

schoolmatters

Jump to it

Getting children to exercise regularly

When the bell rings

Professor Stephen Zubrick
on school attendance

Smooth move

A PEEP at a Year 7
transition program



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Students the priority in evolving education environment

“The one thing we all know about education is that it is constantly evolving.”



There has been considerable discussion and debate in our schools, in our communities and in the media about public education funding and staffing.

There is no denying that we are going through a challenging time as some staffing and resources across the organisation are redirected so that we operate within the cost structures set by government.

Numbers and dollars are dominating our actions and thoughts as we re-assess priorities and explore options for providing learning opportunities for students.

Throughout it all is our professional commitment to do our very best for students.

That's our job as educators and that's what drives us – indeed it's why we are so passionate about what we do.

And the one thing we all know about education is that it is constantly evolving.

I have every confidence that principals will lead discussions in their schools with staff and parents about what the changes mean and will identify opportunities to do things differently.

Any principal who requires help to plan how to manage the changes just needs to ask.

In this edition of *School Matters* we meet two people who are making a significant contribution to public education and to the Western Australian community. Winthrop Professor Stephen Zubrick talks about his findings following a study into how student attendance at school affects academic performance. There is also an interview with Supreme Court Judge Peter Blaxell who led what has become known as the Blaxell inquiry into child sexual abuse in Katanning.

The newly formed Principals' Advisory Team is out and about helping principals who are new to the job; and our successful Graduate Teacher Program is attracting national attention.

In closing I would like to acknowledge all our finalists in this year's WA Education Awards and thank them for their contribution to public education in this State.

I wish everyone all the best for Term 4.

Sharyn O'Neill
Director General

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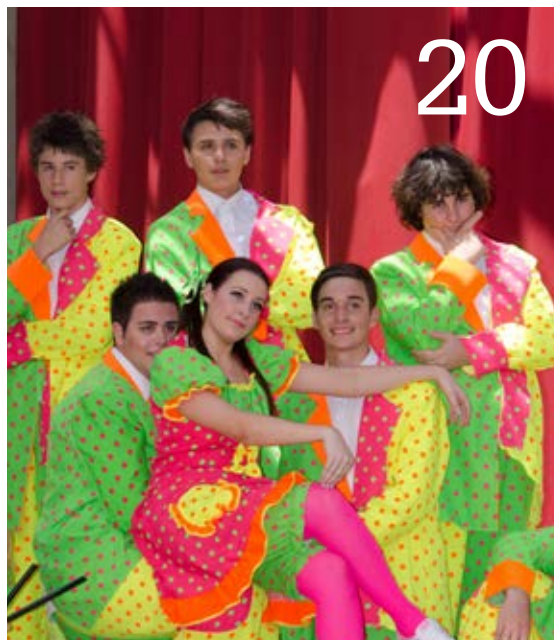
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Students performing a simulated surgery.

Science entices students

Aboriginal students from as far away as Christmas Island, Fitzroy Crossing and Albany converged in Perth over the July school holidays for The University of Western Australia's School of Indigenous Studies Science Camp.

The 50 students took part in campus activities including experimenting with liquid nitrogen, designing a racing car, programming a robot, making teeth moulds, suturing wounds, performing simulated laparoscopic surgery and testing their abilities in sport science.

One of many outreach programs run by the School of Indigenous Studies, these programs encourage Aboriginal students to enrol at the university.

Celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, the School of Indigenous Studies has helped two generations of Aboriginal students gain employment in medicine, dentistry, law, the arts, business, science, health and engineering.

For more information telephone 6488 7658 or email Heidi.madden@uwa.edu.au.



Students are discovering Perth thanks to a core program.

Canning Vale Education Support Centre CAPS success

Canning Vale Education Support Centre's Community Access Program (CAPS) has allowed students to become more involved in the community than ever before.

A core program at the school, CAPS students travel via public transport with a companion to venues around Perth including Scitech, Perth Fire Station, Perth Mint and Forrest Place.

Teacher Julie Dawson said she had seen significant improvements in students.

"One of our students was so frightened of escalators and heights that his mum used to avoid those places. Now he is totally independent. It's a great result," she said.

CAPS is incorporated into many of the eight learning areas of the curriculum, and is structured to maximise learning and develop key skills in students.

The Writing's on the Wall

The City of Melville and WA Police have developed a resource for secondary students to help battle poor decision making and risk-taking behaviour.

The Writing's on the Wall was launched at Leeming Senior High School by Police Minister Liza Harvey, and is for teachers of students in Year 9 and 10 and youth-focused organisations.

The resource is a story about families and young people, the consequences of poor decision making and unhealthy risk taking behaviour, and the importance of getting help.

Principal Brendon Wallwork said the script was created by a professional scriptwriter in collaboration with students from local secondary schools.

"The trial involved our drama students workshoping the play, and English students working through the materials," Brendon said.

"Feedback was then provided by the drama teacher. Student feedback on the script and the class activities were very positive."



Leeming Senior High School students in a workshop.

Brendon said involving students ensured the resource was relevant to young people.

Each kit contains 25 copies of the script, one copy of the teacher resource, and a CD containing all the resources electronically.

W: melvillecity.com.au/twotw



Perth Modern student wins speech award

Perth Modern School student Johnson Ye has won the 2013 My First Speech competition.

The keen politics and law student beat 96 other entrants from Years 10 to 12 from across Australia.

The judging panel included federal MPs Gai Brodtmann and Alby Shultz and leading political reporter Mark Riley. Speaker of the House of Representatives Anna Burke announced the winner.

Johnson said he would like to pursue a career in politics where he could use his leadership and public speaking skills to give back to the community.

"I am the son of a migrant from China. In Australia I see a land of opportunity with great diversity and vibrancy, where individuals can express their views freely and where people from many different cultures are welcomed here as migrants," Johnson said.

"I would like to be part of a political environment where we cast away negative politics and point scoring, and where people from all sides can work together to build a consensus and drive long-term positive outcomes in education, health and infrastructure."

