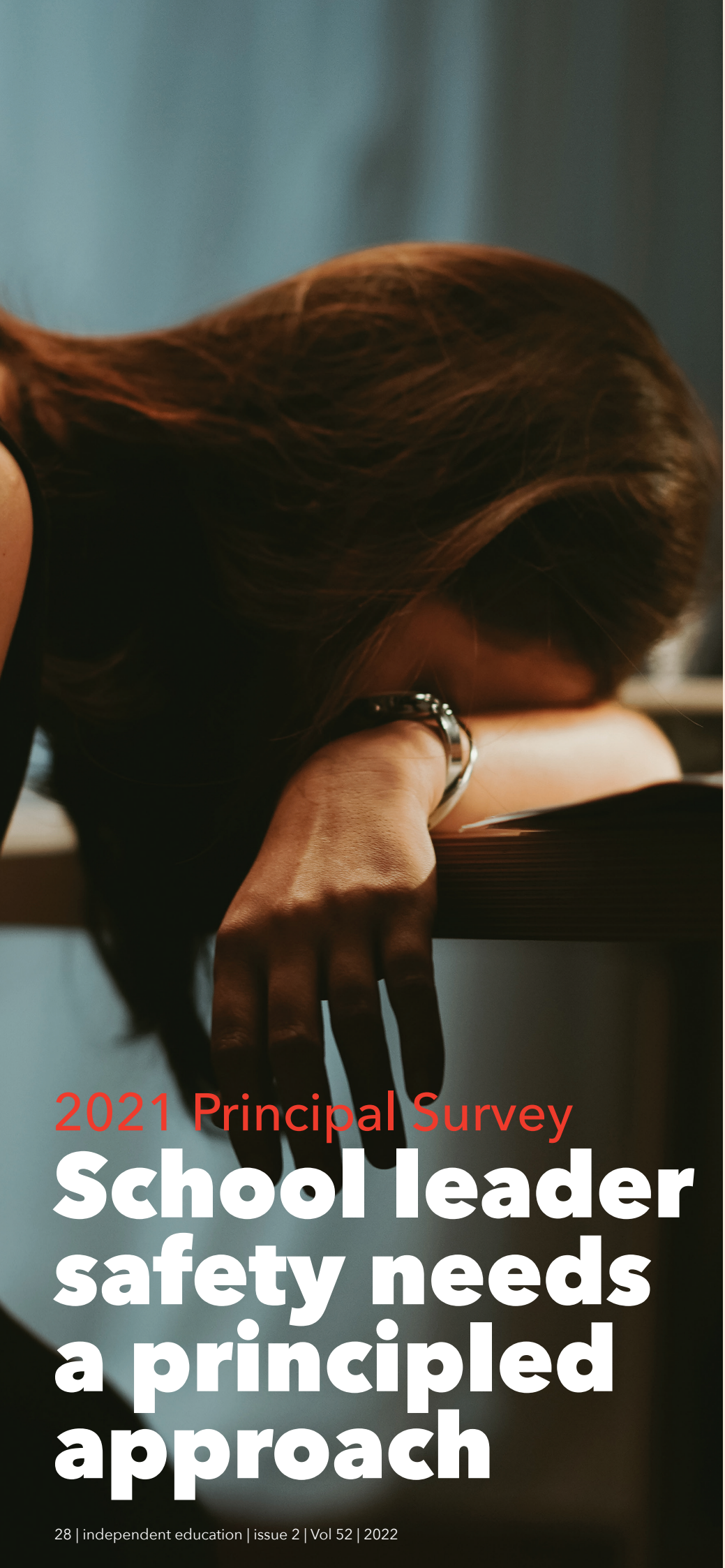
"Every time I go to a PD, I come back to work enthused by the new ideas, wanting to share them, try them, use them," Annette said.

Greater investment in PD for education staff, particularly school support staff, will undoubtedly help to counteract the challenges faced by the education profession.

It is time for school employers to acknowledge this and begin to take action for meaningful change by improving access to PD and ensuring it is an organisational priority.

IEU members should take advantage of free PD sessions and workshops provided by the union for members.

Visit your branch website to find out more.



2021 Principal Survey

School leader safety needs a principled approach

Australian school principals have endured extraordinary levels of stress and disruption in the past few years and, understandably, their mental health has been impacted, write Emily Campbell and Sue Osborne.

