

Australian Educator

Phones in class

The rewards and risks of mobiles at school

Maths anxiety

A new program aims to banish number nerves

Bilingual success

Yirrkala School's award-winning program

Teaching middle years

New research suggests a different approach

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Australian Educator

Our cover: The AEU launched its new Fair Funding Now! campaign in Canberra, calling for full funding for all public schools.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GEOFF COMFORT

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www.aeufederal.org.au

fyi



What we can learn from refugees

A film documenting how education is changing refugees' lives in Indonesia is being screened around Australia.

Australian filmmaker Jolyon Hoff worked with a group of refugees who founded the Cisarua Learning Centre four years ago to provide an education for their children. The film, *The Staging Post*, is about the people he met and the community they've built.

The refugees inspired a refugee-led education revolution in Indonesia, says Hoff.

"There are now more than 1500 students learning at 10 refugee-led schools, taught by around 100 volunteer refugee teachers," he says.

"They have everything to teach us. They didn't wait for their government. They didn't even have a government, and still they brought about the change

they wanted in their world. We can, too."

Hoff says the film is suitable for all ages and is enjoyed by students from all backgrounds. "We'd like to see it screened widely in schools during Refugee Week," he says.

Now Hoff is busy filming a follow-up documentary to track progress and development of the project and calling for donations to help fund it through the Documentary Australian Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation that sponsors documentary filmmaking.

The AEU contributed to Cisarua through its International Trust Fund, which works internationally to achieve human rights and the right to quality public education, to support democratic and independent education unions, and to provide solidarity and emergency assistance.

A study guide, commissioned by the AEU and written by the Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM), is available at tinyurl.com/yarfchqo

EVENTS

12 June

World Day Against Child Labour

17-23 June

Refugee Week

27 July

Schools Tree Day

29 July

National Tree Day

9 August

International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

31 August

Wear it Purple Day

14-20 October

Anti-Poverty Week

22-28 October

Enviroweek

3 December

International Day of People with Disability

#WithRefugees

With this year's Refugee Week just around the corner, beginning on June 17, the Refugee Council of Australia has chosen #WithRefugees as the theme.

Today there are more refugees than ever, and only by standing together #WithRefugees can we begin to change this, says the Council.

"When history looks back will it be to see them standing alone or will it see we were standing #WithRefugees," the Council says.

"We need a global movement to demand the safety and rights of refugees are protected. In Australia, it is the responsibility of our Government and each one of us to ensure that people who are forced to flee from their homes can live with dignity and with hope."

Last year's Refugee Week was Australia's biggest so far with more than 500 events held including film screenings, art exhibitions, circus performances, public storytelling, music festivals, comedy galas, poetry slams and fashion shows.

You can find resources including posters, information kits and a listing of events at refugeeweek.org.au



How to grow smarter

Research shows outdoor learning helps to improve problem solving abilities, emotional intelligence and important educational outcomes, according to a Planet Ark report.

The report, 'Learning from trees: life lessons for future generations', explores the skills and attributes children need to deal with future challenges. It combines Australian and international peer-reviewed academic research with the results of a survey of 200 teachers.

It found that less than 34 per cent of those surveyed taught outdoors for 15 minutes or more in a 10-week term. Only four per cent of teachers surveyed considered outdoor learning as important for fostering inspiration, creativity and problem solving.



Students in Finland, who perform highest on international benchmarks, spend at least 15 minutes in every hour of the school day outdoors.

Planet Ark is encouraging schools to become involved in the Schools Tree Day on July 27. It's been running the annual event since 1996, with more than 24 million native seedlings, tree, shrubs, edibles and flowers having been planted.

Aust education aid falls short

Australia is falling short when it comes to supporting a worldwide push to improve education for all.

The Global Partnership for Education had called on the government to commit \$150 million to its financing conference held earlier this year. Foreign minister Julie Bishop announced a pledge of only \$90 million.

The conference aimed to increase global education financing by governments and other organisations to help meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 to achieve quality education for all by 2030.

The lack of commitment by governments to financing of education is the biggest hurdle in meeting the goal, says Education International president and AEU federal secretary Susan Hopgood.

"Currently, 75 million children and

young people are unable to access education, over half a billion more are in school but not learning and over 750 million adults lack even basic literacy. Yet, aid for education is declining," she says.

Global spending on education must rise annually from \$1.2 trillion per year to \$3 trillion by 2030 if the goal is to be met. For this to happen, governments must allocate at least 4-6 per cent of their gross domestic product and/or at least 15-20 per cent of total public expenditure to education, and donor countries must increase the aid for education to at least 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance.

"Governments have the duty to fulfil the right to education for their citizens. The adoption of the UN sustainable development goals, ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all and promoting lifelong learning is now also a shared responsibility," Hopgood says.

Education issues making news locally and globally

fyi

Failure to invest early

Australia is falling far short of the investment by other countries in early childhood education and that's coming at a cost, a review has found.



- Australia fails to invest early, and pays for it later," the report says.

The Review was asked to consider the most effective interventions to be used in early childhood, with a focus on school readiness, improving achievement in schools and future success in employment or further education. The full report can be found at tinyurl.com/y7m6bc8y. ●

Early childhood education

Children who participate in high-quality early childhood education are more likely to complete Year 12 and are less likely to repeat grades or require additional support, according to *Lifting our Game*, the report released by a review panel commissioned by state and territory governments.

The Review found that quality early childhood education makes a significant contribution to achieving educational excellence in schools. "There is growing evidence that participation in quality early childhood education improves school readiness and lifts NAPLAN results and PISA scores," the report said.

Yet federal government funding to maintain 15 hours of early childhood access remains temporary, with decisions to fund the next 12 months delivered at the last minute.

The review panel has recommended permanent and adequate funding for universal access to early childhood education for all children in the year before school.

Importantly, the panel has also recommended that funding increase to at least the OECD average, noting that the benefits of quality early childhood education are widely accepted internationally.

OECD analysis of PISA results has established that two years of early

childhood education is the minimum needed to improve student performance at age 15.

"The evidence is extensive and consistent. Most comparable countries recognise this and invest accordingly," the report says.

Australia invests less than 0.5 per cent of GDP in early childhood education and care, well below the OECD average of 0.8 per cent of GDP. Nordic countries (Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland) invest significantly more - between 1.2 and 2 per cent.

"It is not surprising that Australia's school outcomes are of concern

It is not surprising that Australia's school outcomes are of concern - Australia fails to invest early, and pays for it later.

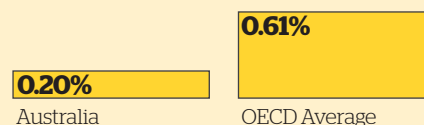


Between **85%** and **90%** of brain development happens in the **first 5 years** of a child's life

Children who participated in a high quality early childhood education program were found to be:

- 🍏 more likely to be ready for school
- 🍏 higher achievers in school
- 🍏 less likely to need special education placements
- 🍏 less likely to repeat a grade in school
- 🍏 more likely to complete high school
- 🍏 more likely to go on to further education
- 🍏 more likely to be employed, and at a higher wage.

Investment in pre-primary as proportion of GDP



Australia is ranked **24th** of 26 OECD countries.

The Turnbull government's bungled education reform sees private schools prospering while public schools struggle.

Follow the money

For 17 years, I taught in public primary schools in northern Adelaide and Port Pirie in South Australia.

I wouldn't trade my years in front of the blackboard for anything in the world.

The 'aha' moments – when a student understands a difficult concept after grappling with it for hours – make it all worth it.

Undoubtedly, the most frustrating thing about teaching is the lack of resources available to maximise a child's learning potential. It's like missing the last piece in a jigsaw puzzle.

That's where the federal government can really help to complete the picture for every child by providing the resources they need to learn.

Instead, the Turnbull government has badly bungled education reform.

How?

It decided last year to strip \$1.9 billion from public schools in 2018 and 2019 without any thought about the effect on student achievement, and it failed to consult the states.

Next, it delivered a cacophony of buzzwords and lofty promises of an education 'blueprint' when it released the report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools, or Gonski 2.0.

The federal budget was an opportunity to put things right. After all, the latest Guardian Essential poll found that 88 per cent of Australians want the government to either increase education spending or

...private schools are handed almost \$2 billion for capital works in a special deal.



keep it at the same level.

But Turnbull ignored public sentiment and showed his priorities are not with our children's education by failing to rectify the gaping resource shortages facing public schools. He has refused to meet the recommendations of the first Gonski review, which promised fairer funding for public schools, and he has failed to provide any extra resources to implement the recommendations of the second Gonski review.

To rub salt into the wound, public schools will receive zero capital funds for much-needed new and upgraded classrooms, while private schools are handed almost \$2 billion for capital works in a special deal.

Schools are missing out

The Turnbull government's cuts leave nearly nine out of 10 public schools below the minimum funding benchmark – known as the Schooling Resource Standard – recommended by the 2011



Gonski Review of Funding for Schooling.

Those schools are missing out on the teaching and learning resources they need to educate their students.

Yet, we know that when schools can give students the individual attention they need, we see improved educational outcomes.

Just talk to the principals and teachers in schools where the first four years of Gonski needs-based funding has been used to deliver strong teaching and learning programs. They'll tell you about the 'aha' moments that their students are having every day.

The Gonski Review's recommendations include greater long-term investment in early childhood education as well as more support for schools to better induct, mentor and train teachers and principals throughout their careers. This can only happen with fair funding.

The \$1.9 billion cut from public schools must be reversed and the cuts to disability funding for public schools in five states and territories overturned.

Every school needs to be resourced at 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard. To have any school below that benchmark is unacceptable.

The onus is on our political leaders, all of whom had their own 'aha' moments in years gone by, to make fair funding a reality.