Johnson presented his speech in Canberra at Parliament House as part of its 25th anniversary open day.



Darling Range Sports College students at the writers' festival.

Power of the pen

Darling Range Sports College hosted a writers' festival during Children's Book Week which allowed its Academic Centre of Excellence students to participate in interactive workshops.

English teacher and festival director Michelle Murphy said authors, poets, playwrights and journalists were invited to the event.

"Several guest presenters and writers had links with our school and provided real life learning experiences for students looking to see where their talents and interests in the written arts may take them," she said.

Former students Katy Watson-Kell, a young adult fiction writer with books published by Fremantle Press, and Kaitlyn Offer, a journalist from *The Sunday Times*, were among the guests.



Calista Primary School students perform at the development day.

Kwinana Federation Network's big development day

More than 400 staff from the Kwinana Federation Network attended a combined school development day recently.

All staff were given the opportunity to present on the day and topics covered a range of learning areas and subjects.

"It was a great opportunity to see the fantastic work in all schools in the area and a way to share teacher expertise with others," said Calista Primary School teacher Jade Moylan.

Director General Sharyn O'Neill also attended and spoke about the good work coming from the network schools.

"She mentioned the different programs we have put in place and spoke about where education has come and where it is heading," Jade said.

"She also spoke about where she sees some of the gaps in education and how she has tried to help rectify these."

Perth Hills and Wheatbelt Band hits the road



The Perth Hills and Wheatbelt Band won a gold award at the Australian International Music Festival.

The Perth Hills and Wheatbelt Band completed a 13 day tour of Sydney and Canberra during the July school holidays.

Directed by Peter Hind and Phil Robertson from Instrumental Music School Services, the tour highlights included winning a gold award at the Australian International Music Festival and becoming the first visiting band to play at a changing of the federation guard closing ceremony at the Australian War Memorial.

The tour also included performances at the Sydney Opera House, Sydney Conservatorium of Music and Great Hall of Parliament House.

The band includes students from Kalamunda Senior High School, Kelmscott Senior High School, Lesmurdie Senior High School, Northam Senior High School, Narrogin Senior High School, York District High School, Northam Primary School and Helena Valley Primary School.

"It was pleasing to see the unifying power of playing music together in action," said Peter.

"Students came together from eight schools for only six rehearsals and achieved so much in two weeks."

The band is now preparing for a four week tour of the European battlefields in July 2015.

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Pathway to justice

Peter Blaxell

From a rough and tumble childhood in the Scarborough sand dunes to a legal career that has spanned the wilds of the Kimberley, 20 years on the bench and a landmark inquiry into child abuse in the Great Southern, retired **Supreme Court Judge Peter Blaxell** believes society needs to look after its own. As told to Emma Jones.

When I took on the Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse at St Andrew's Hostel in Katanning I was supposed to be retired.

Imagine my wife's feelings! All of a sudden I had a full-time job on my hands. But it was very important work, particularly for the people who had suffered at the hands of the offenders.

It was perhaps one of the most satisfying things I've done in my life. The inquiry was a very hard, unrelenting task and I did lose a lot of sleep. I was very fortunate to have a marvellous support staff and we all had to work exceptionally hard but in the end we got there.

I made a point of going to Katanning and meeting with victims and their families to explain why I was handling the inquiry the way I was. It wasn't about being a judge up on a pedestal remote from the people who had been directly affected. It was important to sit around a table with them to explain why there had to be procedural fairness towards those who had failed to protect them.

Sexual abuse is a crime that doesn't leave a lot of physical evidence but often results in significant psychological scarring. During the course of the inquiry, many mature men were disclosing for the first time that they had been abused as school children. For some, this process of disclosure was an horrific experience which caused considerable

"I was very pleased when the Government decided to implement my recommendations."

emotional trauma. Consequently we had psychological and counselling services available at all times.

Most victims who came forward for the first time were remembering events they had always pushed to the backs of their minds and some had been doing this for decades. However I believe that in the end they found it to be a great relief to put these matters behind them.

There were many systemic factors which had allowed the abuse to continue and the recommendations I made were designed to ensure that these systemic problems could not occur again.

I was very pleased when the Government decided to implement my recommendations. There have since been two status reports and good progress has been made towards implementation. I'm confident that once all of these changes are complete we will have a system that does all that can be done to prevent a recurrence of these issues.

The inquiry not only gave people a pathway to justice, it also had a therapeutic effect for many victims. I think the counselling, in particular, that many received has made it easier for them to live out the rest of their lives.

Child abuse often rebounds beyond the immediate victims and affects others as well. This is especially so when former victims of sexual abuse have committed suicide – it affects parents, siblings and in some instances partners and children. The damage sometimes continues down through the generations and can be like the ripple effect after a stone is dropped in a pond.

I believe the systems now being put in place will minimise the risk of future sexual abuse for children, however it will never go away. Like all crime it's not possible to eliminate completely. All that can be done is to implement systems which will minimise the particular crime and that's what is now happening.

I've never regretted choosing law as a career. When I was still at university I performed aptitude tests which showed I was more suited to engineering than law. I'm sure I would have enjoyed engineering because I'm fascinated by mechanical things but I am glad that I did law.

My parents grew up during the great depression and completed their schooling at the age of 14. I was the first person in my family to receive a university education and that was a big thing in those days. When my grandmother was young she won a scholarship to Adelaide University which was then the nearest university to WA. But she was

unable to accept it because of her family's lack of finances. Although she always regretted the loss of that opportunity she took great pride in the fact that she had a grandchild who was going to university.

I grew up in Mount Hawthorn and attended North Perth Primary School until I was 10. My family then moved to Scarborough and I transferred to Doubleview Primary School. It was a great place for a boy to live. I used to roam the sandhills most days after school and learned to love nature.