For the past 11 years, researchers from the Institute for Positive Psychology and Education (IPPE) at the Australian Catholic University (ACU) and Deakin University have conducted an annual survey to examine the occupational health, safety and wellbeing of Australian school principals.

The latest Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey results from 2021 paint a dire picture, with principals facing appalling and increasing levels of abuse and violence compared to previous years.

The ongoing impact of COVID-19, coupled with other traumatic natural events including floods and bushfires, have worsened the risks of long-term damage to principals' health and wellbeing, according to the researchers.

Independent Education Union Acting Federal Secretary Christine Cooper said the 2021 results were alarming but unsurprising.

"Principals have been burdened with increasingly demanding workloads and complexity in their roles due the implications of the pandemic," Cooper said.

"Our members, throughout all branches, have worked longer hours, experienced higher levels of stress and uncertainty whilst being subjected to violence and threats at a much higher rate than the general population.

"Principals have been required to act on government and health advice at short notice and manage lockdowns, remote learning and other pandemic consequences like acute staff shortages which is leading to burnout.

"It's very concerning that a third of principal survey respondents this year triggered the 'red flag' warning after completing the questions," she said.

A "red flag" alert is sent to principals when their responses to the survey indicate they are at high or very high risk in three or more survey categories.

Key research findings

The report confirmed some worrying trends in the rates of principals' psychological ill-health and raised concerns as to how principals can possibly sustain working under such conditions.

"IEU members understand the increasing pressures on the teaching

profession and particularly those in leadership, which is reflected in these results," Cooper said.

"Concerningly, it suggests school leaders are at a higher risk of burnout than ever before."

Key findings of the 2021 report included:

- Principals working an average of 55.6 hours per week, which equates to working from 8am to 7.30pm.
- A quarter of school leaders reporting working over 60 hours per week during school term, which equates to working a 12-hour day 5 days per week.
- 62.4 percent of principals reporting partial and/or complete school closures, up from 26.1percent the previous year.
- Principals facing the highest levels of burnout and cognitive stress since the survey began 11 years ago.
- Younger and less experienced school principals are especially impacted and are enduring higher levels of stress and degradation of their health and wellbeing than more experienced school leaders.
- Women principals reporting higher stress resulting from demands at work compared with men.

Offensive behaviours unacceptable

Appallingly, 84 percent of respondents reported being subjected to at least one form of offensive behaviour in 2021, up from 83.5 percent last year.

Half of all school leaders reported being targeted by three or more forms of offensive behaviour in 2021, including threats of violence, physical violence, bullying, cyber-bullying, gossip, slander, teasing and sexual harassment.

During 2020, rates of offensive behaviours against school principals decreased, bucking an alarming growth trajectory.

However, in 2021, the rates increased again, including offensive behaviours perpetrated by parents and carers of students.

Ms Cooper said it was unacceptable that principals are subjected to such frequent offensive behaviour and violence in the workplace simply for doing their job.

"The results indicate Australian school principals experience threats of violence at 5.7 times greater than the general population, actual physical violence 10.1 times greater than the general population and bullying four times greater than the general population.

"This is a severe work health and safety issue and there should be zero tolerance for this behaviour against principals.

"They are skilled professionals and leaders who deserve safe and respectful workplaces," Cooper said.

Some welcome insights

Despite these confronting results, the report noted there was a silver lining to the tumultuous COVID-19 period for principals and schools.

"Principals were a beacon of hope and showed outstanding leadership at a time when communities faced unprecedented challenges and disruption," Cooper said.

"School leaders and their deputies adeptly managed the school closures and the transition to remote learning, which would have been even more difficult if not for their dedication and tireless support."

"The pandemic resulted in greater public recognition of school principals and through uncertainty and change, principals continued to lead, guide and support their school communities."

The authors noted there were some positive findings which reinforced the vital role school principals play in schools and the broader community, with 82 percent of principals reporting increased parent/carer engagement in 2021.

"Australian school leaders exhibited many strengths during 2021, with extended COVID-19 lockdowns requiring open and continuous communication from school leaders," the report said.

"Principals increased their connection with families and they provided critical support to students, staff, parents and their communities.

"The pandemic resulted in greater public recognition of school principals and through uncertainty and change, principals continued to lead, guide and support their school communities."

In addition, principals reported higher levels of satisfaction regarding meaning of work, commitment to the workplace and self-efficacy.