Correna Haythorpe
AEU FEDERAL PRESIDENT



Stand up. Speak out. Create change.

With a federal election coming, the fight for fair funding for public schools is more important than ever.



A letter signed by almost 6,000 people and 23 organisations was handed to state and territory education ministers at the meeting of the Education Council in Adelaide.

The new phase of the AEU's funding campaign – *Fair Funding Now!* – was launched in Canberra in late March.

More than 80 parents, teachers and principals spoke to the media and politicians from all parties during a day of activities. "We want to make sure that every politician understands the importance of fair funding for public schools," says AEU federal president Correna Haythorpe.

"We were able to tell MPs what we want them to commit to on behalf of our members," she says.

The AEU is calling on all parties to agree to reverse the Turnbull government's \$1.9 billion cut to public schools in 2018 and 2019, ensure all public schools are funded to 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) by 2023, remove the 20 per cent cap on the Commonwealth share of the SRS from the Australian Education Amendment Act, establish a capital fund for public schools to upgrade school buildings and classrooms and reverse the cuts to disability funding.

The *Fair Funding Now!* campaign is off to a busy start following the Canberra launch. Already, almost 6,000 people and 23 organisations have added their name to a letter that was presented to federal education minister Simon Birmingham and state and territory education ministers at a meeting of the Education Council in Adelaide. The letter called on all governments to support fair funding for public schools.

"Malcolm Turnbull has chosen to reignite the funding wars, and we are ready to fight for our public schools," says Haythorpe.



It's time our leaders looked parents and teachers in the eye and guaranteed our children a bright education future.



Correna Haythorpe
AEU federal president

Government funding cuts are hurting



"Country kids missed out...and this is really hurting our public schools and it's hurting our children."

Natalie Walker, far west councillor, NSW P&C Federation



"We are losing over \$1.1 million. We need that money to not only continue the programs but to grow them."

Julie Blanch, teacher, Beverly Hills Girls High School, NSW



"There's an uneven playing field for schools across Australia...only 20 per cent of funding is being made available to public school students and 80 per cent of the funding is being made available from the federal government for students who attend non-government schools."

Rob Walker, treasurer, NSW Secondary Principals' Council



"We had something locked in stone. It was promised, it was signed, it was passed through legislation, and then it was just reneged upon...Promises get made and they should be kept. We tell our children to keep their word and we need our polities to do exactly the same."

Susie Boyd, president, NSW P&C Federation



"It's unfair that these students, who need this intervention and need this support, are ultimately missing out."

Henry Crofts, teacher, Oberon Primary School, VIC



"We shouldn't have to be fundraising to have extra teacher aides or staff at our school. They should be there so they can concentrate on the job and getting outcomes for our students."

Rebecca Godfrey, deputy principal, Blackwater State High School, QLD

With a federal election on the horizon, teachers, principals and activists gathered in Canberra to launch the Fair Funding Now! campaign.

"Turnbull and Birmingham can no longer ignore the thousands of parents, teachers and principals who are demanding public school funding be increased right away.

"It's time our leaders looked parents and teachers in the eye and guaranteed our children a bright education future," she says.

Meanwhile, a number of campaign launches have been held in marginal seats. *The Fair Funding Now!* campaign is targeting 18 marginal seats held by coalition MPs.

An online survey of voters in the marginal seats found that most believe education funding is more important to them than company tax cuts. Most voters also agree that the level of federal government funding for public schools is too low. Three-quarters of those surveyed weren't confident that prime minister Turnbull would ever provide enough funds and resources to public schools.

TURNBULL'S PRIORITIES SHOULD BE:



TAX CUTS



KIDS' EDUCATION



Authorised by Susan Hoggard, Australian Education Union, Melbourne

OUR CHILDREN ONLY GET ONE CHANCE AT AN EDUCATION. WE NEED FAIR FUNDING NOW!

— Correna Haythorpe
AEU Federal President



Authorised by Susan Hoggard, Australian Education Union, Melbourne

SHARE IF YOU AGREE



72%
of voters think
**FEDERAL FUNDING
FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS
IS TOO LOW**

Source: GDO's Research



Authorised by Susan Haggood, Australian Education Union, Melbourne

79%
of voters think
**INCREASING PUBLIC
SCHOOL FUNDING IS BETTER
FOR AUSTRALIA THAN
CUTTING COMPANY TAX RATES**

Source: GDO's Research



Authorised by Susan Haggood, Australian Education Union, Melbourne

**THE TURNBULL PLAN CUTS
\$2.2 BILLION OUT OF SCHOOLS
IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS**



Almost
\$1.9 billion cut
from public
schools.

Public schools Private schools



Authorised by Susan Haggood, Australian Education Union, Melbourne

Building inequity into education

It should go without saying that buildings that are too hot, cold, dark, noisy or crowded get in the way of quality teaching. But the message obviously isn't getting through to Canberra where the gross inequalities in Malcolm Turnbull's education funding system have been laid bare by the latest My School data.

"Malcolm Turnbull is fuelling the equivalent of an educational arms race for private schools," says AEU federal president Correna Haythorpe.

In fact, under the Turnbull plan, there is no capital funding for public schools.

On the other hand, private schools are due to rake in almost \$2 billion in capital funding over the next decade.

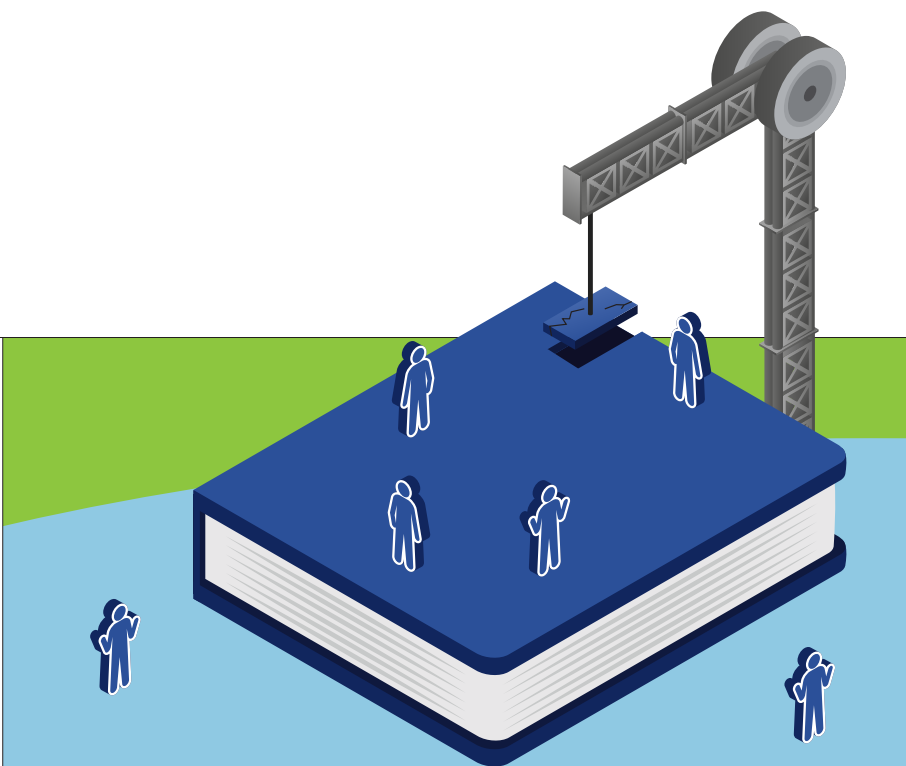
What we need

What's needed is a new capital funding stream for public schools. The AEU is calling for funding for new and upgraded public school classrooms and learning spaces to be \$300 million

in 2018. This amount should increase each year in line with enrolments and school costs.

"If the Turnbull government can afford to provide funding for private schools to goldplate their facilities, it can surely provide the funding that is urgently needed to build classrooms in public schools and ensure the needs of all students are met," says Haythorpe.

"Public school students deserve learning environments where classrooms are well maintained and conducive to learning. They need safe, appropriate classrooms and play areas with modern equipment and technology," she concludes.



Marginal seats in the spotlight

The AEU's Fair Funding Now! campaign is targeting 18 marginal seats held by coalition MPs around the country:

SEAT MP

NSW

Gilmore	Ann Sudmalis
Robertson	Lucy Wicks
Banks	David Coleman
Page	Kevin Hogan (NAT)

QLD

Forde	Bert Van Manen
Capricornia	Michelle Landry (NAT)
Flynn	Ken O'Dowd (NAT)
Dickson	Peter Dutton
Petrie	Luke Howarth
Leichhardt	Warren Entsch

VIC

Chisholm	Julia Banks
Dunkley	Chris Crewther
LaTrobe	Jason Wood
Corangamite (Cox)	Sarah Henderson

SA

Boothby	Nicolle Flint
---------	---------------

WA

Hasluck	Ken Wyatt
Swan	Steve Irons
Pearce	Christian Porter

Targeting individual learning

Extra funding has gone a long way at the Lismore High Campus of The Rivers Secondary College. And it's producing strong results for both students and teachers.

A raft of new strategies and resources to target individual learning and students with learning difficulties have been made possible by extra funding at the Lismore High Campus of The Rivers Secondary College in northeast New South Wales.

Working closely with students to identify and overcome barriers to learning, Lismore High has introduced a new project-based curriculum and teaching program. There's also a new senior study program for Year 11 and 12 students, using individual planning sessions as well as group activities focused on enabling students to achieve their academic goals.

The school has employed an Aboriginal Community Officer

The school has employed an Aboriginal Community Officer to work more closely with families and is running a tutoring program for Indigenous students, providing tailored packages of individual support for Aboriginal students.



How does fair funding help?



