

EDUCATION REVIEW

ISSUE 1 – JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2024



Finnishing school

Why teachers in Finland are so happy
(Hint: it's not higher pay) p14



Subscribe for less than \$2 a week

The latest news and resources for schools and teachers across Australia

Education Review is Australia's highly-respected industry publication, providing unrivalled coverage of the primary and secondary school education sectors to thousands of schools and teachers every day.

At *Education Review* we pride ourselves on being at the forefront of ever changing teaching practices.

We provide an independent source of news, and cover the issues relevant to teachers and the classroom giving an informative, practical and insightful view into day to day life in schools.

- Comprehensive coverage of a variety of relevant topics
- Latest updates in technology and enhanced teaching strategies
- Can be used as a professional development resource
- 6 issues per year
- Interviews and opinion pieces from professionals in the industry
- Written by an independent voice

Please email subs@apned.com.au to find out more.

MANAGING EDITOR
Rebecca Cox
rebecca.cox@news.com.au

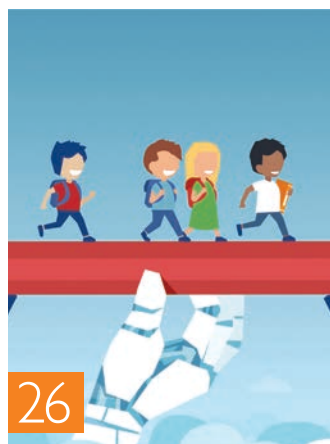
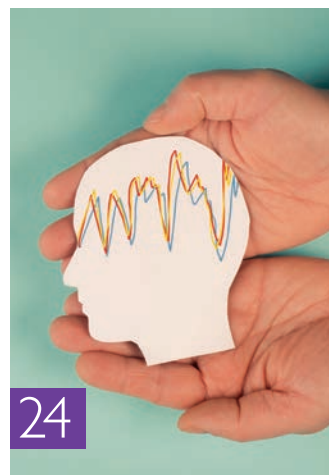
EDUCATION EDITOR
Erin Morley
erin.morley@news.com.au

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Lee Burrell
lee.burrell@news.com.au

COVER
Why are Finnish
teachers so happy?
Turn to page 14 to find out.

PUBLISHED BY
Nationwide News Pty Ltd
GPO Box 4245
Sydney NSW 2001
ABN 98 008 438 828
Print Post 100008043
ISSN 1836-1501
OCLC 536881479

PUBLISHER'S NOTE
© Copyright. No part of this
publication can be used or
reproduced in any format
without express permission
in writing from Nationwide
News Pty Ltd. The mention
of a product or service,
person or company
in this publication,
does not indicate the
publisher's endorsement.
The views expressed in
this publication do not
necessarily represent the
opinion of the publisher, its
agents, company officers
or employees.



NEWS

- 2 **How to save 12 days in teacher workload**
- 4 **New funding announced for disadvantaged students in Queensland**
- 6 **Union calls for full public school funding by 2028**

INDUSTRY & REFORM

- 8 **NSRA delayed**
Lack of progress on reforms leads to hold up
- 10 **The great debate**
How politics has affected the curriculum
- 12 **Student wellbeing**
Are school chaplains on the way out?
- 14 **COVER STORY**
The Finnish line
Trust in teachers makes a better system
- 18 **Future values**
State of the sector report card

IN THE CLASSROOM

- 20 **'Don't feel safe at work'**
The serious effects of classroom disruption
- 22 **On the rise**
20,000 police call outs to NSW schools in 2023

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

- 24 **Positive path**
Epilepsy training can change lives

TECHNOLOGY

- 26 **'Support and enhance'**
The Framework for Generative AI released
- 28 **Nerding out at camp**
Digital skills teaching amplified



Quality resources

Saving 12 days in lesson planning time

By Erin Morley

A 2023 program funded by the federal government's Emerging Priorities initiative saw teachers save an average of 94 hours each in lesson planning time last year.

The grant program was established in 2021 to fund projects that assist school communities with 'priority issues', such as the increasing burden of administrative and planning workloads.

The 'admin burden' has been identified as a major reason for burnout and teacher resignations, and is felt the most strongly at low socio-economic schools.

One of the funded projects was created by Inquisitive. It supplied 15,000 teachers from 1000 disadvantaged schools with online resources and lesson-plan-building tools – a task which has been identified as one that is often done by teachers after hours and on weekends.

Teachers were supplied with whole programs, including activities and assessments through video, eBooks, maps or interactive tools.

Teachers could select a subject or unit, choose their year level, then access the lesson plans that meet those requirements and see how they fit into the scope and sequence of their state's curriculum.

A survey of the participating educators by the Centre for Evidence and Implementation found an average of 12 days of time was saved over the course of the year, and that this led to improved teacher wellbeing and increased confidence in the quality of their coursework.

The participating teachers said they liked the quality of the resources the most, as they succeeded in cutting down the time they needed to spend developing engaging, curriculum-adhering content.

Inquisitive co-founder and head of education Sarah Rich said government funding into quality resources is one of

“The participating teachers said they liked the quality of the resources the most, cutting down the time they needed to spend developing engaging, curriculum-adhering content

the most important current investments into education.

“Teachers need high quality lessons and supporting materials that are easily accessible, curriculum aligned and adjustable as they juggle the demands of the job,” she said.

The program will not be funded by the government initiative next year, but the same schools will be offered discounted prices for the same services by Inquisitive. ■

Reduce Device Downtime for Students

SMART LOCKERS POWERED BY



FUYL Tower Smart Lockers give students, teachers, relief teachers and others convenient and quick access to loaner or replacement devices.



24/7/365 Access to Devices

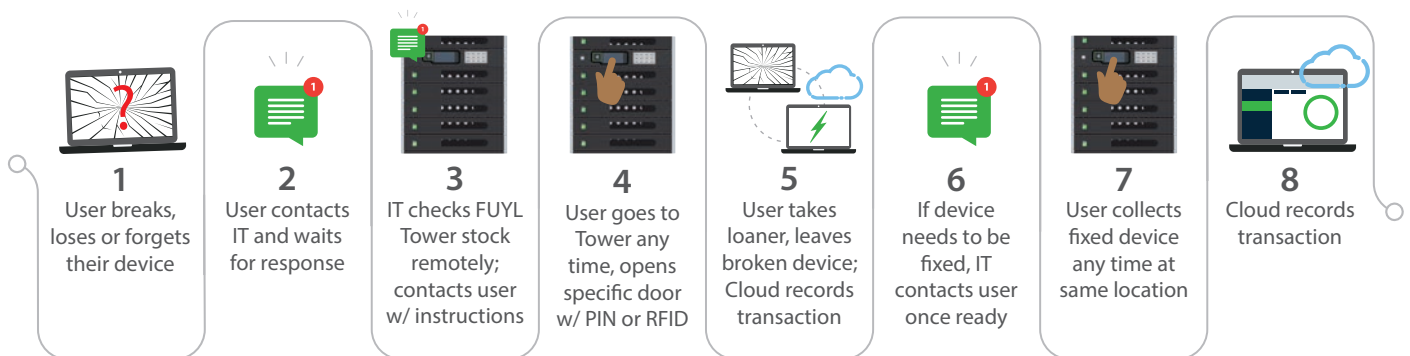
Device Accountability

Contactless Self Service

Faster IT Response Times

Secure Public Charging

The fastest way to get students a loaner device:



To learn more about PC Locs Smart Lockers, Charging Carts or Stations, schedule a demo today.

www.pclocs.com.au

Phone: 1300 725 627 | Email: sales@pclocs.com.au





Queensland Minister for Youth Justice Di Farmer at Queensland Pathways State College, Coorparoo. Picture: NCA Newswire/David Clark

Safe spaces

Queensland investing more into support for disadvantaged students

By Erin Morley

In December last year, then-premier Annastacia Palaszczuk announced a number of education support systems for disadvantaged and vulnerable students in Queensland.

