

Issue No. 15

7 Apr 2015

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Since the beginning of the school year there has been intense focus on domestic violence and the effects on our young people and society as a whole.

APFACTS has been working for many years on the issue of bullying in schools and been a strong advocate for family school partnership in education. The important link and partnership between home and school is sometimes not seamless and yet it needs to be. There is certainly a continuum between aggression and tragic deaths like Tara Costigan's that leave her family and three children without their devoted parent. One Australian woman dead every week is not a statistic any of us should be comfortable with and each of us have a role to play to enable our children to have healthy lives and communities.

Our lives are complex and ever so busy but our kids learn from the many role models in their modern life - homes, schools, peers, TV, games, sports and even aggressive behaviour from leaders such as politicians in Parliament. This newsletter contains information about some mental health programs and resources that are offered in schools and for parents, please look for those important times to have conversations with your children and look out for programs that promote partnerships for youth wellbeing - it is vital that we all work together on these issues.

I was also deeply saddened by the news last week of a structure built for an ACT child with autism. While I am sure the two investigations will bring forward the facts, it highlights once again the issues surrounding sufficient funding, training, learning and behavioural plans of students with disabilities and the lack of a coherent national 'standard' that can help these students realise their potential.

As parents we are the strongest advocates for our children - their aspirations, their educational needs and wellbeing. We are part of vital communities in our schools and together we can achieve a great deal for our children.

Charuni Weerasooriya

APFACTS President

PROGRESSING PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN THE ACT

The ACT is spearheading the nation in progressing parental engagement in education.

In 2013, APFACTS took to the ACT Education Minister, Joy Burch the idea of a pilot project into Parental Engagement that could determine a shared

definition and build Australia's first benchmark with the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY).

The project that commenced in 2014 is a collaboration between the ACT

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President's Message

Welcome to the APFACTS Term 1, 2015 new letter.

We encourage you to be part of the conversation around education issues, join us on:

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Executive Committee members

[Charuni Weerasooriya](#)
President

[Paul Crowley](#) - Vice-President

[Cato Blackford](#) - Vice President

[Stuart Blackford](#)
Treasurer

[Jeannette Fierro](#)
Secretary

Government, the Association of Independent Schools of the ACT, Catholic Education Office, APFACTS, ACT P&C Council and Catholic School Parents Canberra & Goulburn.

In early February 2015 the ACT Education Minister launched a series of publications relating to the project which can be found [here](#).

“Parent engagement is a key driver of student success as it helps to develop pro-learning aspirations and behavior as well as increasing the achievement and wellbeing of children.

APFACTS is excited the research further directs our focus to the factors and conditions required for parent engagement in student learning – an expansion on the long held views of parent involvement (on school grounds).

The key challenge ahead (after the next phase of the project) will be for parents and schools to review current practices, roles and beliefs about learning to re-align with the evidence whilst taking into account that time pressures and technology play a bigger role in our lives. This enables learning environments that benefit students and also build parents capacity and efficacy to connect to their children’s learning and encourages work in partnership with schools to do it,” said
Charuni Weerasooriya, APFACTS President.

Read APFACTS Press Release, [click here](#). Have you checked out our website lately? There are some great resources and reports on parent engagement, [click here](#).

Do you know of an event or resource that non-government schools should know about?

Email us at:
admin@apfacts.org.au

AUSTRALIAN EARLY DEVELOPMENT CENSUS

What the Australian Early Development Census tells us about children

In 2009 Australia became the first country in the world to collect national data on the developmental health of all children starting school. The 2015 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) will be the third national measure of developmental outcomes in children in their first year of school. As Australia’s only census of children in their early years, it is invaluable to schools, governments and communities because it builds a comprehensive national picture of children’s health and wellbeing over half a decade.

Early experiences shape a child’s future

Evidence tells us that a person’s life successes, health and emotional wellbeing are rooted in early childhood experiences. The five areas used in the AEDC to measure development provide a common language to understand what works in different communities, and identify where families may need support to keep children on-track during the early years:

- physical health and wellbeing
- social competence
- emotional maturity
- language and cognitive skills (school-based); and
- communication skills and general knowledge.