When I was in what is now called Year 7 I won a scholarship to Perth Modern School. At the end of my secondary schooling I had no idea what I wanted to do as a career however I was inspired to do law after watching the television series *Perry Mason* which was about a lawyer who always won cases in court.

After completing my degree in law I became an articled clerk with a firm where I became partner. By 1975 I had become heavily involved in Legal Aid and for a year or two I worked full-time establishing a duty counsel service in the Magistrates' Courts. For a period I was also the only white person on the committee of the newly formed Aboriginal Legal Service. Soon after the birth of my second child I took my family to Kununurra for three months to establish the local ALS office and there were further stints for the ALS in Port Hedland and other areas.

By then I was practising solely as a barrister because I chose to be an advocate. In 1982 I also

became a part-time magistrate in the Children's Court. In 1991 I was appointed as judge of the District Court where I remained for 14 years until becoming a justice of the Supreme Court in 2005. I retired in 2011 after 20 years' full-time on the bench.

Looking from the outside, it must seem a very emotional task to be a judge. However after many years of professional experience in the law you learn to be objective, to put emotions aside and to deal only with the facts. There were many times as a counsel or judge when I was representing or sentencing a young person going to jail and I thought 'there but for the grace of God go I'. Regrettably, the upbringing of some offenders is so dreadful that just about anyone in their circumstances might end up doing the same.

Of all my judicial roles, the work in the Children's Court was probably the most difficult. The reason is that so often, particularly with serious crimes committed by children, there is no correct answer as to the proper sentence. If you look only at the circumstances of their crimes the offenders should be put away for a long while. But if you look at their backgrounds and ages you realise that can be the wrong thing to do. The sentencing of juveniles who offend seriously is a very difficult task.

Magistrates and judges always have to do what they believe to be right in accordance with the law. Sometimes the public doesn't understand that there is much more to the sentencing of offenders than what can be gleaned from the media.



Although I am now fully retired I am still fairly active and am currently chair of four organisations including the Perth Theatre Trust and the Independent Media Council which adjudicates complaints against most of the newspapers, magazines and online print media published in WA. I also chair the SAS Resources Fund and the Trustees of Fremantle Sailing Club.

My wife and I live on a five acre orchard in the Hills and have more than 350 fruit trees to look after. We don't run a business – we just do it for fun, so obviously we're quite mad. We grow nearly every fruit that can be grown in Perth: oranges and citrus, apples, stone fruit and avocados – everything. We also have a yacht which is sailed regularly. However our greatest joys are our five wonderful young grandchildren. **sm**

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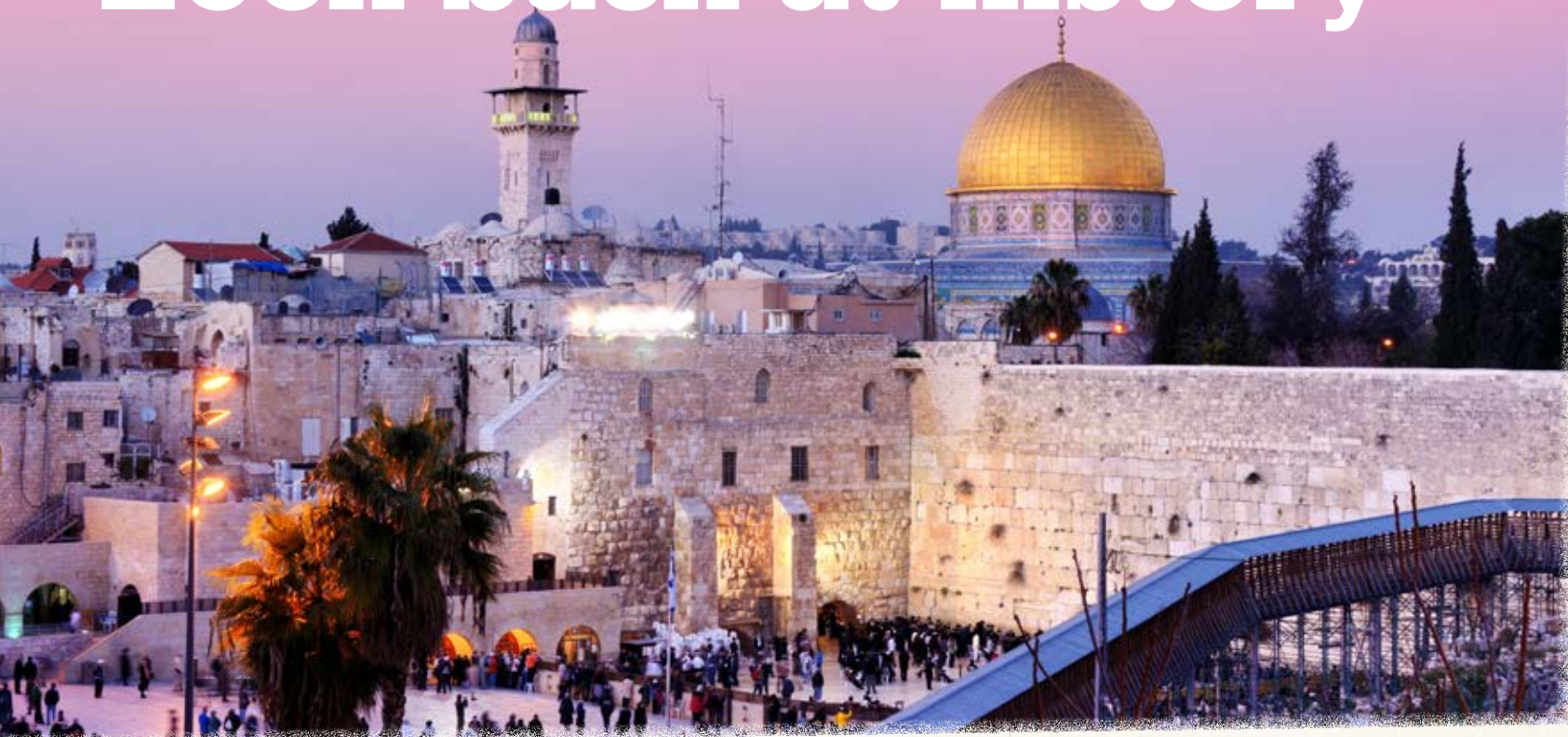
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Look back at history



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Three teachers will travel to Jerusalem in December after being selected for the prestigious Gandel Holocaust Studies Program. **Maria D'Agostino** speaks with Christine Suckling from Mindarie Senior College, Ainsley Free from Kalamunda Senior High School and Jane Nicholson from Perth Modern School about the trip of a lifetime.