They are to share in \$288m in prevention funds as part of the larger \$446.6m Community Safety Package, which had already been announced in the June budget.

The announcement was made at the one of the Queensland Pathways State Colleges, which provide alternative pathways into tertiary study and career access for year 10-12 students.

The program will be extended with a \$120m investment in a further six colleges to be built in Toowoomba, Deception Bay, Mt Isa, Central Queensland, Logan, and Cairns.

There are already 52 FlexiSpaces in the state that provide extra support for students who need a break from the classroom due to mental health issues or disruptive behaviour.

The new funding will see a \$45m boost to create 50 more of the 'inclusive, high quality' environments, designed to

re-integrate vulnerable students back into mainstream classrooms.

Other investments such as \$57m for intensive case management students known to Youth Justice authorities, announced by the Minister for Youth Justice Di Farmer, and \$27m for non-government organisation alternative education centres in Cairns, Townsville, Ipswich and Mt Isa, make up the rest of the Youth Engagement Package.

Twelve court liaison officers, who help children appearing before Children's Courts get their education back on track, will be hired over five years, along with another 165 frontline workers.

A targeted curriculum that is part of the Australian education curriculum will also be created for government and non-government alternative education programs.

Former premier Annastacia Palaszczuk said the initiatives will also focus on increasing engagement programs for First Nations students.

"Mainstream learning isn't for everyone, which is why it's important we create structured, safe environments for students to access education. In turn, we're reducing the likelihood of anti-social or criminal behaviour," she said.

"Backed by funding of \$288 million, this package is the missing link which will support education, intervention and prevention initiatives for students who

“Mainstream learning isn't for everyone, which is why it's important we create structured, safe environments for students to access education

are most at risk of being involved with the youth justice system.”

The investment comes after the premier announced free kindergarten a week before the June budget.

Minister for Youth Justice Di Farmer said the package hopes to address student disengagement, which she says can cause major issues down the line.

"The very complex needs of these students require educational and behaviour intervention more intensive than our schools are currently equipped to deliver," the minister said.

"We know students excluded from school are at-risk of falling through the cracks, experiencing extended periods out of school and entering or re-entering the youth justice system."

Nationwide issues with disengaged students and disruptive classrooms led to shocking OECD rankings and a national inquiry into student behaviour in school settings. ■

Save 70 hours of classtime per cart per year.

CHARGING CARTS WITH BASKETS BY



Our top-loading carts with baskets enable hand out and pack up devices in half the time of a traditional cabinet-style cart.



Carrier™ 20, 30, 40 Carts

Easy Access Devices

Time-Saving Baskets

Universal Charging

Easy to Setup

Lifetime Warranty

Check out our other time-saving charging solutions:



Carrier™ 10 and 15 Charging Station



iQ™ 10 Charging Station with USB-C PD



Putnam™ 8 and 16 Charging Stations with USB-C PD

To learn more about PC Locs Smart Lockers, Charging Carts or Stations, schedule a demo today.

www.pclocs.com.au

Phone: 1300 725 627 | Email: sales@pclocs.com.au





Federal president of the Australian Education Union Correna Haythorpe (centre) and Australian Council of Trade Unions president Michele O'Neil (centre left) hold a press conference at Parliament House in Canberra. Picture: NCA NewsWire/Martin Ollman

‘Every opportunity’

Union calls for government to fully fund public schools by 2028

By Erin Morley

The Australian Education Union (AEU) and its supporters met with Minister for Education Jason Clare late last year to remind the government of their election promise to fully fund all public schools by 2028.

The AEU said the federal government should negotiate new school funding agreements with each state and territory in the next 12 months to allow every school student to reach their full potential by closing the resources gap.

AEU federal president Correna Haythorpe said increased funding will better support students and attract teachers at a time of critical shortage.

“What we are seeing is a groundswell of support from the Australian community for the full funding of public schools,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“Teachers, parents, principals, disability organisations, unions and community groups are united in saying this is a vital

investment in our children’s future that cannot be further delayed.

“Full funding of public schools is the only way to ensure every child gets every opportunity to succeed. This investment will give teachers more time and support to meet the diverse and complex needs of their students.”

The meeting follows AEU’s For Every Child campaign, which says every public school should be funded to 100 per cent of its school resource standard (SRS), a fiscal estimate of the resources required to meet student educational needs, by 2028.

This is a considerable jump from the current 1.3 per cent of schools that the AEU says are government funded to their respective SRS.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the Labor party remained committed to meeting 100 per cent of every public school’s “fair funding level” through state and territory government agreements in his pre-election National Press Club address in early 2022.

A letter signed by 50 education organisations in support of the funding, and postcards from the union’s

“Teachers, parents, principals, disability organisations, unions and community groups are united in saying this is a vital investment in our children’s future that cannot be further delayed

national road trip campaign, were presented to the PM.

All public schools in the ACT are fully government funded, and NSW has pledged to fund their government schools to 100 per cent of their SRS during the next five-year agreement with the Albanese government.

The union said there will be negotiations between federal and state governments next year.

Recently, the federal government also announced public school upgrade funding for projects over \$250k. ■

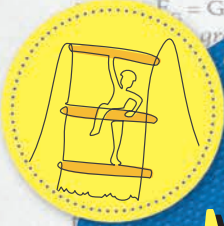
NOT ALL CLASSROOMS HAVE WALLS

Break out of the classroom and harness the power of **outdoor learning**

$$F_{\text{gravity}} = \frac{GMm}{d^2}$$

$$G = 6.67 \times 10^{-11} \frac{\text{Nm}^2}{\text{kg}^2}$$

The term "mass" that appears in Newton's equation for the gravitational force between two interacting masses refers to "gravitational mass"; Newton's law should indicate this property of



**PGL
ADVENTURE
CAMPS**
operate in
VIC and QLD



SCAN ME

pgladventurecamps.com.au 1300 859 895



ADVENTURE CAMPS



Ministers have begun negotiations for the next National Schools Reform Agreement. Picture: NCA NewsWire/Tertius Pickard



Reform school

Next NSRA postponed due to little progress made and underfunding

By Erin Morley and NCA NewsWire

The panel of the National School Reform Agreement (NSRA) review released a report at the end of last year that will guide negotiations about the next education reforms.

The NSRA is a bilateral agreement between federal and state and territory governments, where the latter agrees to use taxpayer dollars to enact reforms that the agreement outlines.

Immediately, the report stated before any of its recommendations can be met, each school needs to be government-funded to 100 per cent of their Schooling Resource Standard (SRS), a reform the government agreed to a decade ago.

All education ministers vowed to fix chronic funding shortfalls in public schools in a statement released shortly after the review, but how the cost of closing the funding gap (an estimated \$6.6bn) will be shared is still yet to be determined.

Unions have been calling for the federal government to commit to full SRS support as they say currently only 1.3 per cent of public schools are government funded to the full amount.

The SRS, derived from recommendations made by the 2011 Review of Funding for Schooling led by David Gonski, provides an estimate of the public funding required for a school to meet its student's educational needs.