"The students will have support in the classrooms...the teachers will be continually growing and learning and, in the end, the students are going to be lifelong learners with great outcomes."
Sarah Cobb, teacher, Blackwater State High School, QLD



"With fair funding we can support our students, enhance teacher aide time to target particular needs, we can deliver speech therapy programs..."
Leisa Neaton, principal, Frenchville State School, QLD



The Lismore High Campus of The Rivers Secondary College in NSW has seen school attendance rates soar to the highest in five years.



to work more closely with families and is running a tutoring program for Indigenous students, providing tailored packages of individual support for Aboriginal students. Meanwhile the extra funding has also allowed more targeted support for EALD (English as an additional language or dialect) students.

The changes have been backed by a substantial investment in new technology, including the purchase of educational software that supports learning in literacy and numeracy and new computers. All students in Years 7 and 8 now have access to their own laptops, which has freed up access for students to other computer laboratory spaces.

As a result of these and other changes over the past two years of additional funding, school attendance rates are the highest in five years, and HSC results are the most improved in ten years while literacy and numeracy results are above state average.

The Gonski funding has also allowed the school to increase its budget for professional learning so

all teachers could undertake intensive training in the new project-based system.

This provides a consistency of approach which benefits students.

Student behaviour in class has dramatically improved and students, staff and parents are all very positive about the project-based learning program.

Under the Turnbull Government's new funding plan, Lismore High Campus will miss out on \$1.6 million of funding it expected to receive over 2018 and 2019. ●



What do politicians need to know?



"Do what's fair. Give the students who need the funding what they deserve."

Denise Lofts, principal, Ulladulla High School, NSW



"My message to the politicians would be: if you're fair dinkum about having a smart Australia, invest your money in education."

Michael Hansen, principal, Cairns West State School QLD



"Education for our kids is not a cost to our economy, it's an investment in the future and every politician needs to understand that."

Chris Presland, president, NSW Secondary Principals Council



"Every child should have equal access to education."

Rebecca Shields, parent, Frenchville State School, QLD

Take action!

Each one of us can make a difference. Together we can make change.

Go to **fairfundingnow.org.au** to join the campaign.

Although progress is being made in some states, one teacher's story speaks volumes about the plight of the many teachers who remain, reluctantly, on fixed-term contracts.

Seasons of uncertainty

Hitting middle-age, says South Australian teacher Fern Hudson, caused her to reassess where her previous career was headed and she decided to turn to teaching.

Three years into her teaching career, however, Hudson is still on fixed-term contracts. After two years teaching home economics at one Adelaide school, she had qualified for conversion to permanency. But on the penultimate day of term, she found out that the permanent position had gone to someone else. Not only had she lost her job, she had also lost her right to permanency.

"That was devastating," she says. "Being the second-to-last day of term, I was shocked. I had to go through the whole summer not knowing if I was going to have a job when school started. [In the end] I got a contract at 12:10pm on a Tuesday and started at 12:30 the same day."

Hudson then had a summer of uncertainty, unsure of whether she'd secure another position.

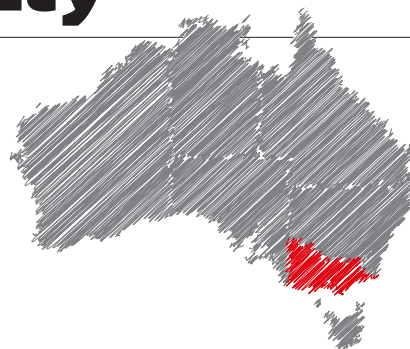
"I have a family and a mortgage, the whole summer I questioned my ability to continue with teaching if I have to go through each summer unsure of my employment. I need job security!"

Although she considers herself lucky to have found a new contract at a good school, she's now in precarious employment again, filling a maternity leave position.

"It means that, in a year's time, there isn't a position at the end of it and I'll need to find another one."

Hudson is far from alone. In her own faculty, she says, there are many non-permanent workers, including one teacher who recently achieved conversion – with the help of the AEU – after a staggering 15 years of contracts.

The AEU is concerned about the plight of those on fixed-term contracts, a problem that continues to worsen nationally. Among increasingly bleak figures, however, the AEU's work in Victoria, the Northern Territory, New South Wales and South Australia has recently had some success in turning the tide.



VIC: Unprecedented win sees big cut in fixed-term contracts

Victoria is the most "devolved" state in Australia when it comes to school management, including school budgets and employment of staff, says AEU Victorian branch president Meredith Peace. Rates of fixed-term employment have varied since fixed-term employment was introduced by Jeff Kennett in the early 1990s, but they have been historically high – 22 per cent for school teachers and 45 per cent for school support staff in recent years.

This level of insecurity, during the Kennett years particularly, hit education workers hard. "People were continually being employed on year-to-year contracts often for no clear or justifiable reason," says Peace.

By the time the Steve Bracks government came to power in 1999, about 18-20 per cent of teachers were employed on contract. Most damagingly, there were no industrial agreements in place to support transition to ongoing employment. With the change in government, however, the union was able to negotiate its first school agreement, with contract clauses tweaked regularly in successive agreements since 2000.

The most powerful mechanism AEU Victoria was able to secure was a translation clause: an agreement

I had to go through the whole summer not knowing if I was going to have a job when school started.



Fern Hudson
Teacher



that schools must translate those on their second contract if an ongoing suitable vacancy arises. With each successive rewrite of this agreement, the union was thus able to secure spikes in permanency – to the extent that numbers of fixed-term employees fell to just 13 per cent under the first agreement with Bracks. An ongoing issue, however, was that, after these spikes, numbers would again creep up into unacceptable territory.

Thankfully, Peace says, the current state government was elected on a platform of tackling the problem of insecure work. This has enabled the union to work with the Daniel Andrews government to secure an agreement that has delivered ongoing employment to unprecedented numbers of members.

“Once a year, there is now what’s called a centralised translation process,” says Peace. “Each school receives a letter saying, ‘Here are all your people at your school on the payroll who are eligible to be translated’ – who have worked more than 12 months – and the principal is then asked to provide reasons why they are on contracts.

“The justification has to fit within the rules in the agreement. The department can then determine if the reason isn’t appropriate, or there’s no justification for it. That’s because the department has all the information on staffing: who is on leave, what kind of leave, whether the school is in budget deficit or has falling enrolments.”

This has made a huge difference to local sub-branch representatives who had in the past struggled to obtain critical, or accurate, data from their schools, says Peace. Now, with the department’s backing, the union is

Overall, 10,030 teachers and ES staff were translated to ongoing at the end of 2017...an unprecedented win for the union.



Meredith Peace
President, AEU Victorian branch

The critical issue for us is that the enterprise agreement, in its final form, must give us the capacity to challenge the excessive use of fixed-period employment at the Fair Work Commission.



Jarvis Ryan
President, AEU NT branch



able to much more effectively advocate for and ensure staff are translated to ongoing.

One other significant win for the Victorian branch is changes to rules for education support staff disability funded positions. All ES staff employed on a fixed-term contract in these positions have been translated to ongoing. It's made a big difference to the percentage of support staff who are on fixed-term contracts: more than 7,000 ES staff disability funded positions were made ongoing in late 2017.

Overall, 10,030 teachers and ES staff were translated to ongoing at the end of 2017, significantly reducing the percentage of staff on fixed-term contracts – an unprecedented win for the union.

NT: Agreement for more permanent positions

In the Northern Territory, fixed-term employment has been a major issue since 2014, culminating in 37 per cent of the current workforce being employed on contract. That's an alarming increase on 2013 figures, which were as low as 13 per cent thanks to the then-government's commitment to convert as many teachers as possible to permanent employees.

This number effectively represented full-permanency, given there are valid reasons for some staff being on fixed-term contracts (such as maternity leave).

On the back of these latest figures, the AEU's NT branch has been negotiating with the current government to reduce fixed-period employment levels to 20 per cent. That's resulted in a 12-month program that sees teachers, who've been employed on contract continuously for more than 12 months, converted to permanency at the discretion of their principal.

The uptake for the program was initially slow but has picked up. Of a teaching workforce of 2,800, almost 200 staff have been converted in the past two terms, and there are hopes that another 300 teachers may be converted this year.

One key issue to shift, says AEU NT branch president Jarvis Ryan, is the cultural acceptance of casual employment. Principals and regional directors now see it as quite normal, he says.

So, the NT branch is aiming to shift the emphasis away from schools' discretionary powers of translation.

"The critical issue for us is that the enterprise agreement, in its final form, must give us the capacity to challenge the excessive use of fixed-period employment at the Fair Work Commission," says Ryan. "We can't do that at the moment but we're confident we will once our new agreement is finalised."

Under the new agreement, the AEU wants a presumption that vacancies are filled on an ongoing basis, unless there's a valid reason. It also wants the ability to request a staffing review at a school or regional level, a move inspired by the NSW Staffing Agreement.



NSW: Department ordered to fill permanent positions

NSW has long had a staffing agreement that guarantees permanency and the filling of vacancies, but last year the NSW Teachers Federation discovered that the department was not necessarily complying with this industrially binding deal.

With stories of a number of unfilled permanent positions or permanent positions filled by temporary teachers, the Federation took the department to the Industrial Relations Commission.

A Terms of Settlement was achieved in the IRC last October that the department fill all permanent vacancies in schools with permanent appointments. As a result, the Federation is expecting more than 3,000 permanent jobs to be filled before July this year.

Despite this success, issues remain in equity areas in particular, including support for Aboriginal students, those with English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D), students from low SES communities and those with disabilities, says Henry Rajendra, the NSWTF's senior officer responsible for staffing.

One example, says Rajendra, since 2015 there has been a 24 per cent increase in funding for EAL/D and a 23 per cent increase in students requiring this support. The problem is that, while schools are receiving the funds, the department hasn't increased the number of permanent positions for those roles, which remains capped at 896 statewide.