1. Only 20 teachers were selected Australia-wide for this study program. Why do you think you were you selected?

Ainsley: It's an incredible honour to have been selected. There is an expectation that those who have been selected will share their experiences with others and commit to creating a network of Holocaust educators who will support each other in years to come. I am committed to doing this and I think that commitment was evident in my interview. I'd like to think the panel could see how enthusiastic and passionate I am about teaching history and learning more about the Holocaust.

Christine: I am a great believer in the importance of authentic learning experiences and like to incorporate these in my classes. I have a passion for history and believe that is why I was chosen. I am grateful to be given such an opportunity and to share it with like-minded people.

Jane: It's such an interesting and important part of our recent history especially because genocides are still occurring today – despite the collective shock and condemnation of the Holocaust.

2. What does the study program involve?

Ainsley: We will do three weeks of intensive training at Yad Vashem International School for Holocaust Studies in Jerusalem. Under the guidance of expert teachers and historians, we will explore the historical content while developing skills and techniques for teaching the Holocaust. The aim of the program is to train educators to become expert teachers of the Holocaust.

Christine: The study program provides practical teaching tools that convey the importance of remembering the Holocaust and also give us the ability to impart that knowledge to our students. It gives educators the opportunity to form an ongoing network so we can share resources.

Jane: The study program lasts for roughly a year with an intensive three week course at Yad Vashem. There are then follow-up seminars in Sydney and Melbourne.

3. How did you hear about this opportunity?

Ainsley: I first saw a notice posted on the Connect group for society and environment teachers and I applied after an English teacher at my school

emailed us about it. She thought it looked like an opportunity we would be interested in – and she was right!

Christine: The online network for the community of secondary school society and environment teachers is a wonderful way we share resources and receive notifications about professional development opportunities.

Jane: I heard about it through my head of department, Louise Secker, who is president of the History Teachers' Association of Australia.

4. What do you hope to bring back to your students next year?

Ainsley: As a graduate teacher I try to maintain a consistent focus on doing the best I can for me, my students and my school each day. I had that in mind when I applied for this program. This is my first year teaching modern history and I was nervous about teaching the Holocaust to my Year 11 students. How can I help the students comprehend this event and its repercussions when I struggle to do so myself? I hope I will return equipped with an improved understanding of pedagogy.

Christine: I have taught these courses for a number



Ainsley Free



Christine Suckling



Jane Nicholson

of years so I hope to get some new ideas on how to make students aware of the atrocities that occurred and perhaps make them more aware of the people who did oppose the Nazis.

Jane: I hope to gain new approaches to teaching the Holocaust and integrating historiography of the Holocaust into the classroom such as causes for it and the prevalence of genocide.

5. What will you study while on the trip?

Ainsley: There will be a mix of seminars, workshops and tours and a look at the Jewish experiences and anti-Semitism throughout history. We have an opportunity to consider the Holocaust through different mediums such as art and music and will travel to the Dead Sea and possibly experience an Orthodox Jewish service. There are also museum visits, bus tours and a chance to work in small groups on teaching projects.

Christine: Sessions include using technology in teaching the Holocaust, music of the Jews and – one of my favourites – representation of Holocaust in literature. We will also visit the second temple fortress of Masada that was built by King Herod in the first century.

6. Will you meet with survivors of the Holocaust?

Ainsley: Yes, it is my understanding that we will meet with survivors. I am also interested in meeting with family and community members who endured the repercussions of the Holocaust – often it is those who are left behind who face the greatest challenges.

Jane: We'll get to hear how their lives were impacted.

Christine: There are very few survivors but I believe we will be accompanied by two people on Schlindler's List to his grave – Nachum and Genya Manor. There is also a workshop with four survivors that I am really looking forward to.

7. How important are experiences like this for your teaching?

Ainsley: To study at Yad Vashem will be a life-

changing experience. It's an opportunity to develop the skills and understandings to return to the classroom and help students understand that we are global citizens, that there are many Australians who still experience the repercussions of the Holocaust and that the Holocaust is more than a historic event slotted in among the teaching points of Nazism in Germany.

Christine: One of the reasons I wanted to do this is because I was selected as a teacher supervisor on the 2010 Premier's ANZAC Student Tour to Turkey. To actually visit Lone Pine and stand among the graves is something I will never forget and I believe it has made me a better teacher of history. After this, I instigated the first Sydney/Canberra tour for our school where we took 37 students to learn more about Australia's history, politics and art. Authentic learning has a real impact on students' understanding. These experiences are very important to me.

Jane: It's essential to create meaningful learning experiences to engage students. Having access to resources from Yad Vashem and also the various lecturers presenting during the course will be very useful.

8. You have to complete an online course before you leave for Jerusalem. What does it entail?

Ainsley: We complete four online lessons that will provide background information about anti-Semitism, the Jewish experience and the Holocaust.

Christine: We also have a reading list and have to complete units of work so we have a thorough understanding before we arrive.

9. Some 900,000 people visited Yad Vashem International School for Holocaust Studies last year and it's the only school of its kind in the world. What do you think your most significant experiences will be?

Ainsley: Visiting Israel – such a historically, culturally and spiritually significant region – and talking with people who have been directly affected

by anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. The State of Israel itself is an example of the impact the Holocaust has had on the world. This experience will be even greater as I will share it with a group of other Australian teachers who are just as committed as I am to developing skills and understandings.