Currently, the standard's funding equates to \$13,060 for each primary student and \$16,413 for secondary students.

Existing legislation restricts the federal government's contribution to 20 per cent of SRS funding, with state and territory governments to pay the rest for the schools they operate.

The federal government contributes 80 per cent of the SRS to private schools that rely on fees.

A recent independent report commissioned by the Australian Education Union found that chronic underfunding of public schools in every state and territory was on track to worsen over the next five years.

It also found that nationally, private schools were overfunded to the tune of over \$800m in 2023, while public schools were hit with a shortfall of \$4.5bn.

The union has asked the government to lift contributions from 20 to 25 per cent of the SRS for all states and lift it to 40 per cent for the NT, where student disadvantage is the worst.

“The review outlined how Australian schools are some of the most socially segregated among OECD countries, where affluent and non-affluent students often “grow up strangers” to one another

Along with implementing measurable student and staff wellbeing, the NSRA review recommended increased transparency about where public funds go, and said that teachers and principals should have more involvement in funding discussions.

MEASURING STUDENT AND TEACHER WELLBEING

Addressing the disparities between advantaged and disadvantaged students, supporting teacher wellbeing, and building a strong workforce are all issues the panel said should be priorities in the next agreement.

They suggested strongly that protocols put in place to address these issues should be consistently measured and analysed to ensure they're making a real difference in schools.

The review outlined how Australian schools are some of the most socially segregated among OECD countries, where affluent and non-affluent students often “grow up strangers” to one another.

Increasing socio-educational diversity is one way to reduce data gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged (including First Nations and disabled) students, the report said, to mitigate the problems caused by concentrated areas of students with varied schooling needs.

One specific area that the panel recommended should be regularly measured is students' progress in developing fundamental literacy and numeracy skills in year one.

This would ensure disadvantaged students don't get left behind, and were accessing services such as catch-up tutoring.

Monitoring student wellbeing and mental health is another factor the panel said will

improve learning outcomes, contributing to higher teacher satisfaction and minimised workloads.

The report stated “year seven to 12 students experiencing poor mental health have, on average, more than double the number of absent days and by year nine are, on average, 1.5 years to 2.8 years behind in literacy and numeracy outcomes. Wellbeing is very much connected with learning, and vice versa.”

The review also said attracting and retaining teachers could be helped by an increase in teacher wellbeing and satisfaction through lessening administrative workloads and ‘celebrating the profession’.

The panel, while recommending more leadership training and professional development courses for teachers and principals, was wary of adding to the already overwhelming teacher administration workload, and said only

useful and effective additional training should be implemented.

They also said Unique Student Identifier (USI) numbers should be improved to streamline education for students who move between schools often.

The report recommended three ‘pillars’ be used to achieve priority outcomes in the next agreement: equity, wellbeing and workforce.

Together these should:

- Lift student outcomes
- Improve equity
- Improve student wellbeing
- Attract and retain teachers
- Reduce data gaps and limitations
- Enhance funding transparency and accountability
- Support innovation and achieve reform.

A NEW AGREEMENT

The current NSRA has been active from 2019 and was due to expire this

month, but was extended to December 2024 by Education Minister Jason Clare after his productivity commission claimed little progress had been made on the current agreement by the former government.

The minister said the panel needed this year to review what needs to change in the next agreement to deliver improvements for all students, especially those who are struggling in the education system.

The panel also recommended the next NSRA should be a 10 year agreement with a mid-way review point, to lower the frequency of a sometimes ‘constant’ change in goals and processes imposed on the teaching workforce.

Dr Lisa O’Brien, chair of the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO), chaired the panel, along with other education experts, who spoke to schools and education stakeholders to investigate the NSRA. ■

UPGRADE TO OUR NEW

PORTABLE STAGE

- Supplied to over 1000 schools
- Quick and easy assembly
- Robust and strong structure
- Australia-wide delivery










CONTACT US

Phone: **1300 712 066**

Email: **info@transtage.com.au**

Website: **www.transtage.com.au**



The great debate

A look at the last 20 years of the Australian curriculum

By Rochelle Borton

The 2008 Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, which was signed by all Australian education ministers at the time, stated that:

“as a nation, Australia values the central role of building a democratic,

equitable and just society – a society that is prosperous, cohesive and culturally diverse and that values Australia’s indigenous cultures as a key part of the nation’s history, present and future’.

That statement has a lot to unpack, and it is most certainly ambitious considering current debates around recognising Australia’s indigenous culture.

This highlights the role that education plays in our society.

The evolution of the Australian Curriculum can be seen as it has shifted between the reviews, reports, and rhetoric.

The central argument has always revolved around religion and perceptions of how it should be taught in schools.

The argument is not about what is taught in religious schools but about what role religious views should have in public school curricula.

Then Prime Minister John Howard first called for a ‘root and branch’

renewal of history in Australian schools in 2006.

This was an ignition point for many conservatives and experts cloaked in religious ethos.

The election of Kevin Rudd in 2007 was significant in establishing the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and the first national curriculum in Australia's history.

The 2008 Framing Paper flagged an important shift and contrast to the narrow-focused view of Australian history held by the former government.

History became the lightning rod for religious conservatives and academics.

It is curious to note that terms such as 'Judeo-Christian' started to appear in debates. It was used as a shorthand for a social and cultural construct of tradition and heritage.

The Liberal government election in 2013, led by Tony Abbott, conducted a Review of the Australian Curriculum (the Review).

The Review evaluated the 'robustness, independence and balance of the development and content' of the Australian Curriculum.

The Review received almost 1600 submissions from 10 January to 14 March 2014, and the final report was released later that year.

The authors made 30 key recommendations, and government ministers were quick to highlight Recommendation 15 – that ACARA revises the Australian Curriculum to place 'more emphasis on morals, values and spirituality' and to 'better recognise the contribution of Western civilisation, our Judeo-Christian

heritage', and the democratic underpinning of the British system of government to Australia's development.

The Report was controversial and met with much criticism.

Some commenters suggested that the difference between doctrinal religious instruction and education about religion and beliefs was lost in the haze of political debate.

The fact that various prime ministers held the belief that children should learn the bible contributed to a narrow post-1788 view of Australian history.

The Mabo decision of the High Court in 1992 recognised that native title existed pre-1788, and the term "Terra Nullius" attracted similar critique to the Australian Curriculum.

The same ideological beliefs that held that the Australian Curriculum should recognise the 'debt' owed to Western civilisation held that Native Title was a grave threat to our nation.

The Australian Curriculum has matured since then.

The so-called 'history' and 'culture' wars appear to have faded into the educational background.

One strategic direction of ACARA's Charter is to create an evidence base that will be used to review, develop, and refine the curriculum.

The most recent Program of research (2017-2020) is reflected in the content of the curriculum, professional development for teachers, and information for families.

The latest Australian Curriculum (version 9.0) reflects the themes

“Some commenters suggested that the difference between doctrinal religious instruction and education about religion and beliefs was lost in the haze of political debate

resulting from this ongoing political and ideological debate.

The Australian Government Department of Education states, "The Australian Curriculum provides schools, teachers and students with a clear understanding of what students should learn".

The curriculum is just one piece of the education system.

Socio-economic disadvantages are yet to be fully addressed, and the Closing the Gap targets are yet to be met.

The recent Royal Commission has also brought the limitations of the current approach to disability and inclusion to public attention.