"Our claim is, you could use that money to employ additional

permanent teachers and lift that cap to one that meets the needs of students," Rajendra says.

SA: Successful campaign sees more become permanent

Declining levels of permanent employment saw the AEU South Australian branch launch a successful Secure our Jobs campaign that's led to the conversion of a significant number of teachers and support staff to permanent employment.

While the department has set a target of 87 per cent of school sector teachers in the state being employed in an ongoing fashion, as of 2017, that figure sits at just over 70 per cent (almost 30 per cent on fixed-term contracts). And, as in other states, the numbers have been getting worse: casualisation was at 23 per cent in 2013, before steadily climbing year by year.

Staffing matters, including filling vacancies and translations to permanency, are handled by each school's Personnel Advisory Committee

(PAC). The PAC consists of the principal, or a delegate; an elected staff representative elected by the staff; a union representative elected by union members; and a non-teaching staff representative elected by the non-teacher staff.

Now, a Tenure Review Panel (TRP) is helping those who miss out on permanency through the PACs, says Howard Spreadbury, president of the AEU's SA branch.

"The AEU, as part of the TRP, can put the argument to the department, and actually take the teacher member with them," says Spreadbury. "Now we have two mechanisms for teachers in schools to achieve permanency, which is also applicable to preschools and student support officers."

Although the system is in its early stages, the signs are good, he says.

For 2017, there were 345 teacher conversions, of which 50 were translated through the TRP process. ●



The union created a focused campaign called Secure Our Jobs, which has led to the conversion of a significant number of teachers and support staff to permanent employment.



Howard Spreadbury
President, AEU SA branch

Source: Centre for Future Work from ABS Catalogue 6291.0.55.003 Tables 24a & EQ04. Twelve-month average data ending August 2017. Some totals do not add up due to rounding. Self-employed includes unpaid family workers.

Changing the rules

Full-time permanent work is continuing to shrink as a share of total work and the ACTU is calling for action.

TEMPORARY, part-time, casual and self-employed jobs are now the norm for more than half of the number of all workers (and the overwhelming reality for most young workers), according to Jim Stanford, economist and director of Centre for Future Work at the Australia Institute.

"Unfortunately, our legal and regulatory systems have not kept up with these changes," he wrote in a submission to a Senate select committee inquiry on the future of work and workers.

"We must do more to ensure that the framework of basic protections and rights is afforded to all, irrespective of how or where we work."

The casualisation of the workforce across all industry sectors is one of the key planks of the ACTU's Change the Rules campaign.

ACTU secretary Sally McManus says the campaign aims to achieve more secure jobs and to give working people more power to negotiate better pay and conditions.

Australia's workplace laws are now not strong enough to balance the power of big business, she told the National Press Club recently.

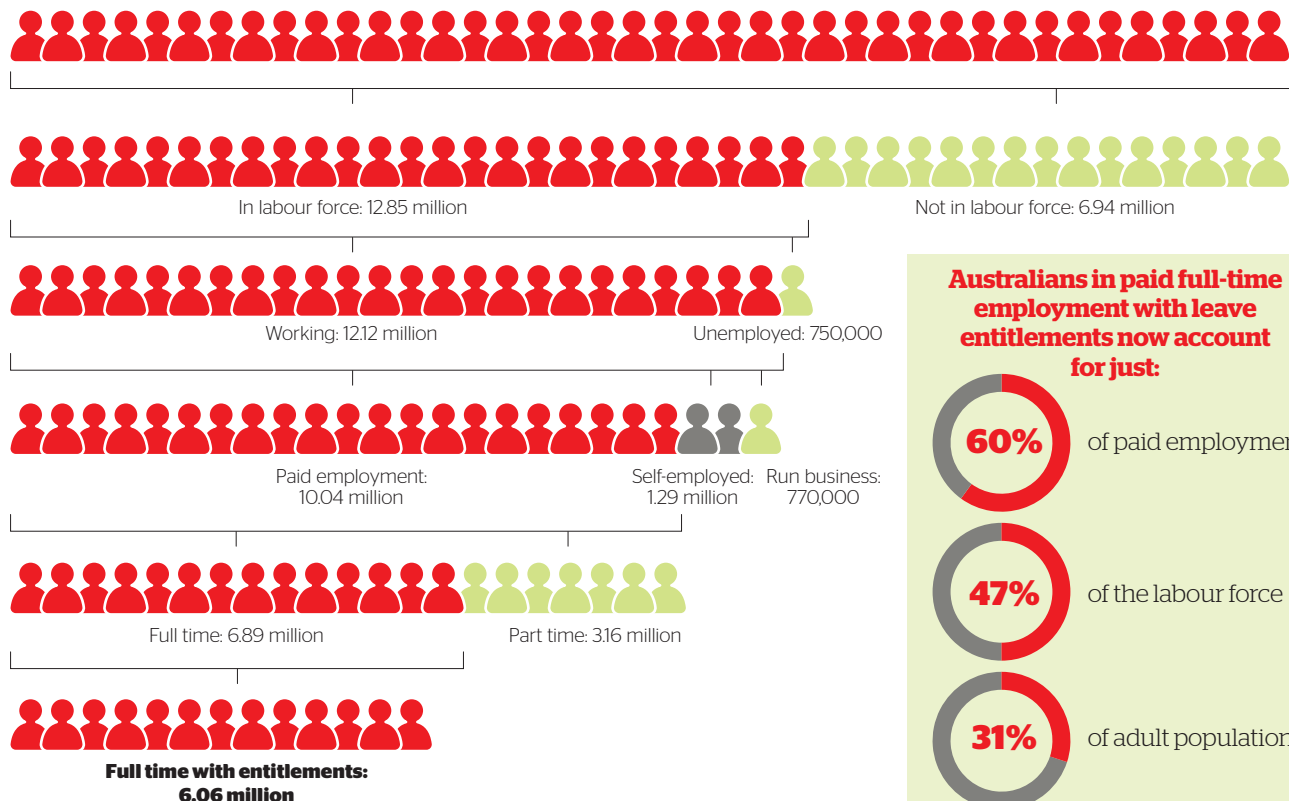
"Workers' rights have stayed still while the power of big business has increased and their models to make profit have adapted and expanded in ways we could not have imagined."

McManus accused the Turnbull government of "wilfully ignoring" a crisis for working people.

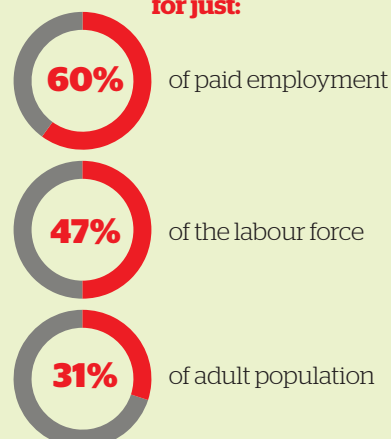
"I have never heard Malcolm Turnbull

Only 60% of jobs are permanent and full-time

Working age population: 19.79 million



Australians in paid full-time employment with leave entitlements now account for just:



It means I can commit myself to this community, this particular school, and give everything I have and not have to walk away.



Leanne Humes
Teacher



driving good teachers towards the private sector “where they can be offered job security and the respect that comes with it”.

Not to mention less stress.

“When you’re in temporary employment you get to the end of every year and start questioning where you’re going to be and what you’re going to be doing,” says Humes. “Will I have full-time work next year, will I be able to go for that mortgage I want, or will I be able to afford to maintain the mortgage that I have?”

Now that she has a permanent position, Humes is grateful to finally feel secure about where she’s going to be next year, and the year after that.

“It means I can commit myself to this community, this particular school, and give everything I have and not have to walk away,” she says.

“It’s a beautiful community out here, and to know I have the opportunity to stay and make a positive change, in whatever way I can, is really quite humbling.”

Case study

Home at last

Settling down in the central western New South Wales town of Condobolin wasn’t on Leanne Humes’ agenda when she began teaching. But after many twists and turns trying to find full-time employment as a primary teacher, the central coast resident decided to expand her horizons.

“I came out to Condobolin on a six-month contract at a primary school and I really enjoyed it,” says Humes.

So, when a permanent special education position became available at the local high school, she applied and was successful.

Humes says there’s a perception among teachers that if you move out west you’ll automatically gain permanency.

That’s not why she made the journey “although I was hopeful, to be honest.” Permanency, she adds, “isn’t what it used to be”.

“Most teachers start out in casual or contract positions these days and many continue in that way for years,” she says.

“It’s absolutely disgusting. There aren’t many professions in Australia where an individual completes four years’ university undergraduate – or more, I have friends who’ve done their masters and still don’t have permanent positions – and there’s no guarantee.”

And that sense of insecurity is

even mention insecure work or utter the word ‘casualisation’. Never. Not once,” she says.

“But insecure work dominates the lives of working families in every city, in every region, in every country town.”

The view that stable, decent work is hard to find in Australia today is backed up by labour market statistics (opposite), says Stanford.

You can join the movement for change at changetherules.org.au ●

We must do more to ensure that the framework of basic protections and rights is afforded to all, irrespective of how or where we work.



Jim Stanford
Centre for Future Work, Australia Institute

Visitor Opening Times | Thursday 7 June: 10am - 5pm | Friday 8 June: 9am - 4pm

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The disastrous dismantling of the TAFE sector by governments has been dispiriting for teachers and their students. Now, after years of campaigning to save the embattled sector, there's a glimmer or two of hope.



Turning the tide?

The most significant breakthrough came when the ALP nationally agreed that any future ALP government would guarantee two thirds vocational education funding to TAFE. This followed earlier commitments by the state ALP in NSW and then the ACT government. In addition, the state Labor in SA and Tasmania have committed to the 70 per cent funding guarantee, and the Tasmanian Liberal Government has also made the 70 per cent funding commitment. Recent budget announcements in Victoria also signal a welcome change in approach, and provide hope for the embattled TAFE system there.