Christine: I am told the Yad Vashem History Museum is an emotional experience so I think I will find this of great significance. I also think that I am going to be particularly moved by the session Righteous among the nations – saving Jews during the Holocaust. I just find the thought of people helping others with such risk to themselves and their own families inspiring and moving. This includes Schindler as well as others such as Raoul Wallenberg and Princess Alice of Greece.

10. One of the objectives of the program is to form a network of Australian teachers committed to teaching about the Holocaust and its universal implications. How valuable is being part of a teaching network like this?

Ainsley: The support teachers receive from each other is invaluable. I am looking forward to joining the network and am particularly excited about strengthening that network in WA with Christine and Jane. I have already received interest from colleagues about future workshops and how we can share resources.

Christine: Ainsley, Jane and I are really looking forward to learning and working together. Jeannie Stevenson from Cyril Jackson Senior Campus, who was a recipient last year, has also been generous with her time and advice. Being part of a network committed to ensuring the Holocaust is not forgotten and making students aware of such genocides is of the utmost value. Educators are always so generous with sharing resources and knowledge and it is wonderful to gain different perspectives. **sm**

When the bell rings

The attendance patterns of more than 415,000 primary and secondary students in Western Australian public schools has led to significant findings about how school attendance affects academic performance. A comprehensive study by The University of Western Australia's Telethon Institute for Child Health Research analysed Department data on school enrolments, attendance and NAPLAN achievements from 2008 to 2012. Winthrop **Professor Stephen Zubrick** says it shows that every day at school really does count.

Does it really matter if a child misses a bit of school here and there? The evidence is clear that yes it does.

With the release of our findings on the relationship between student absences and academic achievement, there is heightened discussion of what it all means.

On average, Western Australian public primary school students miss about 15 days of school a year and secondary students miss about 25 days of school a year. This equates to about 16,000 children (about 520 classrooms) being absent from school each day with 11,000 of these absences being excused and another 5000 or so being unexcused.

If these patterns translate across the country – and we believe they do – the number of Australian children absent from school each day would fill at least two Melbourne Cricket Grounds. You could nearly fill ANZ Stadium at Sydney's Olympic Park with the students whose absences are not excused each day.

Importantly, our findings show that academic achievement declines for every day of absence – in other words, every day of attendance counts and there is no 'safe' level of absence that students can get away with.

It really makes a difference if students attend every day and, when they have to be absent, to have opportunities to make up for this.

Our findings also show that children develop their 'attendance careers' very, very early.

In Year 1 a student's pattern of attendance is already well established and will, in all likelihood, repeat from year-to-year. This tells us that part of what children learn at school is about attending school. So, part of their early learning is learning to 'show up'. After all, life is about showing up – at school,

in relationships, at work, at home and in sport.

Our findings show that school absences are a 'long fuse with a big bang.' This is because the effects of being absent from school add up over time.

Earlier absences in primary school have impacts that can be seen in later years, so it's important that students not only learn to 'show up' but to do so throughout their student careers.

While absences affect all students to some degree, students who are disadvantaged are particularly affected by missing school. Each day of absence has a larger effect on lowering their academic achievements when compared with students in higher socioeconomic settings – and these are the students who can least afford to be absent.

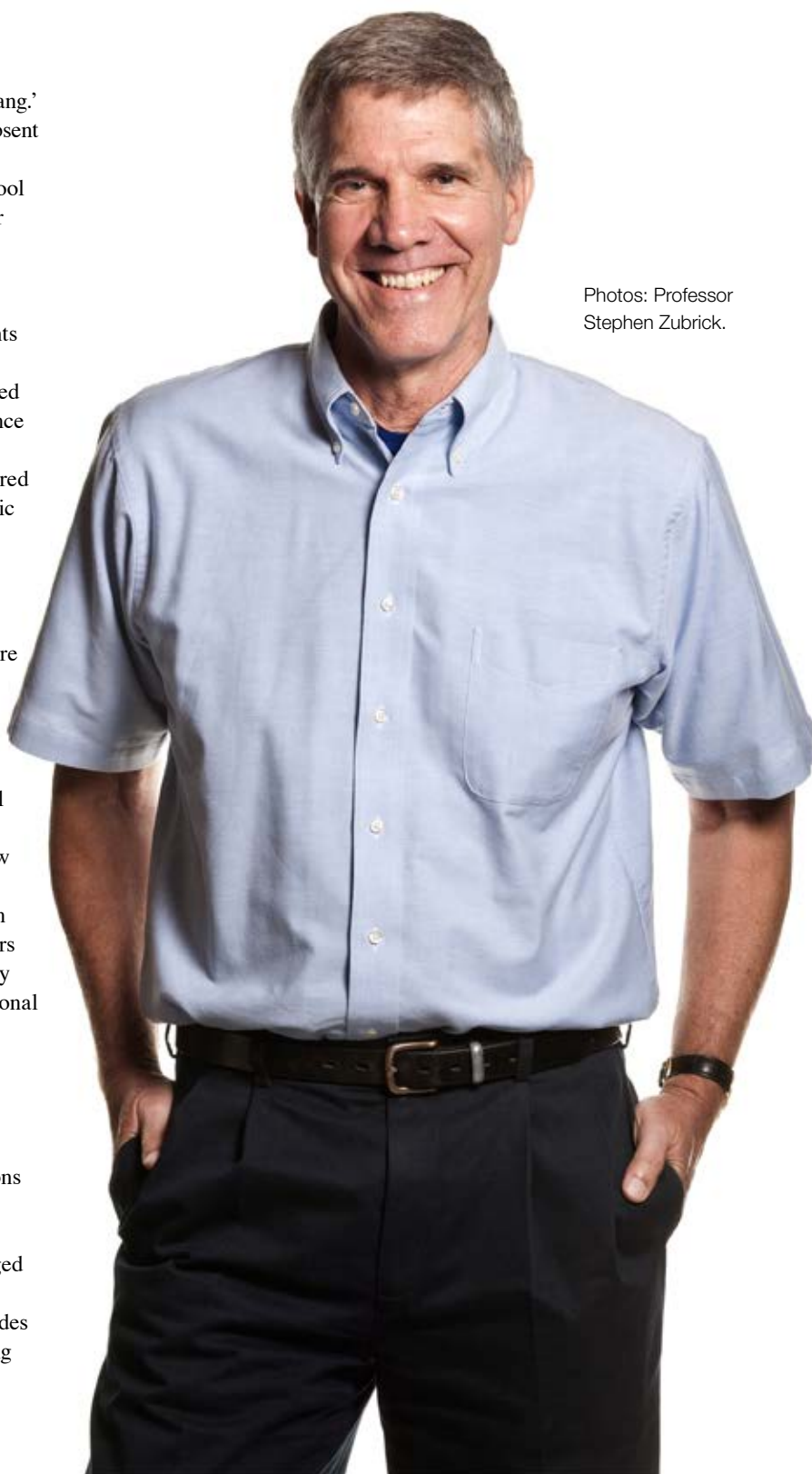
Students who experience unauthorised or unexcused absences also fare much more poorly. But where parents and teachers communicate about the reasons for a student's absence, the effects of being absent are lessened considerably.