ACARA notes that families influence their children most, and their children enjoy and achieve better outcomes when their families are actively involved in their education.

Every child enriches our society and needs the best opportunity to engage in learning. ■

**WE SEE YOU
IGNITE
POTENTIAL**

**STUDY A MASTER OF
EDUCATIONAL NEUROSCIENCE**

APPLY NOW TO START ONLINE ANYTIME

BE DIFFERENT
CQU'S HYPERFLEXIBLE LEARNING PLATFORM

CRICOS: 00219C | TEQSA: PRV12073 | RTO: 40939



Student wellbeing

New survey says chaplains should be hired based on qualification not religion

By Erin Morley

An Australia Institute and Rationalist Society of Australia survey has found 71 per cent of Australians do not know public school pastoral care workers are hired based on religion instead of qualifications.

Two in three of the 1,379 respondents said they agree school chaplains should be hired based on eligibility and experience, and not have to have the endorsement of a religious group.

Three in four respondents agreed that any public school jobs funded by the government should have no religious requirement.

Chaplains are wellbeing officers that can provide emotional, pastoral and spiritual support in non-religious settings such as public schools.

They often run volunteer community programs, breakfast clubs, lunchtime activities and parent/carer workshops.

The federal government has funded religious chaplains since 2006, a controversial decision made by the then Howard government.

The current Education Minister Jason Clare 'opened up' the funding to include non-religious wellbeing officers in June last year, converting the previous National School Chaplaincy Program to the National Student Wellbeing Program (NSWP).

The 2022 National School Chaplaincy Programme Evaluation Report that informed Clare's decision stated that most submissions agreed school chaplains

create a 'more safe and supportive school environment' and 'empower students by providing them with encouragement, advice and strategies.'

The federal government provides \$61.4m funding shared across all the states and territories each year, and schools that volunteer to participate in the program can choose either a chaplain or wellbeing officer.

The report also recommended state and territory governments offer more specific rules about proselytising to minimise the risk of chaplains attempting to convert non-religious students to a religion.

The Department of Education says that chaplains or wellbeing officers are not allowed to provide religious instruction or counselling; and may be of faith or no faith. Although, if a school chooses a chaplain, they must

be endorsed by a third-party religious group, which the survey found confused some participants.

Just over half (56 per cent) of respondents agreed that pastoral support workers should be hired directly, rather than through a third-party agency that may impose religious belief or faith conditions on employment.

Slightly more than a quarter (28 per cent) don't know or were unsure, and 18 per cent disagreed.

The Rationalist Society of Australia has been calling for an end to religious wellbeing officers in public schools for some time, which its president Dr Meredith Doig said is to combat religious discrimination.

"Since 2006, millions and millions of taxpayer dollars have been channelled into propping up the employment of the religious through the National Schools Chaplaincy Program," Dr Doig said.

"We recognise that the work of supporting and guiding students is incredibly important, but there is no reason why it can't be done by appropriately qualified youth workers."

Director of the Australia Institute's democracy and accountability program Bill Browne said the transparency of the program is lacking.

"Australians want pastoral care workers in public schools to be the best-qualified person for the job, not someone hired on the basis of their religion," he said.

"Most Australians do not know that the federal government funds roles in public schools that are restricted on the basis of religion, and when they find out, they do not support it."

The report also said that while 'formal' support organised by chaplains, like lunchtime activities, were valuable, informal supports were most helpful.

“The federal government has funded religious chaplains since 2006, a controversial decision made by the then Howard government.”

One NSW student submitted that a "chaplaincy staff saw during school that I was looking unhappy and distant from my friends and asked if I wanted to discuss it."

Another Victorian student said "I like coming to school because the chaplain is there to check on me."

The 2023 NSWP is a transitional program, and will be overtaken by the 2024-27 plan with a new list of approved providers. ■



SUBSCRIBE FOR LESS THAN \$2 A WEEK

THE LATEST NEWS AND RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS ACROSS AUSTRALIA

Education Review is Australia's highly-respected industry publication, providing unrivalled coverage of the primary and secondary school education sectors to thousands of schools and teachers every day.

- Comprehensive coverage of a variety of relevant topics
- Latest in technology and enhanced teaching strategies
- A professional development resource
- 6 issues per year
- Interviews and opinion pieces from professionals
- Written by an independent voice

Please email us at subs@apned.com.au to find out more.



The Finnish line



Trust: Finland's education system has it from top to bottom

By Michael Lawrence

Is there a one-word answer to the often-posed question, 'What is the one thing that's most different about the Finnish system?' I believe so. It's trust. Trust in both students and teachers.

As I led a tour group of Australians through Finnish schools, a number of them were looking to find the answer for themselves.

One of them left her computer bag and money at a railway station in Helsinki.

When she went back to look for it hours later, a station staff member returned it to her, explaining they had left it there for a couple of hours to see if anyone came back for it before they took it into their office. The money and computer were both untouched.

She tried to reward him with 50 euros, but he refused, insisting he was only doing his job.

TRUST IN SCHOOLS

This approach is repeated everywhere in this country, and is evident in its schools.

We visited schools where the music classroom is open all day for students to drop by and practice when they want to.

At another, a teacher leaves a small class of 15-year-olds so she can take us around a school.

We're wondering about what the students might get up to in her absence, but they're still working diligently when we return an hour later.

Indeed, the trust that is placed in teachers makes teaching a desirable profession in Finland.

One teacher explains that she can interpret the curriculum as she sees fit for her students and devises her assessments accordingly.

In fact, standardisation is frowned upon in Finland as it is understood that it doesn't put the students first.

Ranking of students and schools does not occur.

Schools with mottos such as 'Together we are stronger' are modelling collaboration as separate institutions work together to provide increased flexibility and opportunity for their students.

This removes competition between schools and encourages cooperation and collaboration. >

I can hear Australian observers protesting that competition is present in all areas of the business and in the 'real' worlds, but so, too, are cooperation and collaboration.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

A teacher tells us that all students from seven years old are expected to walk to school on their own, even in snowstorms, one of which occurred on the day of our visit.

The weather conditions are so bad that the following day there's a public warning to stay indoors and work from home where possible.

All the students were present at the school we visited that day.

There are drying racks inside heated cupboards to ensure the wet outer garments the students wear to get to school and at recess and lunchtime are dry by the next break.

The development of individual responsibility in children and students is a high priority and is one of the reasons why children are seemingly more trusted in Finland.

One cannot help but notice them, unaccompanied by adults, waiting at tram stops or walking through shopping malls. You also can't help but notice the absence of irate parents in traffic jams around the school before school and at the end of the day.

A third-grade teacher meets me in the foyer, and we walk up to his class to find the children working away on their mathematics without his presence in the room.

I'm reminded of a similar occurrence on a previous visit when a ninth grade teacher asked me, 'So what do your students do as soon as you are not looking over their shoulder?'

His point was valid. How have we created students who are only prepared to 'work' when someone is 'making' them?

During the Covid lockdowns I asked a Finnish teacher how her students were coping with remote learning.

'They're doing their best to make sure it doesn't impact on their learning', was her response.

I thought about how the students I was teaching remotely seemed to suffer record-high Wi-Fi and computer camera outages – it was as if some of them didn't want to do their schoolwork!

INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

I am often asked what the secret to the Finnish success is. People want me to tell them it is a secret pedagogical practice, some way that the teachers present the content that ensures greater memorisation, or 'deeper learning'.