Cooper said the past few years and its challenges had reinforced the importance of strong leadership in school communities.

"The report also identified that social support from external colleagues continued to increase and is at an all-time high, showing the importance of solidarity and collegial relationships to the profession, particularly for leaders," Cooper said.

"However, simply thanking principals for their immense effort is not enough.

"The most recent results are a stark reminder that not enough is being done to prevent burnout, reduce stress and improve the mental health and wellbeing of school principals," she said.

Principal member experiences

One principal member said COVID-19 intensified their workload and they were unable to work from home due to a high number of frontline worker parents.

"I was constantly working on updates to families and checking in with teachers and managing 'a million' complaints and queries," the member said.

"The fatigue and stress of COVID has meant much less resilience in student and staff behaviour.

"Students came back to school and had to learn how to socialise again, staff came back and had to learn how to behaviour manage students who would not normally give them problems.

"It has been a very tense two years and everyone is fatigued.

"My connection to my school community has grown but so has the expectation that I will fix every little problem.

"The job description of a principal would rival that of a CEO of any company, yet the salary is not indicative of the hours worked each week and the level of responsibility held."

Another principal member spoke of the need for mentoring, both formal and informal, so principals have a comprehensive support plan and regular time out to discuss issues and seek help.

"Principalship can be a lonely and confronting position and most principals would benefit from non-judgemental accompaniment and companionship," they said.

"Currently, support is often provided as remediation, not prevention.

"A significant problem is that many outstanding candidates for

principalship look at the current workloads and arrangements and see the toll it can take and ask themselves is it worth the effort.

"We should continue to explore new models of principalship such as co-principals, cluster groupings of principals and principals in residence.

"Periodic time away from the role to reflect and discern on goals and aspirations would be good.

"We need the 'mental space' to be able give attention to their resilience and to endorse their continuing commitment to the role," they said.

Union makes a difference

The report made 14 recommendations to improve the health and wellbeing of school leaders, although these would benefit all school staff who are negatively impacted by increased workload, burnout and psychological injuries.

Fundamentally, the 2021 results showed that we need to:

- support school leaders by reshaping work practices, role demands and targeting professional learning; and
- create a shared dialogue to address bullying and violence.

One principal member said the survey results validated what most principals know about their work.

"There will be deflection and redirection of accountability by systems and central offices, with the implication that the responsibility for principal resilience and ultimate health lies with the individual," they said.

"What other workers are required to take full responsibility for their own health and safety irrespective of the work they do?

"If a principal appears to be struggling often it is seen as a leadership and management issue, not a wellbeing concern."

Cooper said principals and all school leaders must have greater professional autonomy and arbitrary workload demands must be reduced as a matter of urgency.

"The various IEU branches have represented principals who do not have the autonomous right to hire and fire since the 1980s, during which time members have already won conditions that have made a difference to the profession.

"Union membership is vital to eligible principals so they can have access to individual representation on issues when needed, but also for the benefits secured through collective bargaining.

"IEU members have campaigned and fought for a range of provisions to address and help manage workplace stress and enhance wellbeing.

"During that time, collective bargaining has achieved positive outcomes and improved conditions specifically for our principal members, including provisions such as professional renewal leave, increased individual remuneration for working at a school with special characteristics, wage increases and improved classification structures.

"These provisions aim to provide meaningful interventions to help members in maintaining their wellbeing at work.

"We would urge principal members to make use of these very important provisions and entitlements as per our union negotiated collective agreements.

"Principal members must continue to amplify their demands for better wellbeing initiatives and support measures which are covered under their collective agreements. "Collectively, our union branches must ensure workload and wellbeing issues are on the agenda with employers – our principals and schools deserve better," Cooper said.

We encourage any current principal members to reach out to their IEU branch for support if needed and welcome non-member school leaders to join our community today.

Read the full report at https://www.healthandwellbeing.org/principal-reports

Teacher autonomy and the workload crisis

Improving conditions to retain and recruit teachers is about more than money, writes Will Brodie. It's about workload.

Across Australia, workload is the scourge of teachers, the byword for poor conditions driving them from their profession. Too much documentation and administration, too many meetings, too little time to prepare engaging lessons. A recent IEU survey of Victorian Catholic teachers received over 800 responses repeating these concerns:

"Admin is taking over teaching. I want to know my students and teach them. There is just way too much other stuff that gets in the way."