It's important to note that school attendance is just one of several influences that matter in terms of how well students perform.

The most important influence on students is the quality of their teachers and the learning experiences that they provide. Quality teaching is foundational to excellence in school performance. Also, socioeconomic disadvantage is a far greater influence on academic performance than even attendance.

Addressing disparities in educational opportunities, expectations and constraints for disadvantaged students is central to closing gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged students.

Finally, attendance and the attitudes of parents and students about attending



Photos: Professor Stephen Zubrick.



“ Our findings also show that children develop their ‘attendance careers’ very, very early.”

(or conversely being absent) are also important. Showing up does matter. Parents and schools need to be in conversation about what happens when children miss school and the steps that can be taken to minimise the effects.

Inevitably, community interest will turn to suggesting harsher penalties for families of children who chronically fail to attend school.

It’s tempting to assert that school is compulsory and parents have a responsibility to send their children to school, so penalising the family is justified. But this attitude simply adds insult to injury. It doesn’t actually get at the root of the problem for most families where chronic school absence occurs.

Improving attendance for all children rests first with alerting parents to the fact that it really

matters, and re-affirming with our community that being absent from school, for reasons other than authorised absences, impairs onward success and, for some children, narrows their life chances.

More of this knowledge along with more vigorous steps by parents and schools to determine the nature of reasons for absence is the desired starting point for acting on our findings.

Children miss school for many reasons. They get ill. Families have emergencies that require children to miss school. Special opportunities come along. And sometimes it can all be ‘too much’ and it’s easier to keep children at home rather than deal with the effort it takes to mobilise attending school.

Our report puts school absences into perspective and possibly reminds

us of what we have always taken for granted – school really matters.

We would be pleased if more parents asked about school expectations and processes that are used when children are absent. We would be pleased if more parents spoke with one another and their children about school attendance and what they expect. We would be pleased too if more schools were supported to engage with their school communities in regular dialogue and expectation-setting about attendance and absence at school. We would all benefit from this.

The report called Student Attendance and Educational Outcomes: Every Day Counts is online at childhealthresearch.org.au.
sm

Key findings

- Children develop their ‘attendance careers’ from as early as Year 1.
- Disparities in attendance rates are also evident from Year 1. They are carried into, and become wider, in secondary school. Initiatives aimed at improving attendance therefore need to start early.
- There is no ‘safe’ threshold of absence. Attendance matters for achievement, and every day counts.
- Unauthorised absences are more strongly associated with poor achievement than authorised absences.
- Most achievement disparities are in place at the outset of Year 3. Improving the attendance of disadvantaged students may help to reduce these, or prevent the gaps from becoming wider over time.



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Peter Glendenning, Jan Hepburn, Leila Bothams and Trevlyn Geiles are part of the Principals' Advisory Team. Gary Crocetta (not pictured) is also in the team.

16

Team building

A team of highly experienced principals is working alongside principals who are new to the job, sharing their experiences and supporting them to lead successful schools. Campbell Primary School principal Peter Glendenning is a member of the Principals' Advisory Team and speaks with **Maria D'Agostino**.

A principal sits at his desk after a long day. He has been in the position for just three months and is finding it hard to adapt. Student demands, staff needs and relationships with parents – he wonders how he will be able to manage them all.

This is where a team of experienced principals chosen to mentor and support new principals comes in.

Peter Glendenning is one of five in the Principals' Advisory Team – selected from a highly competitive pool of applicants who expressed interest in becoming a member.

Leila Bothams from Rossmoyne Senior High School; Gary Crocetta,

consultant principal in primary support; Trevlyn Geiles from Jurien Bay District High School; and Jan Hepburn from East Kenwick Primary School make up the team.

Peter says the initiative, which started this year and will run throughout 2014, is providing a valuable sounding board for principals.

“Our confidential support team is supporting principals in the contexts of their schools,” says Peter.

“We have contacted principals who were appointed last year and this year and those in long term acting positions. We have also been contacted by principals who are interested in working with us.

“There is a lot of interest in this initiative as principals want the best

for their staff and students. They are looking for support to help them make their schools the best they can be.”

The team is currently working with 130 principals, with more expected to join next year.

Principals can seek advice on student achievement and wellbeing, staff development and management, resource management and governance, community engagement, and program delivery. The level of involvement depends on the needs of each principal.

“We touch base with some principals once a term. For others we are in weekly contact. Sessions are driven by the needs of principals and the contexts they're in,” says Peter.