Instead, it's this intrinsic motivation that's the most significant difference I can identify.

It's akin to a racehorse whose jockey frequently uses the whip versus a horse that simply loves running. The former may win some races, but the latter will undoubtedly perform better in the long term and will continue to do so even when they are not consciously 'performing'.

Most Finnish teachers are quite happy to teach in a way that they know will have better outcomes in the long term rather than teach to a test.

The matriculation years, which can range from two to four years depending on the student's choice, are organised in the same way an Australian university would provide its courses.

Students choose when and for how long they will study certain non-compulsory subjects, and can come and go as they see fit outside of scheduled classes.

The pressures to achieve in examinations are reduced, as students can re-sit exams six months later, or choose to defer them if they don't feel ready to take them.

For the Finns, phrases such as student-centred and wellbeing are not just tick-boxes on a list.

TEACHER AUTONOMY

Teacher autonomy is a serious matter in Finland; its value is recognised as key to the profession's ability to continue to attract the country's top young people.

In Finland, teachers are considered well-trained professionals who interpret the national curriculum as they see fit for their students, create appropriate activities, and assess as they see fit.

They have been trained to do that and are trusted to do it.

There is no curriculum inspection (or 'curriculum co-ordinator'), and the only national testing is done in small samples to judge the suitability of the national curriculum rather than students or teachers.

In Finland, standardised curriculum is considered an old-fashioned relic, as the looks on the faces of those who asked me about it made clear.

“The development of individual responsibility in children and students is a high priority and is one of the reasons why children are seemingly more trusted in Finland”

One teacher optimistically asked, "Yes, but if you were doing your own thing, specifically for the needs of your class, surely it is understood that this is your job?"

This autonomy and trust in the profession attract the country's best young minds to teaching. And despite the common myth that they are paid more, the difference is minimal.

The Finnish teacher has true professional status, and to question their decisions or teaching methods is seen in the same light as going into a doctor's office and trying to tell them how they should be treating a patient who comes to them with an illness.

Current figures suggest that one in six applicants are accepted into teaching, compared to one in 10 a decade back.

These are astonishing numbers in comparison to Australia, where we cannot maintain our education course enrolment numbers, and the conditions for entry are anything but challenging, particularly when compared to other professions.

In one school on our Finnish tour, we were greeted by teachers who guided us through the buildings and spoke frankly about their challenges (devices, differences between outcomes between male and female students, language difficulties, etc).

I cannot remember the last time in Australia when a teacher or principal felt free to speak openly about their school's challenges.

Finland may not have the answer to every issue, but they feel free to talk openly about it and work on solutions.

The administration structures of Finnish schools are made up of groups of teachers, ensuring that they have a sense of autonomy and control in their practice.

This is one of the specific differences that create a system where teaching is one of the most desirable professions. It is also the key to teacher and student wellbeing in Finland.

Any education proposal not in the best interests of teachers and students is quickly stopped.

As an educator, having structures that create a love for learning and make school a place students want to be is almost intoxicating.

NO STANDARDISED TESTING

How could we have come so far off the track that we believe obtaining grades and ticking off 'standards' are more important than ensuring our young people love learning?

I recall the moment when I realised that the standardised English curriculum I was 'obliged' to teach was turning students away from a subject that I had always viewed as a creative, enjoyable one.

It was difficult for me to convey this joy for the subject when even I could feel the deadening impacts of the inflexible content.

Finnish teachers have told me that as a professional, their first obligation is what is in the best interests of the student.

As a consequence, any form of standardisation is seen as compromising the needs of the students.

Ranking and comparing are both for the needs of the school and the system and not in the best interests of the student.

I have never forgotten the Finnish primary teacher who questioned how I could, as the professional responsible for the wellbeing of my students, allow children as young as eight to be exposed to the potential harm of something like NAPLAN.

At the time, I brushed it off, thinking, 'How bad could it be?'

Back in Australia, just months later, during a year eight class discussion about

growth mindset, one of the top students in the class told me she could remember the moment she realised that she was not good at mathematics.

She said that it was during the third-grade NAPLAN test when she encountered questions she could not answer.

As an eight-year-old unable to answer some questions in a test, she decided she didn't want to disappoint adults and her teacher, so she would avoid mathematics in the future, as it was not her strength.

As she finished telling me this, I could see other girls nodding in agreement.

These were well behaved and intelligent young girls and I began to understand why my Finnish colleagues had such disdain for standardised testing.

Soon after, while researching my book, *Testing 3, 2, 1: What Australian education can learn from Finland*, I found stories of students attempting to take their own lives during the NAPLAN test, and I could no longer justify my previous indifference to it.

NAPALM is how I now refer to it, and it's more than just a play on words.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

On the last day of our tour in Tampere, in southern Finland, we met with key educational sciences faculty leaders from the University of Applied Sciences to discuss the education situation in Australia.

I found it hard to explain the extent to which teacher's professional autonomy has been eroded in Australia.

Plans with the university include creating collaborations with Australian schools (a couple of them are already in the pipeline), which would consist of staff and student exchanges, research projects and

“This autonomy and trust in the profession attract the country’s best young minds to teaching. And despite the common myth that they are paid more, the difference is minimal

regular meetings with all stakeholders, creating courses specifically for Australian educators, and developing links with Australian industry keen to be associated with educational change.

To quote Professor Pasi Sahlberg, who is working closely with Education Minister Jason Clare at present:

“The Australian education system, like many others worldwide, finds itself at a crucial juncture. Throughout the last decade and a half, student engagement in school learning has declined, making teaching a less attractive career choice. Student achievement has slipped in international comparisons ... Rather than perpetuating the same approaches with the expectation of different outcomes, we require innovative ideas and courageous reforms to shape our course.”

We can be sure that schools that embrace change, trust teachers and build intrinsic motivation in students will find that they can retain their best teachers and attract new teachers. ■



SUBSCRIBE FOR LESS THAN \$2 A WEEK

THE LATEST TEACHING NEWS ACROSS AUSTRALIA

Education Review is Australia's highly respected industry publication, providing unrivalled coverage of the primary and secondary school education sectors to thousands of schools and teachers every day.

Comprehensive coverage of a variety of relevant topics | Latest updates in technology and enhanced teaching strategies | Can be used as a professional development resource | 6 issues per year | Interviews and opinion pieces from professionals in the industry| Written by an independent voice

Please email subs@apned to find out more.



Future values

"At the end of the day, schools are places where incredible work is done by incredible people every day," says Fleur Johnston.

The state of the Australian education sector now and ahead
By Fleur Johnston

As we stand at the threshold of 2024, the Australian education sector finds itself at a critical juncture.

We have the opportunity to solve persistent workforce challenges using contemporary and transformative organisational strategy and design processes, or the choice to continue to hope that the things we have tried in the past will yield different results to those we are experiencing today.

Our decision to act (or not) will ultimately impact the sustainability of the sector, and the sector's ability to achieve the educational outcomes we aspire to reach.

There is no doubt that education's persistent landscape of high workloads, high work intensity, and widespread staff shortages are continuing to leave teachers and leaders feeling increasingly exhausted and at risk of burnout.

In Australia, commendable marketing efforts are being taken to influence long-tail supply shortages, and the need to focus on recruitment efforts.

The federal government's recent 'Be That Teacher' campaign beautifully highlights the power of connection and

purpose in the work of teaching when it is going well.

But the onus is on us now, as an industry, to bring this vision to life for the adults who choose to chart their professional paths in our schools and to act honestly on the issues that are making it go not well at all.