Then the ALP announced that, if it wins the next federal election, there'll be an inquiry into post-secondary education within the first 100 days of coming to power.

It's a promise that has the potential to

"fundamentally redefine the architecture" of the TAFE system, says AEU federal TAFE secretary Pat Forward.

The wide-ranging inquiry would look at curriculum and pedagogy, quality, funding, competition and market reform and competency-based training. It would also review components of the marketised approach to VET vocational education that Forward says has destroyed TAFE teachers' professionalism and undermined their working conditions.

These welcome developments provide some hope for TAFE's future, says Forward. But she's not about to sit back and rest just yet. "There remains considerable work to do, however, in framing and advocating the policy that will give substance to the funding guarantee, and lead to increased funding for TAFE."

Disastrous privatisation

Privatisation of the vocational education and training sector has been disastrous for the TAFE system. Successive governments have reduced public funding for TAFE, which has threatened the sector's viability and led to college closures and campus amalgamations, the loss of teaching jobs, the reduction or elimination of vital courses, and fewer people completing trade apprenticeships, traineeships and diplomas.

As dodgy for-profit providers continue to grab the headlines with scandals and college closures, the AEU's Stop TAFE Cuts campaign has been working hard to rebuild community and political confidence in the TAFE system, raising awareness of the critical importance of TAFE colleges as providers of skills and knowledge in these challenging economic times.

If state governments are serious about meeting their infrastructure goals, they need a robust TAFE system.



As things stand, TAFE is no longer the comprehensive system it was in the mid-1970s. But John Pardy, senior lecturer in the Faculty of Education at Monash University, says it continues to do good work, and "people need to know about that, so they can value it".

"TAFE learning is more than just trade apprenticeships," says Pardy. "It's about giving people industry experiences, so they can have livelihoods. It's about knowing practice."

If state governments are serious about meeting their infrastructure goals, they need a robust TAFE system, says Pardy.

In the lead-up to the federal election, the Stop TAFE Cuts campaign will strengthen its arguments around the importance of a highly qualified, industrially secure and well-remunerated TAFE teaching workforce being at the centre of rebuilding the system. ●

Help celebrate TAFE

National TAFE Day will be held on Tuesday June 19, providing an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of our public TAFE system and to remind politicians that TAFE is too good to lose.

You can sign up as a TAFE supporter at stoptafecuts.com.au, follow the campaign on Twitter (@TAFECampaign) and check out Facebook (Stop TAFE Cuts) to hear more about National TAFE Day closer to the date.

With its award-winning resource centre and bilingual program, Yirrkala School is leading the way in how to affirm culture and identity while building a foundation for English literacy.

BY KRISTA MOGENSEN

Centring on identity

The breakthrough work of a resource centre in Australia's north-east Arnhem Land has won the Arthur Hamilton Award for Outstanding Contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education. Yirrkala School's Literature Production Centre produces multi-language print and digital resources for the bilingual school's students and coordinates its cultural program.

The centre supports the school's team of teachers through planning, resource selection, production and assessment, and provides IT support and mentoring.

Its staff produce all print, video and online resources a teacher might need in the local Yolŋu Matha languages including books, songs, activity sheets, play-based learning resources, handwriting books, dictionaries and translations.

It has embraced new technology, producing interactive ebooks for iPads, and this year is working with the University of Melbourne on a Yolŋu Matha phonics app.

The centre, established in 1974, is staffed by a teacher-linguist fluent in English and several Yolŋu Matha languages, a literature production supervisor / IT specialist, a multilingual senior literacy worker and two literacy workers who are Year 12 graduates of the bilingual program. The centre is also part of the mentorship program for Yolŋu Team Teachers undertaking Certificate IV in Education Support.

Valued culture

Yirrkala School's goal is to develop fluent 'both ways' literacy and enable its students to 'walk in both worlds'. This is dependent on first building strong Yolŋu identity, language and culture.

"Having strong language and strong

culture supports students' identity and wellbeing," says senior literacy worker Rärriwuy Marika. "It makes them feel proud and know their culture is valued."

Strong cultural identity and literacy in the local language creates the basis for students to successfully learn English.

"Setting down that strong foundation of literacy and oracy in their first language leads to more success in learning English as a second language," says literature production supervisor Jake Stockley.

The school's 190 students all speak Dhuwaya Yolŋu Matha at home and use it as their first language in class.

"Dhuwaya is a lingua franca in the community," says teacher-linguist Yalmay Yunupingu, "And we know all people learn best in their first language."

The school uses the highly successful and evidence-based staircase, or step, model of bilingual instruction, where a child begins their early schooling speaking and writing in their first language.

The use of English for teaching gradually increases throughout a child's school years. By Year 4, English is used 50 per cent of the day and by Years 11 and 12, English is used for teaching 90 per cent of the day. By Year 12, students are fluent in English as a second language and literate in their first language, with a number of students undertaking their Year 12 Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training.

The school also supports senior students to strengthen their clan languages, which they begin learning as they get older and go through initiation, says Marika.

"What we often do now is produce a book in Dhuwaya - the children's language - and, if that story was told in



The 2017 Yirrkala Literature Production Centre team: Jake Stockley, Bamurugu Mununggurr, Rärriwuy Marika and Yalmay Yunupingu.

Setting down that strong foundation of literacy and oracy in their first language leads to more success in learning English as a second language.



Jake Stockley
Literature production supervisor

a clan language, we will also produce a version in that language," says Stockley.

Under the school's both-ways Garma Maths curriculum, traditional Yolŋu metaphors and patterns are used to teach modern mathematics.

The school has a formal Learning on Country partnership with Dhimurru rangers who manage the country on behalf of the Yolŋu landowners. Students, teachers, rangers and elders work together to learn about their land, history and stories relating to country.

Profound metaphors

The centre provides planning space, resource production and management of resources for lessons.

There's a lot more to it than checking sentences and spelling. "It's about going through the process to make sure the work is appropriate for Yolŋu students," says Marika.

The centre uses the profound Yolŋu metaphors of *Nathu* (the cycad nut) and *Yambirrpa* (the fish trap) to share beliefs about the way Yolŋu people live and work.

The *Nathu* metaphor describes how to remove the deadly poison from a cycad nut so it is safe to grind for making sacred bread. It has an inherent message about the importance of process.

The *Yambirrpa* metaphor, about working together to build a shallow rock wall on the beach to trap fish, reflects a culture built on understanding and working with the environment.

Creating culturally appropriate learning resources for Yolŋu children follows the same careful process.

"We ensure they are correct, appropriately levelled and consistent with a Yolŋu worldview," says Stockley. "We work together to make a bilingual

On country: Yalmay Yunupingu teaches students how to collect paperbark for shelter and cooking as part of a Galtha Rom Workshop.



education that respects Yolŋu knowledge and ways of learning."

With four decades of experience, the teachers at Yirrkala know bilingual education is the right pathway for their students. "Yolŋu children speak and think in Yolŋu Matha," says Yunupingu. "To educate them in any other way would put them at an even greater disadvantage than they already are.

"Non-Yolŋu Matha speakers should consider that, if they were educated in a language other than their first language, how well would they do?" says Yunupingu. ●

Krista Mogensen is a freelance writer.

Arthur Hamilton Award

The AEU's annual Arthur Hamilton Award is in honour of Arthur Hamilton, a proud Palawa man, educator and union activist who died in 2004.

For more information about the history of Yirrkala School, see Dhanbul Djamarrkuli at vimeo.com/232279997

We catch up with the three new starts we're following this year – a principal and two teachers – and find out that the reality of their new roles has hit home.

BY NIC BARNARD AND MARGARET PATON

The real deal



Where the buck stops
Jennie-Marie Gorman

The intense workload of making a start as a principal hasn't dimmed Jennie-Marie Gorman's enthusiasm for the job.

HECTIC. THAT'S HOW Jennie-Marie Gorman describes her first term as a principal, at Sheidow Park School, in Adelaide.

In the 15 minutes she talks to *Australian Educator*, a dozen emails appear in her inbox. There are 1,000 children, parents and staff to get to know, briefings to attend, paperwork to complete. And a completely new educational philosophy for her to come to grips with in the growing primary school's Steiner stream.

Gorman has been a teacher for 17 years, and an assistant and deputy principal for several years, but the principal's job brings a whole new level of responsibility.

Probably about week three, I went 'Yep – this is the job for me.'



Jennie-Marie Gorman
Sheidow Park School, SA

"The minute I get out of the car [in the morning], I'm conscious I'm the principal. I've got my principal's hat on until I get back in the car at the end of the day," she says.

Even the education departmental briefings she used to attend as a deputy feel different, with the realisation that "it's me who has to make sure we implement whatever we're supposed to be doing. The buck didn't stop with me before."

Having arrived from nearby Darlington Primary, Gorman has her ideas and ambitions for Sheidow Park. But her first term has been largely about getting to know the school and its community.

"The hardest thing about moving school, whether as a teacher or in leadership, is going from knowing everyone in the school to knowing nobody," she says. "When you have 350 students, plus parents, plus grandparents, that's up to 1,000 people you're trying to meet."

The reality of the job means the first parents she met were those of "the naughty kids", but she has been meeting more during daily after-school duty and says most have been very welcoming. Elections were necessary for the

NEW PRINCIPAL



Jennie-Marie Gorman
Sheidow Park School,
Adelaide, SA

.....
Previously assistant
principal at Darlington
Primary, SA

NEW TEACHER



Jesse Weston

*Baynton West Primary,
Karratha, WA*

.....
Previously a youth worker

10 parent seats on the school council.

She has also been getting into classrooms regularly ("I want teachers to know it's not judgmental – just part of the work I have to do"), with the Steiner stream as her first port of call.