More than half a million children have been measured and the number of children found to be developmentally on-track increased by four per cent over the two collections. The number of children found to be developmentally vulnerable has decreased but is still large at 22 per cent.

Using data to help children and families

Census results are used in a range of contexts to tailor class programs to children’s needs, plan services and evaluate policies, and target support for children and families.

The AEDC website features many examples of actions and initiatives informed by local AEDC data - both at the school and community level.

At a primary school in Canberra, the AEDC results showed levels of developmental vulnerability among its children who spoke English as a second language in the area of physical health and wellbeing. The school partnered with a community centre to run a dedicated playgroup to develop children’s motor skills. Child and Family Centre worker Jason Thornton said, *“The AEDC gives us the evidence to help us enrich our play programmes to better meet children’s needs.”*

In Adelaide, a school used its results to change teaching practices and to engage parents after the second census in 2012 revealed an increase in vulnerability in all five areas of development. By combining AEDC results with other information such as NAPLAN and Phonological Awareness Skill Mapping data, the school identified areas for improvement. One improvement was a new Building Partnerships policy that brings together teachers and early childhood educators in preschools and kindergartens to train, share data and consider aspects of the national Early Years Learning Framework. Deputy Principal Leanne Prior remarked: *“the school has moved from a focus on how the child is ready for school to how the school is ready for the child.”*

To read more detailed examples of how the AEDC results are being used to improve children’s health and wellbeing visit: www.aedc.gov.au

REVIEW INTO SCHOOL BUS SERVICES POLICY

In response to the implementation of a new School bus service for schools in the ACT on 1 September 2014, APFACTS has advocated for a review into how school bus services are operated in the ACT.

“Of the many issues we elevated with ACTION in relation to these changes, perhaps the most prominent was the fact that parents and schools were not consulted about the changes, and received little notice of the changes once they were agreed upon” said Julie Sengelman, Executive Officer APFACTS.

APFACTS is pleased to confirm that a review into the policy for the provision of school bus services commenced this month with a facilitated session run by ACTION and attended by stakeholder representatives.

“A number of improvements to the policy were discussed as well as a way forward to progress the issues. A sub-committee has now been formed to set in place Terms of Reference for the School Transport Liaison Committee and to work on updating the Provision of School Bus services policy” said Julie Sengelman, Executive Officer, APFACTS.

BUS SERVICES ON MONDAY 27TH APRIL 2015

Parents should be aware that normal bus services will not be in operation on Monday 27th April, 2015. A Saturday bus service will be in operation on Monday 27th April, due to the fact that ACT public servants are not required to work in lieu of the ANZAC day holiday on Saturday, 25th April.

The Minister for TAMS, Shane Rattenbury advises parents to make alternative arrangements on Monday 27th April to get children to and from school and advises that ACTION has provided a list of services that will be in operation on that day. All non-government schools are listed and the corresponding bus services which will operate on that day are listed next to the school name. [Please check here.](#)

CHANGES TO SCHOOL SERVICES FROM MONDAY 18 MAY 2015

On Monday 18 May ACTION will be introducing a range of timetable adjustments and service improvements to the normal weekday network, as well as changes to some dedicated school services.

Since the launch of the new schools network in September 2014, we have been continually monitoring the network using performance data and identifying areas for improvement. For dedicated school services these include:

- the addition of six new services
- directional and stop changes for 21 school services
- changed start times for 68 school services
- and just 1 school service will no longer be in operation

We encourage you to view the various changes to normal weekday network changes taking effect from May 18 as connection times to dedicated

changes taking effect from May 18 as connection times to dedicated school bus services may have changed. For more information, call 131710 or visit the following links:

- [School Bus changes](#)
 - [Summary of service changes](#)
 - [Weekday network map](#) and [Weekday timetable](#)
-

NAPLAN AND MYSCHOOL UPDATE

2015 Writing Assessment

This year's NAPLAN writing assessment will have two writing prompts – one for Years 3 and 5; and a different prompt for Years 7 and 9 – instead of the previous single prompt for all year levels.