Senior Research Fellow Dr Jessica Holloway says an "extensive review of teacher workload, working conditions and compensation" is required as unsustainable workload expectations force teachers to consider other career options and dissuade newcomers from entering the profession.

But she also says policymakers must enable the professional autonomy required for teachers to do their jobs well. The surveyed teachers back up Dr Holloway.

"I feel that being a teacher is not valued by anyone anymore," said one. "I feel that every decision is micro-managed by people in offices who have no idea what it is like being in a classroom."

Dr Holloway is also critical of the "people in offices" running education policy.

"Schools are deeply complex institutions, and it takes working within them to truly understand the intricacies involved in making them function effectively," she says.

"Too often we see schooling solutions being crafted externally and then imposed onto schools and teachers.

"The lack of understanding regarding what schools and teachers actually need only intensifies the problems we're seeing across the country, like unbearable workloads and burnout."

Easy solutions

Many survey respondents wanted to be able to leave school grounds when they didn't have scheduled class time.

"We are professionals," said one. "I am a professional and will get my planning and marking done and I want to do it in a way which works for me."

Others asked for a reduction in face-to-face time; more time set aside to deal with useful administration; more regular, meaningful time to collaborate with colleagues; rewards for those who rarely take sick leave; a ban on adding new programs until something else is subtracted; and a reduction in excessive email exchanges with parents.

When Finnish education expert Professor Pasi Sahlberg analysed Australian education, he suggested Australia "reduce top-down control" and offer teachers more "professional autonomy".

"Maybe there is not enough trust in Australia in good teachers," Professor Sahlberg said.

Job satisfaction

A practical example of how to counter teacher exhaustion – and improve student outcomes – arose from the uniquely Australian conjunction of sport and poetry in Queensland.

English teacher Kim Roy told a parliamentary inquiry that the comprehension results of Year 9 boys improved instantly when she switched poetry classics for the tomes of contemporary rugby bard Rupert McCall.

The moment she offered footy-based poems "all of a sudden it went 'boom' – they were interested".

"We know these kids in front of us," Roy said. "We know the big picture that we want to try to get them to, but we can tailor that best if we've got that freedom of autonomy."

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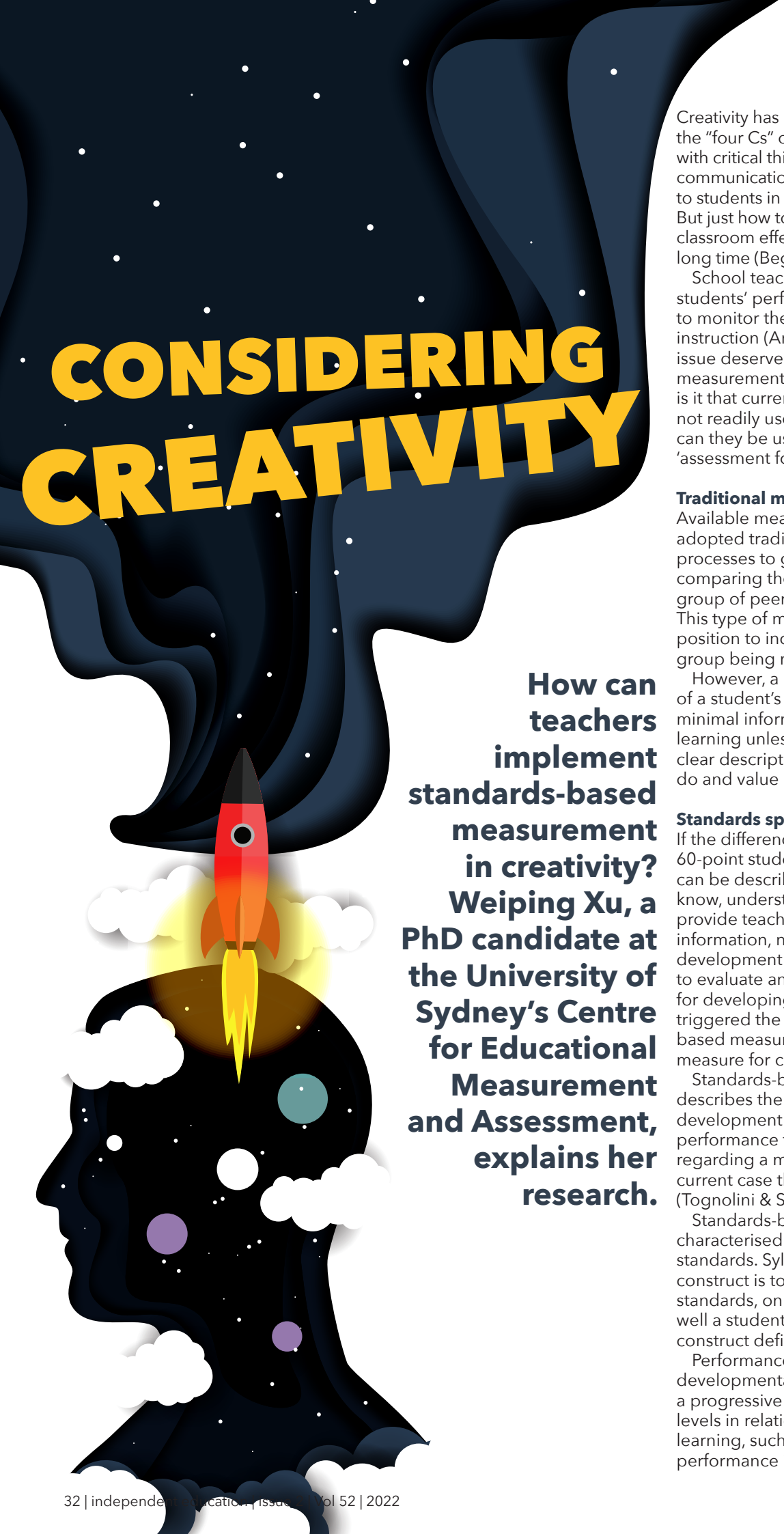
Australia's teacher shortage crisis must be an election priority – expert, Brett Heneberry, *The Educator*, 20 April 2022