"Steiner education is something I didn't know anything about before I came [here], so I've been working with those teachers to get to know the philosophy and how things work in their rooms. Because it's quite different from mainstream teaching.

"From their point of view, it was important that I was open to the Steiner stream. It's really important for the school to be one school. That's something we worked on from day one. That we're not Sheidow Park Steiner stream and Sheidow Park mainstream."

The education department provides every new principal with a mentor. Gorman says her regular talks with her mentor, a retired regional director with a wide network of contacts, have been invaluable.

With a leadership team of only herself and a deputy, the workload can be intense. The first week after the summer break left her "more tired than I can ever remember in my life", but she's back into school fitness and says she's pretty good at looking after herself.

On Wednesdays she leaves at 4pm for a dance class. "That's something I do for myself once a week."

Still, there have been a few late nights, the odd "sticky moment" and some chasing after wandering reception students. But so far so good.

"I love it," she says. "Probably about week three, I went 'Yep – this is the job for me.'"

"Every time I speak to my education director, I tell her I'm still smiling."

Former youth worker Jesse Weston prioritises daily one-to-one conversations with his students.



Pain and gain

Jesse Weston

New teacher Jesse Weston is getting to grips with the realities of wrangling a class on a daily basis.

JESSE WESTON SUMS up his first few weeks teaching at Baynton West Primary School in Karratha in WA as "full-on, a lot of figuring things out, stumbling, falling, getting back up again and hoping for the best".

The idea of short-term pain for long-term gain is very poignant for him, he says.

"All this stuff I had to do in my first term of teaching – like creating

hundreds of laminated signs for my classroom – I'm probably not going to have to do again. Or if I do, it may not have to be all at once, or I'll just have to add and tweak."

Weston, 28, was a youth worker before taking on his current role, at the helm of a Year 4 class of 23 children in the city of 17,000 people on the coast of the Pilbara region of northern Western Australia.

I see teachers who are currently hitting their stride and it's obvious that they love their jobs.



Jesse Weston
Baynton West Primary, WA

"Someone told me the hardest part of teaching is unlearning your entire degree," he says. "I didn't quite believe that until now. As Socrates said, 'The only thing I know is that I know nothing.'"

His degree was focused on theory, including the theory of learning.

"Those theories are great, but unless you can manage a class and get students to complete activities, theory is a secondary or third thing. Engagement and behaviour management are where it's at."

To encourage his students' "sense of meaningful engagement", he has been having personal conversations with each of them every day.

Informal mentor

Weston has had the benefit of 'point-of-need' mentoring, with the concertina wall between his and his mentor's classrooms staying open.

"We're teaching our separate classes, but at the same time I'm listening to what she's doing and thinking, 'Hey I should have done that.' It was initially daunting, but it works well.

"She has also said to me, 'That was different to how I'd do it, but I like the way you did it.' It's informal supervision."

Rather than having a formal weekly sit-down, Weston and his mentor have 10 to 15 conversations throughout the week about how his teaching is going.

His hardest day was after a relief teacher filled in while he was doing professional development.

"The kids were like, 'Ooh, we're going to test Mr Weston again.' It took a whole day to get them back to the point where they weren't doing that. It's not that the relief teacher didn't do a good job. It's just that they did a different job."

Social side

When *Australian Educator* previously spoke to Weston, he said he intended exploring the Pilbara region, but he hasn't actually managed to set foot outside Karratha.

"My eating habits are a lot better, but I've been to the gym only twice in six weeks. I leave for school at 7am and come home at 5pm, and I'm exhausted."

Although he lives in an apartment block with four other graduate teachers from the same school, they rarely have time to catch up.

"Last night was the first time in six weeks I've had people over to drink some wine and watch a movie."

But he's looking forward to when he's more settled in his teaching role, in maybe two or three years' time.

"I see teachers who are currently hitting their stride and it's obvious that they love their jobs."



Bicycling to a rollercoaster

Kate Smith

Kate Smith is discovering new strategies to deal with the everyday dramas of secondary school teaching.

TEACHING IS SLOWLY "falling into place" for mature-age entrant to the profession Kate Smith, but mental tiredness is a constant companion.

"I'm prioritising, getting to know what can be left to the next day and making a point of looking after my personal wellbeing," says the 38-year-old of her first full-time permanent year, teaching English and drama at Epping Secondary College, in northern Melbourne.

She cycles to and from work with a co-worker and often drops into Fitzroy pool for a dip. As a guitarist-singer with a band, she rehearses weekly and performs monthly.

"On my quiet nights at home, I'll just turn everything off, read or play guitar and think about lyrics," says Smith, who is mostly teaching Year 8 students.

"I think about writing in the same way I try to teach - experimenting and playing with it. I want to cultivate that in my classroom."

She meets weekly with the other English teachers. The college has about nine classes in Year 8 alone.

"A teacher who has been there the longest has driven the scope and

You can deliver content until the end of the day, but teaching is about engagement.



Kate Smith
Epping Secondary College, VIC



there and not there in their eyes.

"You can deliver content until the end of the day, but teaching is about engagement."

When one of her drama students was angry, Smith told her not to direct it at the teacher, but to channel the energy in the performance piece she was developing.

"I wasn't going to tell her to be calm. I said 'Be louder' and gave her a feisty part of the text to work with. She warmed to that idea and I'm looking forward to seeing what she produces."

Tensions rising

Smith says she has had intense moments of her own.

"There was an incident at school with tensions rising in a group of kids, and I was there by myself before other teachers arrived and I had to diffuse it. Riding home, the stress of the moment came out and I was quite distressed."

Next morning she spoke to coordinators and the head of middle school to debrief, which helped.

Teaching is swings and roundabouts, and a rollercoaster, she says.

"Sometimes you want to cry and sometimes it's hilarious, but it's where I'm meant to be."

Smith recently finished writing a school production to be performed at a nearby arts centre. It's a cabaret built on vignettes and songs that relate to what the students study in class.

She is allocating different sections to the music and drama teachers she is working with and encouraging as many students as she can to be a part of it.

"We'll really get kicking on it in term 2." ●

Nic Barnard and Margaret Paton
are both freelance writers.

sequence based on what she has taught before. As a group, we teachers check in, share resources and mirror each other a bit. It has been great to have that touchstone.

"I've been spending a lot of time talking to coordinators, figuring out individual plans not just for problematic kids, but for kids who are questioning why others might get away with something or do different work. I'm learning how to differentiate teaching on the fly without making it really noticeable to other students.

"I have to think about how to engage them, get them back. They have so much potential, but at 13 or 14 years old, they're seeing what's

NEW TEACHER

i

Kate Smith

*Epping Secondary
College, Melbourne, VIC*

.....
Previously a performance
artist, talent scout,
TV casting agent,
singer-songwriter

A new program is being developed for recognising and addressing the widespread problem of teachers and students who have maths anxiety.

BY JANINE MACE

Banishing the number nerves



Do you get that butterflies-in-the-stomach feeling when you think about reconciling your bank statement or using algebra to solve a tricky problem? Have you ever watched students disengage during a maths lesson, or had a good student 'forget' to do their maths homework?

That's maths anxiety at work.

"Maths anxiety is the feeling of tension and worry some people feel when doing a maths task," says Dr Sarah Buckley, of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

It's not something that should be ignored, she says. It creates very real problems for teachers and students.

"While the full extent of the problem is unknown, we do know that maths

anxiety is very common in schools and it's something many schools are interested in addressing."

At the broadest level, anxiety reduces student learning. But the power of maths anxiety extends far beyond a simple sense of nervousness.

"On average, students who have it tend to have a lower level of maths achievement," says Buckley. "And maths



anxious teachers tend to use more traditional teaching methods and are less confident in their maths teaching practice.

"There is also some evidence that maths anxious teachers may transmit their negativity about maths to their students."

Maths anxiety can shut the door on maths opportunities for both students and teachers.

"The biggest consequence is maths avoidance, which means maths anxious students may avoid their homework and steer clear of maths subjects or careers with a maths component. Maths anxious teachers will often try to avoid teaching maths wherever possible," says Buckley.

Victorian pilot

In collaboration with researchers from Curtin University in Western Australia and the University of Limerick in Ireland, ACER researchers have developed a new professional learning program that addresses maths anxiety among primary teachers.

The pilot program of the initiative, which is funded by a Sidney Myer Grant, will run in 12 Victorian primary schools from July to December this year. Between one and five teachers from grades 3 to 6 and the maths / numeracy coordinator at each school will participate in the training.

The pilot builds on maths anxiety workshops for preservice teachers undertaken by Buckley and Dr Kate Reid through the Australian Research Council's Science of Learning Research Centre and draws on research from psychology, neuroscience and education.

The program is designed to help participants increase their understanding of maths anxiety, how it

There is some evidence that maths anxious teachers may transmit their negativity about maths to their students.

disrupts the learning process and how it can influence long-term behaviour in relation to maths.

"We target maths anxiety directly, so we can take avoidance out of the picture," says Buckley.

There is face-to-face training and webinars, with opportunities for reflection after participants use strategies to address maths anxiety in the classroom.

Multiple strategies will help teachers deal with different personalities and different situations. "Teachers need to have lots of tools in their toolbox to deal with this problem," says Buckley.

Maths coordinators have been included so they can lead the program across their schools and train others.

The program, which has an inbuilt research component, with a future roll-out to other schools in mind, is also designed to help teachers who aren't maths anxious but may have maths anxious students in their classes. ●

Janine Mace is a freelance writer.

UK study findings

The Centre for Neuroscience in Education at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom is due to report soon on a study investigating the causes of maths anxiety.

The study is expected to identify the triggers of maths anxiety, to understand coping mechanisms and look at the links between anxiety and performance. The centre hopes the information will be useful in determining how maths anxiety can be avoided or alleviated and how positive attitudes towards mathematics can be promoted.