"Having two prompts will enable better questions to be set. More age-appropriate writing prompts will better ensure all students have the opportunity to produce their best writing," says Dr Stanley Rabinowitz, ACARA's General Manager Assessment and Reporting.

My School Update

The information on the My School website <http://www.myschool.edu.au/> was updated in March 2015 by ACARA with the results from the 2014 NAPLAN. There was much written in the press about those results as well as the production of league tables by the Canberra Times.

"The Association of Parents & Friends of ACT Schools (APFACTS) believes that the results on the My School website are only part of the picture when parents choose a school" said Julie Sengelman, Executive Officer APFACTS. *"Information is key for parents when choosing a school for their child and My School is one of many sources of information considered by parents and is not commonly used as the sole input for decision making."*

To find out more about My School and NAPLAN as well as some useful guides for parents for interpreting the results, [click here](#)

Update announced for My School Website

The Federal Education Minister, Christopher Pyne released the My School report recently, which finds that the site is "too difficult and complex" for parents to navigate. The reports recommends information be added to help parents understand the data provided about schools' results, as well as resources to help them better talk to schools about their child's performance. It also suggests more information is provided to parents on the site to give them a more rounded picture of a school, including extracurricular activities, student support services and connections to the local community.

To read the report, [click here](#).

CURRICULUM UPDATE

Six language curricula made available

ACARA has made six language curricula available (Arabic, German, Korean, Modern Greek, Spanish, and Vietnamese) on the Australian Curriculum website for Foundation – Year 10. Japanese curriculum will be made available soon.

This is the second group of language curricula to be released by ACARA (Chinese, French, Indonesian and Italian curricula were released in July 2014). Further languages to follow are Turkish, Hindi, AUSLAN, Classical Greek and Latin. For more information on the language curriculum, [click here](#).

Interested in how the curriculum is managed in Primary Schools?

A series of 20 videos has been released to illustrate the management of the Australian Curriculum within primary schools has recently been released which shows the steps schools have taken to manage the Australian Curriculum. Planning proformas, timetables or other documents that help to

demonstrate their work are now available on the Australian Curriculum website.

The primary schools in the videos represent government, Catholic and independent school sectors from across Australia. These schools are from metropolitan, rural and remote areas and range in size from 130 to over 700 students. To watch the videos, [click here](#).

The Australian Government's Review of the Australian Curriculum

At a recent Education Council meeting in March 2015, Education ministers agreed to recommendations, proposed by ACARA, to respond to the Australian Government's Review of the Australian Curriculum

ACARA's Chair, Professor Barry McGaw, represented ACARA at the meeting, with Robert Randall, ACARA's CEO. Professor McGaw said, "We are pleased that the Education Council has endorsed our proposal and extremely grateful to ACARA's staff, partners and stakeholders for the enormous amount of work they have done in these early weeks of the new year to get us to this point. There is, of course, more to be done, but we have established a secure base on which to proceed".

For more information on the Australian Curriculum review, [click here](#).

APFACTS is a strong advocate for parents on many curriculum forums in the ACT. We represent parents on:

- BSSS – Board of Secondary Studies
- CAC – Curriculum Advisory Council
- ACT Curriculum Taskforce.

Are you interested in curriculum issues? If you have any areas regarding curriculum you would like us to discuss, please [email us](#).

HEALTH AND WELL BEING

As parents we are always interested in the happiness, health and wellbeing of our students. Following is some information on initiatives, services and upcoming events which are focussed on these areas.

Kids Matter

KidsMatter is an Australian mental health and wellbeing initiative set in primary schools and in early childhood education and care services (preschools, kindergartens and day care centres). It is a framework that helps take care of mental health needs of children by focusing on:

- creating positive school and early childhood communities
- teaching children skills for good social and emotional development
- working together with families
- recognising and getting help for children with mental health problems.