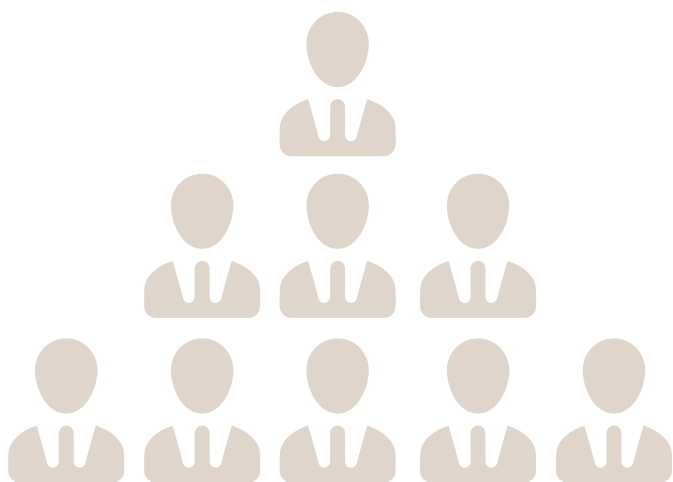
“We provide confidential and

non-judgemental advice. This is really important so they are comfortable knowing they can rely on us to help them whatever they may be facing.

“We work with each person to develop their leadership skills and their capacity to lead. This ranges from providing information and acting as a sounding board for issues, through to mentoring and coaching them in areas they would like to develop.

“The role of the principal is multi-dimensional. Principals are much more accountable than they were in the past and are responsible for a raft of initiatives and programs – and the overall success of their schools.”

The team is being funded through the Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership.



“As a newly appointed principal of a school starting as an Independent Public School this year, I was keen to get as much support and guidance as possible.”

Craigie Heights Primary School principal Lynne Bates has worked with the Principals' Advisory Team and was very interested to be part of this initiative.

“As a newly appointed principal of a school starting as an Independent Public School this year, I was keen to get as much support and guidance as possible,” she says.

“I meet a couple of times a term with Peter. His support and guidance are a huge benefit to me and ultimately to the school and our students. I get time to discuss issues

pertinent to my school community in an open, frank and confidential way.

“Change management processes have been a particular focus of discussion and, through Peter's advice and support, I have developed greater confidence in my leadership capabilities.”

Lynne says she has also asked Peter to provide constructive feedback on her leadership approach.

“As a leader I am promoting reflective practices and developing a learning community among staff who need to see that I engage in these

processes myself,” she says.

“A principal's role is complex and I don't have all the answers – so I need support to grow as a leader just as our teachers need support to grow as teachers.

“The big plus is that, with this belief and commitment to self improvement and with the support of an advisor, those who ultimately benefit most are our students.”

Peter says feedback from principals such as Lynne has been great.

“Those principals with whom

I have worked have been very happy with the support they've received,” he says.

“They want to talk about the issues they're facing and to plan ahead. Many are dealing with challenging circumstances.

“As a team we also help principals to build and develop relationships with their staff and school communities – so vital to a successful school.” **sm**



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Above and far right: Primary school students participating in Newman Senior High School's art and technology and enterprise classes.

peep!
Into High School Life

18

Smooth move

Primary and secondary schools across the State are working with students and school communities on the move to Year 7 in 2015. **Melanie Dunn** examines how schools in Newman are working together to create meaningful partnerships and ensure a smooth move for students to secondary settings.

For students in the mining town of Newman, the Year 7 move in 2015 will create exciting new experiences.

This year, Newman Senior High School launched the Primary Experience Enrichment Program (PEEP) – an extension of the school's existing transition program for current Year 7 students at Newman Primary School and South Newman Primary School.

Principal Milanna Heberle says the revised program ran for five weeks during Term 3 and was designed specifically to include Year 5 and 6 students from the local primary schools.

"PEEP provided the opportunity for primary students to come to our school one afternoon each week and participate in classes," she says.

"It prepared students for secondary school life by familiarising them with the secondary environment and teaching staff, and provided

an opportunity for students from both primary schools to interact.

"PEEP was a positive experience for students, and helped ease any worries students had about starting secondary school.

"The existing program has Year 7 students spending two weeks in Term 4 attending our school, where they wear our uniform and are timetabled as secondary students.

"This year, Year 5 and 6 students have been included as students in both these year levels will be attending secondary school in 2015."

Secondary settings will give Year 7 students access to specialist subject teaching and facilities needed for the new Australian Curriculum. During their weekly afternoon classes, PEEP students participated in Newman Senior High School's technology and enterprise and art classes.

"These subjects were selected to showcase the

specialist facilities in the school, and gave students opportunities and experiences not generally available in primary school environments," Milanna explains.

"We had on offer Kids in the Kitchen, Iron Workz, Mini MAP Robotics, Loony Toonz Cartooning, Turtling Computer Programming and Art Attack.

"These experiences will help students make informed decisions about elective choices as well as give them a head start on how to safely use equipment."

Milanna says participation from Year 5 and 6 students was outstanding: "We had a huge response to PEEP, with 107 Year 5 and 6 students involved!"

Newman Primary School principal Noel Morgan says the program shows students the exciting possibilities the move will bring and encourages schools to work together.

"Our teaching staff have always worked with students and families to make the transition periods throughout primary school as easy as possible," Noel said.

"By talking with students about new routines, rules and expectations, and understanding their strengths and weaknesses, we can help students become comfortable with new school environments – this is what PEEP has done.

"The activities were engaging and students'



understanding about life at secondary school is much richer for the experience.

"I think you can measure the success of this phase of the program by the 100 per cent uptake from our students for the next phase."

South Newman Primary School principal Dave Thomas agrees, saying the program has strengthened the bond between the three schools.

"Early data shows that the close links between these schools will see more than 85 per cent of local students list Newman Senior High School as their choice for secondary school," Dave explains.

"It's essential that the community knows about

the high quality programs that our schools offer – PEEP provides an initial introduction and reassures families that the choice to stay in Newman and have their children attend the secondary school is the right decision."

Dave says PEEP gives students the confidence they need to continue their education in a secondary setting, and gives them more of a say about their secondary school education.