The "marketing-to-practice" gap is potentially just another risk if we are tempted to take our eye off what is arguably the more important workforce 'R': retention.

Retaining the teachers, middle leaders, and other staff we have in our schools today – and providing conditions for them to flourish and maximise their impact through their work with students – is undoubtedly our best opportunity to address immediate



and emerging workforce capacity and capability challenges.

When PeopleBench released last year's annual *State of the Sector* report, the data painted two diverse experiences of work within the sector: that of senior leaders, and that of middle leaders and staff.

The difference between the two cohorts is stark, with senior leaders expressing substantially more optimism about their roles and the future of their schools compared to teachers and middle leaders who are focused on teaching and learning in the classroom.

This data picture should be alarming.

About 30% of respondents who were not in senior leadership indicated that

they did not expect to be in their roles in 12 months' time.

While the 30% possible turnover statistic in itself is not new for teachers, the fact that middle leaders have expressed this rate of intention to leave suggests our experienced school leadership pipeline is now at significant risk, too.

So, when we look at what the future holds for the education sector in 2024 and beyond, we have to ask ourselves: 'how bad will we let it get before we start to implement the real and transformative change that is needed?'

One step in the right direction is likely to include the introduction of more flexible work.

A "lack of flexibility" was one of the most cited reasons that participants suggested they were likely to leave.

When we dig a little deeper, we can see that, objectively, schools have not kept pace with other industries when it comes to offering contemporary and dynamic work redesign.

Participants also expressed their concerns that a lack of "change readiness and openness to change" were among the factors causing them to consider exiting.

In some parts of the country, four-day working week options are being explored.

In others, reimagining the job families and roles types that schools may operate with in future are being explored as pathways to build a more contemporary and sustainable workforce for the future.

None of these ideas are radical, but when we observe the alarmist response from media, and in some cases the community and even the current workforce itself, there is little question that implementation complexity is the next hurdle to jump if the sector is to reap the benefits of new models of education service provision, and of improved employee experience.

To make the leap, senior leaders will need support to consider the changes that make sense in their unique contexts.

They will need a plan for moving from the way they do things today to the ways they will need to operate in the future if they are to enjoy a sustainable future supply of staff who are impactful in their work.

Beyond "good leadership skills", senior leaders in schools need access to strategic organisational transformation

“There is little question that implementation complexity is the next hurdle to jump if the sector is to reap the benefits of new models of education service provision

and HR tools, processes, and professional learning opportunities.

These are resources and investments that other sectors have benefited from for some time – and we have let existing and future school leaders down by not providing access to them sooner.

Recognising this need to invest in the sector's senior and middle leaders, so that they might improve outcomes for all staff and students, is crucial.

Our mission is clear: to improve schools as workplaces and enhance student outcomes as a result.

At PeopleBench, our work is about democratising access to the ideas that should belong to school leaders everywhere, and we make use of technology – as well as human-centred relationship support – to help our clients accelerate their journey to become contemporary places to work.

At the end of the day, schools are places where incredible work is done by incredible people every day.

It is those same incredible people who deserve for their experience of work, and their professional journey through the sector to be deliberate, to be supported, and to be "do-able".

Schools and systems who actively turn their attention to addressing the seemingly intractable challenges of attraction, retention, and wellbeing of staff will be the ones who solve them for their communities – and every community deserves for that to be the case. ■

Fleur Johnston is the founder of PeopleBench, a school workforce improvement company that provides K-12 workforce data, insights and advice to inform school strategy and decision making across 3,500 schools, 161,000 staff and 1.4m students.



‘Don’t feel safe at work’

Disruption report: Australian classrooms ‘among the worst in the world’

By Erin Morley and NCA Newswire

Nine sweeping education reforms have been recommended by the Senate in *The issue of increasing disruption in Australian school classrooms* report, released by the Education and Employment References Committee last December.

The inquiry found evidence-based practices should be used to teach Australian children good classroom behaviour, routines and habits as part of a push to improve school discipline.

The inquiry comes after the OECD assessed Australia’s classrooms to be among the most disruptive and disorderly

in the world — ranking at 69th out of 76 school systems.

The Committee was tasked with receiving submissions and investigating the classroom disruptions issue in November 2022 after teachers were overwhelmed by disruptions.

One recommendation suggested that a national ‘behaviour curriculum’ should be designed to curb classroom disruptions, which would outline to students exactly what their behaviour in the classroom should, or shouldn’t, look like.

Other strategies include an end to open-plan classrooms and a return to traditional school rooms, along with an increase in school-based psychologists, social workers and specialists to help identify and manage disruptive behaviour.

Disruptive behaviour includes students talking unnecessarily and

calling out without permission, being slow to start work or follow instructions, showing a lack of respect for each other and staff, not bringing the right equipment or using mobile devices inappropriately.

The committee also recommended teachers receive more professional training in dealing with disruptive behaviour, in large part due to increasing reports of physical harassment of teachers by students.

Some submissions to the inquiry said their teachers were being hit, having furniture thrown at them, or having their cars keyed by students. This was inhibiting them from teaching or supporting students to their full ability because they don’t feel safe at work.

Although the inquiry found disturbing cases of harassment and abuse, the committee found the most common



“ The committee also recommended teachers receive more professional training in dealing with disruptive behaviour, in large part due to increasing reports of physical harassment of teachers by students

disruptive behaviour is when students, as a group, consistently disengage with their schoolwork or become idle when completing tasks.

The report also called for education ministers to issue a yearly survey to students and teachers to gauge each school’s learning climate, behavioural culture and policies, and the frequency and impact of classroom disruption and the schools’ responses.

The national survey scheme is used in the United Kingdom, and is seen as valuable because teachers and students are ‘recipients and inhabitants of [school] culture’, and know what really goes on inside the classroom.

The inquiry, headed by WA Senator Matt O’Sullivan, also recommends the introduction of classroom lessons designed to ‘help students

understand their school’s behavioural expectations and values, allowing them to navigate their school’s social environment successfully while ensuring that the best possible learning climate is achieved’.

The report’s terms of reference said disruptions in classrooms are ‘disadvantaging students and contributing to poor literacy and numeracy results for young people, denying them the learning of essential foundational skills to reach their full educational, economic and social potential’.

In response to the report, Education Minister Jason Clare announced new ‘Engaged Classrooms’ resources to help teachers manage noisy and disengaged classrooms.

The minister acknowledged many teachers who first enter the workforce

don’t feel prepared to handle disruptive students, something the report also outlined as an issue.

The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) consulted with teachers and classroom management to develop the ‘easily accessible evidence explainers and adaptable best practice guides’.

AERO chief Dr Jenny Donovan said this is the first of three classroom management resources to be released over time, with the others to be published this year.

An AERO submission to the disruptions inquiry explained that even if schools are assigned evidence-based learning regimes, sometimes teachers and principals struggle to understand and implement them.

The submission also said the Engaged Classrooms resources aim to be effective through understanding ‘behaviour needs to be explicitly taught and ... treated like other elements of the curriculum ... that need to be taught, practised and retrieved so that it becomes routine.’

“Students thrive in classrooms where they are engaged in learning without distractions; where they feel safe; and where they know what is expected of them,” Dr Donovan said.

“These resources offer evidence-based guidance to teachers about explicitly teaching students the expected behaviours so that all classrooms are conducive to learning.