Is your child's school a Kids matter School? For more information, [click here](#).

Mind Matters

MindMatters is about young people; their health and wellbeing. It helps schools to support young people to achieve their goals, build relationships and cope with challenges. MindMatters is a framework that aims to promote mental health, prevent problems and enable early intervention. MindMatters:

- Supports schools around Australia to foster the mental health of their students
- Provides training for schools using the framework
- Assists secondary schools and health services to work more closely together
- Encourages secondary schools and families to work more closely together
- Provides useful resources and links (on this website) for young people, families, teachers and schools

Is your child's school a Mind Matters School? For more information, [click here](#)

Headspace

Headspace is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation. Raising sensitive

issues and working to resolve problems that arise along the way can be challenging. It can also be hard as a parent to know the difference between normal behaviour, such as moodiness, irritability and withdrawal, and an emerging mental health problem with your young person. Headspace can help you and your young person with:

- General health
- Mental health and counselling
- Education, employment and other services
- Alcohol and other drug services.

For more information on Headspace, [click here](#).

TEACHER EDUCATION MINISTERIAL ADVISORY GROUP (TEMAG)

The Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group's (TEMAG) report was released in February 2015, read the report, [click here](#).

Included in the media have been the following articles regarding the contents of the report:

- [The Conversation - what the review of teacher education should be asking](#)
- [The Canberra Times - A quality education begins with the best teachers says Christopher Pyne](#)

The Australian Parents Council (APFACTS is a member) comments, [read here](#).

Executive Director of the Australian Parents Council, Ian Dalton said "the crunch message of the TEMAG report is that teacher education programs must improve. Real improvement will be seen when teacher education providers can engage and inspire young Australians with the potential to be great teachers. To do so their programs must focus more sharply on the things that will make the most difference: teaching capability; teacher confidence; classroom practice; and school culture – and, ultimately, to students. This will require closer attention to entry-level English language proficiency, educational and social psychology, technology capability and relational competencies such as conflict resolution."

EVENTS

Mental Health & Wellbeing Seminar

On Friday 5th June 2015, Generation Next will be hosting an event in Canberra on "The Mental Health and Wellbeing of Young People" with a wide range of high profile speakers. To book and find out more information, [click here](#).

Australian Parents Council (APC) Webinar series for parents

Learn more about the Family School and Community Partnership Bureau and parent engagement and family school partnership by following this [link](#).

Forum event @ St Francis Xavier College, Florey - Tuesday April 7, 2015 @7.30pm

What do educators need to consider to prepare students to be positive contributors to society and the workforce in 2030? What role models do young people really need? What does the learning need to look like? What do students really need to know, value, believe and do? For more information, [click here](#).

PARENT RESOURCES

Have you joined our online parent community? In case you missed some of our most popular posts on facebook or twitter:

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Parent Resources:

- [Engaging children in reading](#)
- [Great tips to start children saving money early!](#)
- [Tips on how to cope with bullying in schools](#)
- [Kids matter resources page](#)

News items of interest:

- [What are your views on managing respectful relationships in schools?](#)
- [A great way to engage students in nutrition and sustainability](#)
- [More information to be added to the Myschool website](#)
- [Shock and sadness at 'cage' for Canberra boy with autism](#)
- [Education system failing students with autism](#)
- [Joy Burch calls for new approach to domestic violence in the ACT](#)
- [Transport chaos tipped for students and public servants over Anzac Day long weekend](#)
- [Complex Myschool needs a re-vamp](#)
- [Canberra Schools settling for second best](#)
- [Girls opt out of Science and Maths](#)
- [Subjects trimmed in primary school curriculum shake-up](#)
- [Myschool 2015 goes live](#)
- [APFACTS response to publication launch 'Education Capital: Progressing Parent engagement.'](#)
- [Chief Executive admits flaws in NDIS coverage for ACT families](#)

Surveys:

- [Parent views on testing and children's learning](#) - Australian Parents Council survey
- [Parent attitudes to children learning Asian languages in Schools](#) - Asian Education Foundation survey

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