Too much control': Pasi Sahlberg on what Finland can teach Australian schools, Michael McGowan, *The Guardian*, 7 January 2018

Teachers' autonomy vital for classroom learning, inquiry hears, Tony Moore, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 March 2019

"A common phrase around my office last year was 'teaching really gets in the way of my job' and that really sums it up."

CONSIDERING CREATIVITY



How can teachers implement standards-based measurement in creativity? Weiping Xu, a PhD candidate at the University of Sydney's Centre for Educational Measurement and Assessment, explains her research.

Creativity has been considered one of the "four Cs" of 21st-century skills – along with critical thinking, collaboration and communication – to highlight its importance to students in this new era (Chiruguru, 2020). But just how to assess student creativity in the classroom effectively has been discussed for a long time (Beghetto, 2019).

School teachers find it difficult to measure students' performance in creativity and to monitor their learning progress during instruction (Anne & Leon, 2017). This issue deserves to be considered from a measurement perspective; for example: Why is it that current measures of creativity are not readily used in the classroom? And how can they be used to achieve the purpose of 'assessment for learning'?

Traditional measures of creativity

Available measures of creativity have adopted traditional norm-referencing processes to give meaning to the scores by comparing them to the scores of a normative group of peers (Said-Metwaly et al., 2017). This type of measurement can yield a relative position to indicate students' ranking in the group being measured.

However, a mark itself or a relative position of a student's achievement can only provide minimal information on teaching and learning unless it can be referenced to a clear description of what it is they know, can do and value in relation to creativity.

Standards spur progress

If the difference in creativity between a 60-point student and an 80-point student can be described in terms of what students know, understand and value, then it should provide teachers with a wealth of meaningful information, not only to identify the level and development of students' creativity, but also to evaluate and improve their pedagogies for developing creativity. This reflection triggered the potential for using standards-based measurement principles in building a measure for creativity.

Standards-based measurement describes the degree of students' learning development by referencing their performance to a pre-determined standard regarding a measured construct (in this current case the construct is creativity) (Tognolini & Stanley, 2007).

Standards-based measurement is characterised by syllabus and performance standards. Syllabus standards describe what construct is to be measured. Performance standards, on the other hand, articulate how well a student performs in relation to the construct defined by the syllabus standards.

Performance standards describe a developmental continuum that shows a progressive sequence of proficiency levels in relation to creativity. Evidence of learning, such as test scores and students' performance in the classroom that are

relevant to creativity (or any other construct), can be referenced to the performance standards that are generally presented in a measurement rubric to show what students know and can do.