“By refining their classroom management, teachers will see increased student focus on learning and fewer disruptions, which will subsequently enable teachers to focus more on teaching, leading to improved outcomes for all students.” ■



On the rise

Police called to NSW schools 20,000 times last year

By Erin Morley and NCA Newswire

Police were called to schools across NSW almost 20,000 times in the year to November 2023, including for serious sexual incidents and violence involving pistols and swords.

The rising tide of school violence in the state has been laid bare in a dossier released by Police Minister Yasmin Catley which showed an average of 53 police call-outs a day.

The figures include three reports of terrorism.

Teachers and youth mental health advocates have pointed the finger at increasing anxiety and social deterioration among students.

University of NSW professor of special education Therese Cumming

said Covid-19 lockdowns are probably to blame.

“During Covid, a lot of young people lost the ability to socialise and have become so used to communicating online some have a really difficult time in person – they find it traumatic,” the professor said.

The figures revealed 2821 reports of assault, 1190 incidents of malicious damage and 856 call-outs for break and enter.

They also show a large number of weapon-related incidents, 66 involving a knife, sword, scissors or screwdriver, seven involving a pistol or a shotgun, and 31 physical incidents involving fists or feet.

There were 685 sexual touching incidents reported on school grounds – a rate of more than 13 incidents per week and a further 411 sexual assault incidents, at a rate of almost eight per week.

Police were also called to schools to respond to 479 reports of stealing, 282

drug detection incidents, 67 incidents involving fire and 29 stolen vehicles.

Separate figures from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics shows there has been a steady increase in criminal incidents occurring on school grounds during the latest two annual reporting periods.

The figures include a 34 per cent increase in assaults on school grounds between 2021 and 2022 and 116 per cent increase in sexual offences over the same period.

Incidents of assault and sexual offences are also higher than pre-pandemic levels.

NSW Secondary Principals’ Council president Craig Petersen said teacher shortages and an increased reliance on casuals have added to the disruption felt by students.

“When students have the same teacher they know what the rules and consequences are, but that becomes more complex when more classes are being taught by casuals,” he said.



“ When students have the same teacher they know what the rules and consequences are, but that becomes more complex when more classes are being taught by casuals

The figures come as the NSW Government prepares to roll out a new student behaviour policy across the public school system in Term 1 that includes setting no limit on how many times a school can suspend a student.

A recent unflattering disruption report also said student behaviour in Australian classrooms were 'among the worst in the world'.

Previously, rigid and inconsistent suspension rules harboured a 'grey' area

for principals, who Education Minister Prue Car last November said are often left feeling helpless when trying to discipline persistently disruptive students.

The old rules said principals can only suspend students if they: (1) cause actual harm to any person; or (2) pose an unacceptable risk to the health and safety, learning, and/or well being of another.

The updated rules now include 13 reasons a student can be suspended, including for misuse of technology (mobile phone use), continued disobedience, disruptive behaviour, verbal abuse, vaping and supplying vapes.

Other reasons include malicious damage or theft of property, possession of illegal substances or weapons, engaging in sexual assault or other sexualised behaviour, engaging in physically violent or criminal behaviour, or discriminating against someone based on their gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability. ■



SUBSCRIBE FOR LESS THAN \$5 A WEEK

THE LATEST NEWS AND RESOURCES FOR PROFESSIONALS IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION INDUSTRY

Campus Review is Australia's only publication dedicated exclusively to the higher education industry, making it an essential read for those working in the sector.

6 issues per year | Tax-deductible | Written by an independent voice

Please email subs@apned.com.au to find out more.

“Mr Robinson set us on a positive path to navigating my son’s epilepsy”

Epilepsy training in schools can transform children’s lives

By Erin Morley

Awareness enterprise Epilepsy Smart Schools is calling for mandatory epilepsy training for teachers and schools to avoid ‘adverse educational outcomes’, which they say can include early school leaving, unemployment, and poverty in adulthood for children with the disorder.

Schools are required to make adjustments for students with disabilities under the Disability Standards for Education 2005 legislation, although each state and territory has different requirements for training.

A 2020 review of the Standards revealed many educators are unaware of their responsibilities, with students and

parents having to research and explain what reasonable adjustments are to their teachers so that they receive the ones they are entitled to.

The Review also said that education providers should be held to a higher degree of accountability for failing to meet the standards, an action that would trickle down to individual state and territory education authorities.

It also described a power imbalance that was created between the teachers and students with disabilities and their parents or carers, ultimately distracting those students from progressing with their learning.

Chief of Epilepsy Smart Schools’ Queensland division Chris Dougherty said that there are a number of consequences for students with epilepsy when educators aren’t equipped with the skills they need to understand the condition.

As well as affecting the educational outcomes of these students, this knowledge gap also impacts negatively on key social, emotional and behavioural indicators.

“Epilepsy can have a huge impact on a child’s experience at school, from the seizures themselves, to medication causing problems with concentration, to the effect on social inclusion and – as a result – psychosocial wellbeing,” he said.

“People think of epilepsy as [only] being about seizures, but the medical impacts are just one piece of the puzzle. Lack of understanding and awareness can be deeply stigmatising, leading to isolation and discrimination. We have to do better.”

Co-founder of Terry White chemists Rhonda White AO, who attended an Epilepsy Queensland call-to-action event, said her son received comments about his distracted and disruptive behaviour in



report cards from his teachers before he was diagnosed with epilepsy.

"It transpired that my son had been calling out, standing up and walking around in class for no reason. But [one] teacher looked beyond the behaviour and considered the possibility that he might be having seizures. [This teacher] could only do so because he understood epilepsy from the experiences of his own brother," Ms White said.

"Having the insight and courage to see things from a different angle, he set us on a positive path to navigating epilepsy management.

"I often think, 'thank you Mr Robinson', because that day my son's life was set on the right trajectory to deal with the issues and challenges he was going to face going forward."

She went on to point out that public education campaigns would help the

position of those diagnosed with epilepsy, as has been done with other medical conditions such as heart health, weight management, asthma and diabetes.

Mr Dougherty said that one in 200 children are diagnosed with epilepsy, and often spend a lot of time in school undiagnosed, as Ms White experienced with her son. He added that there are over 70 types of epilepsy seizures and over 40 syndromes that can easily be misunderstood. All of these can lead to social isolation and educational exclusion.

Teachers could identify a possible seizure or behaviour with proper training, he said, which would put that student on the path to treatment sooner, shortening the pre-diagnosis period and reducing its effects on their education.

For instance, some seizures can be followed by disoriented and disruptive behaviour. There are examples of

“Lack of understanding and awareness can be deeply stigmatising, leading to isolation and discrimination. We have to do better

teachers placing students on behaviour management plans because they don't recognise that these poor behaviours were actually symptoms of their epilepsy.

An epilepsy training ambassador and the principal of St Margaret's Berwick Grammar in Melbourne, Dr Annette Rome, said she has seen direct results from teacher training implemented in her school.

This has been particularly evident for Ava, a student at St Margaret's who has epilepsy. Since the training, her teachers are equipped to handle her seizures and complications with the disorder.

Dr Rome said it has "opened up a social world for Ava that did not exist" before the training, as she now feels her condition is in safe hands.

Ava can now attend school camp, has started having sleepovers on the weekend, and can continue playing community basketball; all things that she was hesitant to do before there was awareness about her epilepsy and its implications.

The principal said even though there has been teacher epilepsy training for a number of years, what made a difference in her school was adding another layer of annual training that looked at the administration and handling of medication.