Dr Sarah Buckley
Australian Council for Educational Research

Education International's chief Asia-Pacific coordinator, Shashi Balasingh, talks about growing up as a girl in India, the importance of strong unionism and why she's optimistic about the future.

BY KRISTA MOGENSEN

In a world of working wonders

Shashi Balasingh remembers how hard it was for her to become a university student and teacher in India. Three decades ago, cultural norms didn't value the education of girls. Her brothers had to help persuade her parents to allow her to pursue graduate and postgraduate studies.

Drawn to teaching, Balasingh completed an education degree several years after marrying. She had to stare down opposition from a society that didn't approve of daughters-in-law working outside the home. When she became a primary school teacher in 1984, Balasingh relished the opportunity to be her own person and move beyond a solely domestic life.

In 1986, following a trip with other teachers to Nepal for a biennial education unions conference, she started helping her local union with Hindi-English language work.

Her 'real' union career began when she was invited to Australia to attend a one-month course at the Trade Union Training Authority in Wodonga, Victoria, thanks to a proviso that two of the five Indian national federation places must go to women.

Despite the challenges of understanding the Australian accent, the long, intensive days were a turning point that gave her confidence and the understanding that unionism mattered.

Gender equality focus

Back home, Balasingh's new union involvement was tough going. "Women were in the minority in the Delhi state union and they were undermined or treated as subservient."

She resigned from teaching and embarked on a full-time union career to focus on gender equality. "I have personally experienced the

discrimination, the violence, the threats. I can understand the pain, difficulties and challenges women face."

Balasingh was a regional coordinator at Education International (EI) from 1993 until 2013, when she became the chief Asia-Pacific regional coordinator responsible for five sub-regions including the South Pacific and countries as diverse as India, Nepal, Myanmar, Iraq, Indonesia and the Philippines.

The overall region has 52 per cent of the 263 million children in the world who are out of school, and 46 per cent of the world's illiterate young people. In many of these countries there are conflicts and persecution, extreme poverty and grave violations of human rights. "The realities are stark," she says.

EI's standard for funding public education is 6 per cent of GDP, but many developing countries invest no more than 2.5 to 3 per cent, she says. Privatisation is undermining public education in countries such as India and Indonesia, and the use of contract and para-teachers is becoming more common.

Nonetheless, Balasingh is optimistic about the future. As "proof that strong unions can work wonders", teachers in India now have maternity protection benefits; women's networks prosper in many regions; and there are quotas for female representation at all union decision-making levels.

Girls' enrolment in schools has increased, and although retention rates and learning outcomes are still a challenge, improvements are visible. "Things have changed for millions of daughters who now have better opportunities."

In many places, unions have become larger and more unified, and therefore stronger. She also cites the role of

EI and collective unions in getting education recognised as a United Nations Sustainable Development Goal.

In Balasingh's own life - "a long journey of constant struggle" - she's also seen the wheel turn.

"I now see my daughters as successful and independent young women. They are ready to face any challenge." ●

Krista Mogensen is a freelance writer.



Shashi Balasingh is optimistic about the role of unions.

Things have changed for millions of daughters who now have better opportunities.



Shashi Balasingh
EI chief Asia-Pacific coordinator

Great leaders focus on financial success



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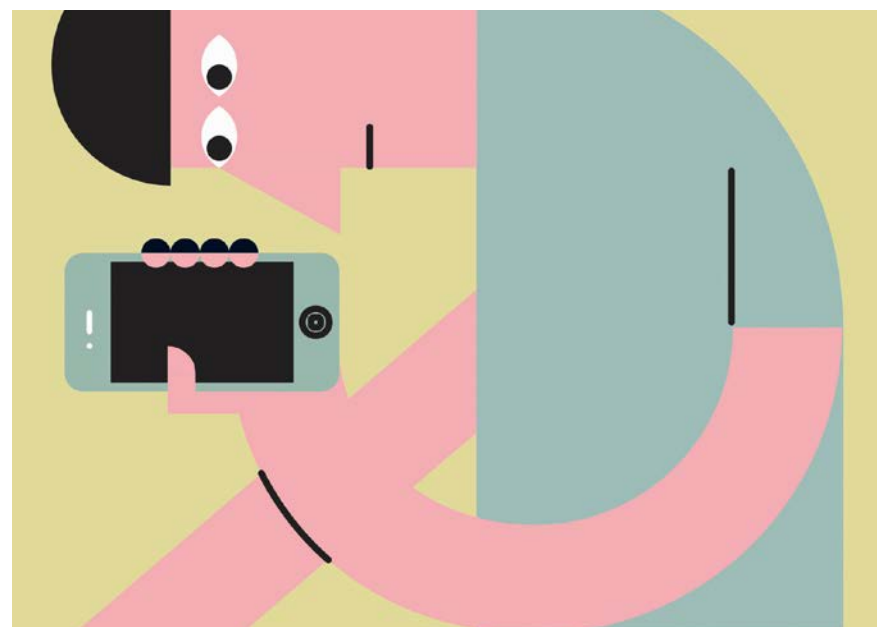
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With debate continuing to rage over the risks and rewards of mobiles for children, *Australian Educator* takes a look at the arguments for and against phones at school.

BY CYNTHIA KARENA

Phones in class: attraction and distraction

Mobile phones at school are a double-edged sword. They can be a useful teaching tool, but students can be distracted by frequently checking for messages. So, is there a place for mobiles in the classroom? Two principals with very different views explain their reasoning.



Dealing with misuse is simply a part of the school's normal discipline policy.



Chris Presland
Principal, St Clair High
School, NSW

FOR

There will be no phone ban for students at St Clair High School, in Sydney.

Principal Chris Presland isn't a fan of bans in general. "For example, we know there's a problem with speeding and deaths on the road, but we don't say the answer is to ban driving," he says.

"It's not the use of mobile phones, but the abuse of mobile phones that is the problem."

Federal education minister Simon Birmingham wants to ban phones in schools and he has linked their use in schools with suicide and cyberbullying, says Presland.

"We know it's to do with parental supervision as well as teachers. But we won't reduce cyberbullying by banning phones, because there are other mobile devices they can use.

"Since [then prime minister] Tony Abbott cut the laptop program across the country, we lost the guarantee that every student can have a laptop. For a lot of students, a mobile phone is the main tool they have to access applications that other students take for granted."

Students at St Clair use their phones for class research and filming for class projects, and to access educational YouTube videos.

One class assignment had students researching the periodic elements and designing a QR code [a matrix barcode like those on grocery items] with information about each element embedded in the code. They pasted the codes around the school so other students could access the

We are losing the ability to connect with each other on a personal level.



Pitsa Binnion
Principal, McKinnon
Secondary College, VIC

information through an app on their phone.

"Students carry phones around with them, not tablets, which makes it easy for them to check out what's in a QR code," says Presland.

"Using mobile phones is not always the way to go, but educational applications are lost simply by banning them."

Presland concedes that phones can be a distraction, but says it's their misuse that needs attention.

"Dealing with misuse is simply a part of the school's normal discipline policy. If a student misuses their phone, for example for cyberbullying, they are dealt with under the normal school disciplinary policy.

"It's the same if a student fails to follow a teacher's directive regarding putting a phone away. It's classified as disobedience.

"So, in essence, we don't differentiate for phone misuse as distinct from any other form of misbehaviour. It's part of the broader picture of respect."



Principal Chris Presland
from St Clair High School
in NSW believes mobiles
can be positively used
for learning.

AGAINST

At the start of the year, McKinnon Secondary College, in Melbourne, banned mobile phones during school hours.

"The idea behind the ban is to make class time more effective," says principal Pitsa Binnion.

Students themselves say they find their phones a distraction, pulling them out constantly to check the time or notifications and messages, says Binnion.

When she looked at confiscated student phones, the number of notifications was "astounding – around 40 to 50 in an afternoon!"

Some were from parents who send text messages when they shouldn't be contacting students during school time, except through the front office, she says.

"So, with all these distractions, why do we allow phones in the classroom? We've done our research. We looked at how many hours we waste on phones and how much we're addicted to them. We are losing the ability to connect with each other on a personal level."

Binnion says there is no educational disadvantage for students in not having their mobile phone in the classroom.

"It's a digital world, but phones are not being used for learning. Students are constantly checking them for things other than education.

"Every student has a Google tablet where they can access apps. The tablets have everything they need, without the distractions of a phone.

"If a teacher wants to specifically use phones for a lesson, they can ask students to bring them in."

Students whose phones are confiscated must see the principal before getting them back.



Victoria's McKinnon
Secondary College
principal Pitsa Binnion
thinks phones are a
distraction for students.

"Some are in tears," says Binnion, "but we have a conversation and it helps them to think about why they need access to a phone at all times. How does it help them?"

The ban includes carrying phones in the playground.

"Since the ban, we've had more students actually playing in the playground – playing ball games, having conversations – instead of all heads down, looking at screens.

"The classroom is a nicer place without the continual distractions of phones.

"Students are developing the ability to navigate their way through their reliance on phones. They themselves are saying that no mobile phones in class is helping them concentrate more because they're not always checking messages."●

Cynthia Karena is a freelance writer.

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My best app



CENDALL SLATTERY

Wudinna Area School,
South Australia

An English, history, and media teacher by trade, Cendall Slattery is now in a leadership position where she helps teachers one-on-one or in small groups to design and plan "deeply engaging" lessons.

Based at Wudinna Area School, a small school situated in a rural area on the Eyre Peninsula in South Australia, Slattery works with teachers in other country schools.

"Technology is important for me to be able to communicate with these teachers. Some are as far as 250 km away. So technology bridges that physical gap."

Apps are part of the technology mix and they give students the time to explore concepts on their own, she adds.