By linking standards-based measurement to a construct such as creativity through a measurement rubric, it becomes possible to express differences in performance levels on creativity in terms of what it is students know and can do.

This, in turn, allows teachers to develop learning strategies for assisting students to move along the developmental continuum and become more creative.

Uncertainty and standards

The 'uncertainty' associated with perceptions of creativity seems to be the opposite of what a 'standard' means. Creativity is considered unpredictable, while a 'standard' is established by a set of pre-expected outcomes. (Standard is derived from the Frankish/Germanic military word, 'standahard' which literally means 'stand firm'.)

The premise of a performance standard is not to describe what a creative product looks like; rather, it is to demonstrate the characteristics of a creative product and what students should know and do to be able to achieve this standard. The requirement for critical and creative thinking in the Australian Curriculum and its learning continuum is a good entry point to understanding creativity (ACARA, 2016).

Creative thinking is an important part of creativity – but not equal to it. The requirement in the Australian Curriculum should be adapted carefully to better suit different educational purposes, such as in specific subjects or courses.

The consideration could be, for example, whether creativity or creative thinking is a learning goal in a particular unit, whether critical and creative thinking is measured together as an integrated whole, and what creativity looks like in (for example) a science classroom. Answers to these questions can help to contextualise generic standards of creativity into a specific context.

Shared understanding

However, teachers might interpret the performance standards (abbreviated as standards) differently as the descriptions in the standards sometimes fail to visualise how well students can perform at a particular level in the construct of creativity.

This disconnect between the standards and classroom practice can be minimised with the use of student exemplars to achieve consistency in teacher judgment before the assessment of creativity starts. Exemplars, or work samples, which have been commonly used as a standard package in the NSW Higher School Certificate, describe what level of performance is required to achieve a particular band in a course (John, et.al, 2012).

The learning objectives (corresponding to the components of the construct) and performance levels that each task addresses need to be thoroughly discussed to make sure that the evidence from the students carrying out the task enables the 'correct' location of the student performance on the measurement rubric. Throughout this process, teachers will need to develop a shared understanding of creativity.

"The 'uncertainty' associated with perceptions of creativity seems to be the opposite of what a 'standard' means."

Conclusion

The absence of standardised tests in creativity (or creative thinking) provides teachers with freedom and space to rethink 'what to measure' and 'how to measure' student creativity.

The vision for using standards-based measurement in enabling teachers to build measurement rubrics for measuring creativity has the potential to provide teachers with more meaningful information to better understand their students and scaffold their teaching to improve student creativity.

Once this is the case, it should be possible to cultivate, teach and measure student performance in creativity as readily as any other construct in everyday teaching.

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Teachers Union Health Future of Teaching Bursary 2021

Collegial connections and the importance of literacy

Hannah Brennan-Silwood is a committed IEU member, secondary English teacher and an aspiring Teacher Librarian, who creates dynamic learning opportunities for her students and instils in them a love of literature.

In 2021, Hannah was the recipient of the annual Teacher's Union Health (TUH) Future of Teaching Bursary, which gives an IEU-QNT and TUH member the opportunity to apply for a $5000 grant.

Hannah said she was shocked when she opened an email to learn she had been awarded the TUH Bursary.

"It was wonderful to be able to share the exciting news with my incredibly supportive colleagues, who encouraged me to apply," Hannah said.

The grant was established in 2020 to recognise and support educators who deliver innovative solutions that can benefit their careers and communities in the world of learning.

The funds may be spent on a single professional development course, a set of professional learning activities or to fund research into innovative learning solutions.

Hannah is using the Bursary funds to undertake further study in a Master of Education (Teacher Librarianship), a specialised degree which she is currently studying through Charles Sturt University, while balancing full-time work as an English teacher at St Aidan's Anglican Girls' School in Corinda.

Strengthening students' love of literacy

"A few years ago, I first discovered the role of teacher librarian," Hannah said.

"Looking to strengthen my own skillset in literacy beyond that of my knowledge as an English teacher, I began to research further into the role.

"I remember being so excited at how the role was so multi-dimensional and focused on championing the importance of literacy and encouraging collaboration among teacher practitioners to strengthen teaching and learning.

"I was inspired by this and thought that it would be wonderful to transition into a role that focused on creating dynamic learning opportunities while also promoting learners to adopt a love of literature."