"Every year, Ava's teachers will change, so we make sure relevant teachers get that training. And because she's the person she is, I know our teachers do not begrudge that in any way, in fact they celebrate it," she said.

"We need to have more awareness in schools, that this condition is something that through staff training can be successfully managed.

"The course now exists, the 'why' to do the course exists, and I know if any principal knew such a thing could change a young person's life, they would do whatever they could to promote it."

Epilepsy Smart Schools and other organisations offer annual training and other resources for teachers and principals. ■

‘Support and enhance’



The Framework aims to mitigate risks associated with AI in relation to learning and privacy while supporting the benefits.

Framework for generative AI in schools released

By Erin Morley

The Australian Framework for Generative Artificial Intelligence in Schools (the Framework), released in December, outlines what best practice is when it comes to using generative artificial intelligence (AI) in schools in relation to a number of areas.

In February 2023, education ministers met and agreed that regulating AI in education was a national priority to help teachers dealing with students using generative AI services, such as

ChatGPT, that are not aligned to their learning curriculum.

The Framework aims to support better education outcomes and ethical practices in schools through six principles and 25 guiding statements.

It also aims to rid schools of bullying or discrimination caused by AI, and to stop students using the technology to cheat on exams and assessments.

The principles are:

- Teaching and learning: Generative AI tools are used to support and enhance teaching and learning
- Human and social wellbeing: Generative AI tools are used to benefit all members of the school community

- Transparency: School communities understand how generative AI tools work, how they can be used, and when and how these tools are impacting them
 - Fairness: Generative AI tools are used in ways that are accessible, fair, and respectful
 - Accountability: Generative AI tools are used in ways that are open to challenge and retain human agency and accountability for decisions
 - Privacy, security and safety: Students and others using generative AI tools have their privacy and data protected
- Each guiding statement explains how these principles can be achieved.



For example, one guiding statement for the first principle, Teaching and Learning, is:

“Instruction: schools engage students in learning about generative AI tools and how they work, including their potential limitations and biases, and deepen this learning as student usage increases.”

Federal Education Minister Jason Clare said the Framework outlines when generative AI should and shouldn’t be used, especially in terms of student privacy.

“This Framework will help guide all school communities so they can enjoy the potential benefits to teaching and learning

that generative AI offers, while mitigating the risks,” the minister said.

“Importantly, the Framework highlights that schools should not use generative AI products that sell student data.

“If we get this right, generative AI can help personalise education and make learning more compelling and effective, and this Framework will help teachers and school communities maximise the potential of this new technology.”

The Framework was ultimately developed by the National AI in Schools Taskforce, with input from unions, teachers, students, academics, parents and school representative bodies.

“ It also aims to rid schools of bullying or discrimination caused by AI, and to stop students using the technology to cheat on exams and assessments.

It will be implemented in term one in 2024 and will be reviewed every 12 months by education ministers, or more often if necessary. ■



Students (left to right) Mia Bentata (18), Luca Grice (15), Sydelle Isaacs (16), Ashna Makwana (16), Iola Fleming (16) and Keira Haines (15) at the Melbourne NCSS camp. Image: supplied.

‘Nerding out’

Computer science camp fills educational gap around digital technologies

By Erin Morley

In the second week of January, 160 year 11 and 12 students gathered to learn about coding, cryptography, cyber security and generative artificial intelligence at ed-tech charity Grok Academy’s school holidays computer science camp.

Designed to address Australia’s tech skills shortage and prepare students for jobs of the future, 80 students in Sydney and another 80 in Melbourne met with executives and engineers from tech giants including Atlassian, Airwallex and Google.

Trivia, scavenger hunts and a programming competition were followed by activities that build real-world skills such as mock job interviews, lectures, lab work and team projects at the 10-day residential camp to carry out Grok’s National Computer Science School (NCSS) rationale.

Teacher and chief executive of Grok Academy Dr James Curran said the education system is key to building a technologically sound workforce of the future.

“Whether you want to fight climate change, make a blockbuster movie,

or unlock the secrets of the universe, technology will underpin almost every future career choice of today’s primary and high school students,” he said.

“We believe that establishing a solid computer science understanding and core skills from a child’s early learning years is vital to shore up our future economy.”

The camp comes in addition to Grok’s e-learning digital skills platform, where up to 209,000 teachers access resources to support delivery of the ‘digital technologies’ curriculum, in which students learn computer science skills.

Although digital technologies is a mandatory curriculum requirement from kindergarten to year eight, Dr Curran said it can be challenging for educators to teach a subject they never learned at school, and who don’t have the time to complete professional development to fill that knowledge gap.

“In reality, we know many schools are still struggling to teach [digital technologies] effectively, or find teachers that have the expertise to teach it well,” he said.

“Unfortunately, the initial teacher education programs don’t teach enough digital technologies, and more broadly digital literacy skills.

“It’s not surprising that computing, especially something that’s moving as

“Regardless of where computer science and digital technology [coursework] is at in schools, there is a need for elite programs that stretch our most advanced students

rapidly as computing technology, is a struggle for teachers to teach effectively and in an engaging way.”

The NCSS camp is also an opportunity for digitally advanced like-minded students to work together on big projects in a social way, something most schools can’t offer them.

“Regardless of where computer science and digital technology [coursework] is at in schools, there is a need for elite programs that stretch our most advanced students,” he said.

“[The camp] is, on some level, a nerd camp. Finding a group of other students that all, unashamedly, want to celebrate learning these things, means that the socialising time together is [with] a different group of people than [the students] would see at school.

“Especially if [they] aren’t in a very big school, they might be the only person in their year that’s really excited about computer science.”

Dr Curran said Grok has in the past run specific programs to encourage female students to join Grok, which has resulted in a 50/50 split of female to male summer camp applicants.

Initiatives such as the Girls Programming Network has specifically created a pipeline for girls and non-binary students.

“We need to build that pipeline, but we need to think of that pipeline of starting in primary school and making sure that the experience [of computer science] right from then is great.” ■

Grok Academy’s computer science summer camp ran at the University of Melbourne and the University of New South Wales in January, and expressions of interest are now open for 2025.



Subscribe for less than \$5 a week

The latest news and resources for professionals in the higher education industry

Campus Review provides exclusive and invaluable higher education news to the staff at universities and colleges across Australia. As Australia's only publication dedicated exclusively to the tertiary education industry, we offer you the perfect opportunity to stay informed with what's going on in the wider higher education community.

Campus Review is Australia's only publication dedicated exclusively to the higher education industry, making it an essential read for those working in the sector.

- Exclusive and invaluable coverage of higher education news
- 6 issues per year
- Tax-deductible
- Widely-respected industry magazine that consistently portrays the sector accurately
- Written by an independent voice

Please email subs@apned.com.au to find out more.



Subscribe for less than \$2 a week

The latest news and resources for schools and teachers across Australia

Education Review is Australia's highly-respected industry publication, providing unrivalled coverage of the primary and secondary school education sectors to thousands of schools and teachers every day.

At *Education Review* we pride ourselves on being at the forefront of ever changing teaching practices.

We provide an independent source of news, and cover the issues relevant to teachers and the classroom giving an informative, practical and insightful view into day to day life in schools.

- Comprehensive coverage of a variety of relevant topics
- Latest updates in technology and enhanced teaching strategies
- Can be used as a professional development resource
- 6 issues per year
- Interviews and opinion pieces from professionals in the industry
- Written by an independent voice

Please email subs@apned.com.au to find out more.