"There are so many different apps that can achieve different goals. Apps can help teachers to change the way they teach, from the old style of skill and drill to a 'flipped' classroom.

"There is a movement towards students asking the questions, finding the answers and reporting back, potentially on a global scale, and apps make that possible. The way students go about their work has changed," she says.



Lightbot

(Android, iOS; \$4.50)

Lightbot is a programming puzzle game that uses logic to solve problems by guiding a robot to light up tiles using programming commands.

"It gets students into coding," says Slattery.

"You can start young students with directional language, such as forward, back, turn, and then progress to more complicated concepts such as loops and branching."

Slattery also uses Lightbot as a diagnostic tool. "You can start to see when most of the students are stopping at the same level. This is a good point to start teaching."



Explain Everything

(Android, iOS, Windows; free)

This is another collaboration app. It's like a cross between an interactive whiteboard and Power Point, says Slattery.

"Students can narrate their learning using images and text or create a mini movie," she says.

"It's useful in a flipped learning environment because teachers can also narrate a story with a front facing camera, so their picture is in a corner of the screen. It creates a more personalised experience for the student because they can see the teacher narrating the story."



Padlet

(Android, iOS, Windows; free)

Padlet is a digital canvas where students and teachers can embed photos, videos, record an interview, write text or upload documents. It's designed for easy collaboration and sharing.

"It's like an online bulletin board for the whole year, where updates, announcements and resources can be shared," says Slattery.

She also uses Padlet as an online brainstorming tool. "Twenty students can brainstorm an idea in five seconds flat. I like this app because it creates a safe space for brainstorming if students are reluctant to get noticed. They can feel safe in posting without judgment in anonymous posts when they are putting forward their ideas."

Comments can be moderated, and teachers and students can access this online bulletin board from many devices such as phones, tablets, and laptops.

"It's a place where students can store resources and ideas, as they don't tend to write things down much these days."



Cendall's tips

Teachers need to keep in mind the legal side of things when using apps. For example, always look at the age recommendations.

If you're not sure about using an app, just dive right in and have a play. Also aim for apps that allow for students to create content, rather than just consume it. I suggest using 80 per cent 'creation' apps and 20 per cent 'consumer' apps. If students are engaged in creation, then the distractions of other things on student devices are not a problem.

Recent advances in brain research have thrown the book at how best to teach students in Years 5 to 9.

BY MARGARET PATON

Changing the capacity to learn

Our understanding of how the brain functions has advanced more in the past five years than in the previous 3,000.

In the new third edition of the book *Teaching Middle Years: Rethinking curriculum, pedagogy and assessment* (Allen & Unwin), Professor Donna Pendergast and her co-editors, Katherine Main and Nan Bahr, play catch-up with the latest research developments.

The implication is that in the crucial middle years – commonly from Years 5 to 9 – teachers' jobs just became a lot more complex.

Teachers can find comfort, or fear, in hearing there's no single correct way to teach or learn during these years, says Pendergast, dean and head of the School of Education and Professional Studies at Griffith University, in Queensland.

The challenge is the magnitude of physical, psychosocial, emotional and cognitive changes, which are "second to none to those experienced in the first two years of life", she says.

The book has chapters by 14 writers, with their standout themes including teachers' roles in middle-school reform, cognitive engagement, and the lifelong learning skills students can be taught.

"We're learning all the time as educators and teachers, so we have to have an open mind to be able to

change our pedagogies," says Pendergast. "There's been a genuine shift in the past five years about what traits make us professional educators, [with] a greater focus on being reflective and using an evidence base around our practices. These are core in the way teachers now work."

There is more knowledge about the effect of teacher practice than there has ever been before, she says.

Classroom reforms

Rather than just take on board top-down reforms in their schools, middle teachers can effect change in their own classrooms, says Pendergast.

"The classroom is the most powerful site because it's about you as an educator and a student as a learner coming together to influence the way of thinking about learning.

"It's not about content. It's never about content. It's about influencing the capacity to enable others to learn," says Pendergast.

If you don't have a deep understanding of why you're experimenting with your pedagogy, you risk a reduction in students' engagement and learning.

Model approach

Teachers are part of the reform picture, but for sustainable, long-term improvements, it needs to be a whole-school effort.

Look at where you give students the opportunity to be self-regulatory in what they are doing, taking control of their own learning, setting their own goals...



Professor Donna Pendergast
Griffith University



Australian Educator

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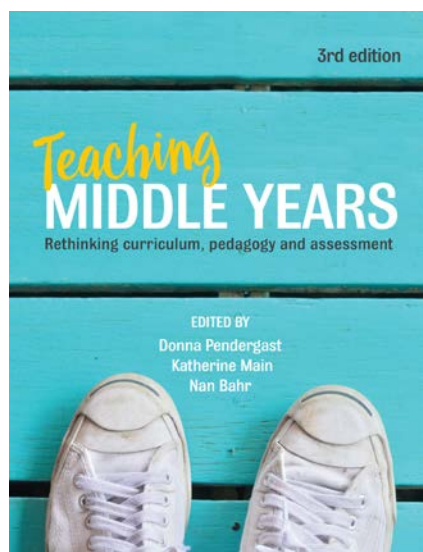
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Teaching Middle Years: Rethinking curriculum, pedagogy and assessment (Allen & Unwin, \$59.99) is available at www.allenandunwin.com.au

The Educational Change Model for the Middle Years, developed by Pendergast and her team of researchers in 2005, is one approach now underway, in all 258 state high schools in Queensland. The model takes between seven and 17 years to initiate, develop and consolidate.

The reform has led to more team teaching, using themes rather than teaching the curriculum in silos, and to more opportunities to instil in students lifelong learning skill sets. The schools involved are already seeing better NAPLAN results, stronger teacher-student relationships and smoother transitions between year levels.

Cognitive engagement

Engagement – the bugbear of teachers – can be split into emotional, behavioural and cognitive components. However, cognitive engagement subsumes all, says Pendergast, because it includes the key elements of high-order thinking, understanding, making learning authentic, building self-regulation, and agency. These are handy competencies for lifelong learning, too.

"It's really up to us to cognitively engage young people because the middle years is where they're set up for life," she says. "Educators need to look beyond the class and learning that's taking place to see how that fits into the overall learning needs of the students.

It's like a world view around your class."

"Look at where you give students the opportunity to be self-regulatory in what they are doing, taking control of their own learning, setting their own goals, how they can push themselves to achieve more, understanding how learning takes place. They are the skill sets they need."

For example, where educators might set up a learning experience about the nutritional value of food by identifying the three main food groups, an issues-based approach could be adopted instead by brainstorming with students on the subject of how to make the world 'food literate' or ensuring food security in the developing world.

"You open the discussion around values, unpacking deep knowledge around food and the world, and you connect to literacy," says Pendergast. "Having a theme, idea or concept to hook into can create a powerful vehicle for deep learning."

The guns-in-schools debate in the United States is an example of middle-school students making powerful public statements.

"It's about action. Not just thinking about it but creating change where some of our mature world leaders simply don't have the capacity to think through the complexity of these issues," says Pendergast. ●

Margaret Paton is a freelance writer.

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Award-winning teacher Prue Gill's love of her job extends to research and helping others to be better teachers.

BY MARGARET PATON

Inspired and invigorated

PRUE GILL SAYS SHE comes from a family of teachers – “I have a gazillion aunts who taught” – but she's the only one of 25 grandchildren to have taken up the profession.

“I was the only sucker,” says the executive English teacher at Lanyon High School, in the ACT, who was the ACT's Secondary Teacher of the Year in 2013. “I thought teaching was something I could do. Working with children, helping them, being empathetic.”

She's in her 12th year at Lanyon High, which covers years 7 to 10. She also teaches history and geography, but not this year.

“English is my favourite. I've done some writing for Reading Australia and I work with our teachers across the board in all subject areas to develop their students' literacy. I tell those teachers I'll support them and help them with the class, but they, as the science, woodwork or whatever teacher, need to teach the literacy in their classroom.”

Guinea pigs

Gill was one of seven teachers from her school who completed an online masters in new learning and new literacies from the University of Illinois, in the United States, in 2010. They were the guinea pigs, so to speak, for the degree.

“I needed to learn more in uptaking digital technology. Just putting a worksheet online for students isn't it, and the course came at a perfect time. I did it at school during school time, with the school's support.”

Along with other secondary teachers, Gill is now doing on-the-job action research and she has worked with a developer to create online programs for the feeder primary schools.

She was lead certified with the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership in 2016 and has had some of her

Executive teacher Prue Gill teaches English, as well as history and geography, at Lanyon High School in the ACT.

writing published in books about technology and literacy.

She says the degree also inspired her to encourage peer feedback among students.

“I've taught a Year 10 class on and off since the students were in Year 7 and they are now automatically giving feedback to each other. When I put up a post and ask them to respond at home or school, they know they have to write three sentences to two or three of their peers, which amounts to having a conversation about learning.”

Gill also posts about what the class will cover that day, the next day or next week. As a result, the students think about learning outside the classroom rather than just during class.

Her next move is to use technology to help teachers practise differentiation learning and to embrace team teaching more.

Natural process

Gill took time off to have two children and says she was always excited about getting back to work because it invigorates her.

“I know many people are leaving teaching, and losing good teachers often annoys me. We have too much on our plate at times, but that's where my role as executive teacher comes in – to make sure that doesn't happen.”

She stresses to other teachers the need to always ask why they are doing what they are doing. “I say to them, ‘Don't do that if it doesn't come back to improving the learning of your students.’ When items fall off your to-do list, it's a natural process. Perhaps they didn't need to be done.” ●

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We have too much on our plate at times, but that's where my role as executive teacher comes in...



Prue Gill
Lanyon High School, ACT



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