Hannah said it has been interesting to engage in an area of study that complements her role as an English teacher.

"I am thoroughly enjoying the challenge of considering different perspectives and exploring how, as integral members of educational communities, teacher librarians serve to act as agents of innovation and advocates of agency.

"They equip practitioners with the knowledge base to underpin their teaching with literacy and research programs," Hannah said.

"I love how engaging with further study, and being exposed to new perspectives and ideas, encourage us

to pause and consider new ways of presenting ideas or concepts within our pedagogy.

"Undertaking further study to be a teacher librarian, particularly in research acquisition and curriculum, has helped me to reflect on how I utilise texts to support student learning.

"Engaging with different platforms to identify and explore various texts has allowed me to discover some remarkable new platforms and programs that I have been able to implement in my curriculum planning.

"Each week I'm learning something new and finding connections I can embed within my classroom practice."

Library staff are integral

Hannah said qualified teacher librarians and library staff are critical to the effective functioning of school communities.

"For many, the library is a space of discovery and nurture – a sanctuary where learners and teachers can seek solace to explore new texts, connect with peers or look to satisfy their curiosity by asking questions and searching for answers – yet the impact of teacher librarians serves to influence far beyond these four walls," she said.

"Their expertise in ensuring learning is accessible, relevant and engaging not only serves to benefit learners but teachers, as they seek to foster dynamic learning opportunities for all.

"Teacher librarians are integral to educational communities as their knowledge of research helps educators to underpin their curriculum with contemporary, appropriate, and engaging sources to peak interest, challenge perspectives and foster curiosity.

"Teacher librarians help educational communities manoeuvre in the digital landscape and work with traditional text types.

"As we shift into adopting new methods of sourcing texts, this knowledge is important to ensure teachers are including a diverse range of resources and recognising the value they each hold."

Connecting with early career teachers

In her bursary application, Hannah described her plan to develop a strategy-based literacy blog to assist early career teachers embed a greater focus on critical literacy across all subjects.

"By starting a blog and establishing an online network for early career teachers to engage with, I can introduce a broad 'online' community where, despite distance, we can connect, reflect and discuss our triumphs and challenges in the classroom," Hannah said.

"Literacy is a cornerstone in education and, as such, I would love to create a resource that can help early career teachers to seek advice, strategies, and suggestions for how, within their own subject area, they can embed this priority in everyday activities.

"My hope is to create an online interactive space where early career teachers can connect with other like-minded professionals, contributing their own suggestions, perspectives and experiences as we all look to work together to champion literacy in schools.

"Early in my career, I found that collaboration with other teachers offered the opportunity for us to see how, despite teaching various subjects, we could embed similar activities to focus on literacy.

"The discussions proved to be invaluable, especially when it came to establishing continuity for students requiring additional support across the curriculum.

"Specific strategies could be applied across all subjects and most activities (as opposed to literacy simply being a focus in the English space).

Hannah Brennan-Silwood

"It was here that I began to see the power of connection within communities which is exactly what I hope to achieve through creating a literacy blog," she said.

Innovation essential to education

Hannah believes it is important for teachers to consider innovative solutions to tackle problems faced in modern education contexts.

"If we consider the impact that technology has had on our global world, it would be remiss of us not to look to the future as to how innovative approaches will help to further change the education landscape," she said.

"We must consider how we can adopt solutions that will serve to strengthen our knowledge base as teachers and encourage us to create purposeful learning opportunities to spark student interest and capture their curiosity."

Hannah understands the power of collegial connection and the importance of being an IEU member, and believes it makes a real difference to the teaching profession.

"Union membership offers integral support and advocacy, especially in providing professional and industrial strength.

"As an early career teacher, it is incredibly comforting to know that I can connect with my union anytime to seek advice and access up-to-date information that may impact me."

Hannah said she is glad to have taken a risk by submitting her TUH Bursary application last year and encourages other IEU members who are TUH members to apply for future bursaries.

"Like I say to my students: 'you'll never know if you never try'," Hannah said.

"The process of reflecting on both my practice and passion for education in the application, in addition my experiences so far in undertaking my further study, has affirmed my ambition to be the best educator I can be and to make a positive difference in the lives of young people."

"It would be wonderful to transition into a role that focused on creating dynamic learning opportunities while also promoting learners to adopt a love of literature."

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