"With students so excited about PEEP, we are seeing families reconsider leaving town or sending their children away to boarding school," he says.

It's not only PEEP that is having a positive

"The activities were engaging and students' understanding about life at secondary school is much richer for the experience."

impact on the community. In June, more than 1000 people witnessed the signing of a Community Partnership Agreement.

The agreement was signed by the three schools, community members, organisations, families and Aboriginal Elder Mr Booth to improve education outcomes for Aboriginal students.

"The agreement ensures expectations and support for Aboriginal children is consistent from Kindergarten right through to Year 12," Milanna says.

"I have received so much positive feedback about the signing of the agreement, with many people saying it was a highly emotional and moving experience.

"Together with the community, we are consistently showcasing high quality public education for the young people of Newman." **sm**

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Photos: The Healthway Canning Vale College circus troupe performed in Los Angeles.



Clowning around

Dreams of joining a circus have come true for a group of Canning Vale College students. After several auditions, the school's very own circus troupe was selected to perform at Disneyland and Hollywood earlier this year.

Deana Pullella speaks with troupe director Crystle Challenger to hear about the group's high flying adventures.

It was the trip of a lifetime that still has 26 Canning Vale College students buzzing with excitement.

"We heard the trip was a possibility but when we actually got told it was happening we thought it was unbelievable," Year 11 student and circus performer Isaiah Kuru says.

"To think we were actually going overseas to perform at Disneyland was amazing!"

Following five rounds of auditions, the Healthway Canning Vale College circus troupe was selected for eight days of performances at Disneyland, Universal Studios, California Adventure Park and on Hollywood Boulevard.

The troupe, which was set up seven years ago, had humble beginnings.

Teacher and troupe director Crystle Challenger says she got the idea after seeing students respond positively to learning acrobatics.

"Being a qualified gymnastics coach, I tried to get the students excited about drama through teaching them basic acrobatics for their physical theatre task. The students really got into it and became very animated in their presentations," she says.

"Based on their fantastic response, I decided to teach them slap stick, clowning and juggling. My deputy principal was very supportive of this idea.

"He used juggling when he was a physical education teacher to teach the importance of goal setting and persistence, and found the skill building to be a great motivator."

Crystle says the school enlisted the help of a professional circus educator to run workshops, giving students the footing to take their performances to the next level.

"I pieced together some of the best short performances for a whole-school assembly and the students did so well they started taking their performances to local primary schools," says Crystle.

"It was such a fantastic opportunity for our students as quite a few of them had some academic and behavioural issues. We started to see a marked improvement in their attitudes and engagement in school."

Shortly after, the college began offering circus as an elective subject, making the after-school program highly sought after.

"The after-school group grew to 35 dedicated and committed students. They never missed practice and really excelled in the principles I was teaching them such as team work, school pride, self pride, civic and social duty as well as true enjoyment of performing and live production," says Crystle.

Healthway has been supporting the troupe for the past five years as part of its program to aid school projects that engage students in physical activity, while supporting the act, belong, commit message.

With Healthway's support, the troupe performs up to 10 different routines a year at around 40 venues including metropolitan and country schools, retirement homes, special needs facilities, charity organisations and at fundraising events.

Their shows deal with aspects of mental and physical health and touch on subjects like drug taking, bullying, depression, peer pressure and being involved in active play.

Crystle says the process of getting the troupe to Los Angeles was extensive but it was without a doubt the best thing she's done in all her years of teaching.


"The students were over the moon with excitement and determined to do their best. They worked very hard to make their show exceptional, often training nine hours a week," she says.

Isaiah who has a range of skills including club, ball and contact juggling and clowning, says controlling his nerves while performing was a challenge.

"Our first performance was at California Adventure Park and I was very nervous," Isaiah says. "As time went on, it became less nerve wrecking and I got more confident performing as part of a team."

Isaiah says being a part of the troupe has helped him in his academic pursuits.

"Some of the main things we focused on in our circus training were creating goals and good habits, and time management. I used these skills in other subjects to my advantage."



"The after-school group grew to 35 dedicated and committed students."

While it may be hard to top a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Los Angeles, there is no rest in sight for the Healthway Canning Vale College circus troupe.

Next year's schedule is already being planned. The troupe aims to increase the number of visits to metropolitan and country schools and embark on a workshop tour to Melbourne. A return visit to Disneyland in 2015 may also be on the cards.

"Disneyland has invited the troupe back which is a huge honour as I am told this does not happen often and is a testament to the exceptional performance of the students," says Crystle. **sm**



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01

Jump to it

22

Getting children to exercise regularly can be a challenge. **Sue Oldham** talks with a Perth primary school that has found a fun new way to get students moving.

It's a regular school assembly at South Ballajura Primary School and Education Support Centre. Students sing the national anthem, the principal talks about the week's highlights and several students receive merit certificates.

Then, on comes the theme music to Kung Fu Panda and the whole assembly breaks into a choreographed exercise routine. It's clear that students and teachers alike are having fun.

For the past seven months the school has been trialling the aerobics-based exercise program JUMP JAM which originated in New Zealand more than a decade ago. Education Support Centre assistant Angela Guise was familiar with the program having worked in New Zealand for a number of years.

"When I took over the dance class at the centre, I made enquiries to see if there was anything specifically available for students with special needs," Angela explains.

"My initial plan was for an integration exercise activity with a mainstream class to present as an assembly item."

Angela got in contact with JUMP JAM founder Brett Fairweather, pleading with him for the resource, which was not yet available in Australia. Brett agreed to send Angela the original kit, adapting the routines where necessary to suit her students with special needs.

The response from students and teachers caught Angela by surprise, with everyone wanting more.

"The whole campus has now purchased the program and we've taught the students every routine," she says. "It's a great feeling just to see their faces and how happy it makes them – they just love it."

"We have a JUMP JAM club once a week and students have even started doing flash mobs at lunchtime."

"What I love about JUMP JAM is that it allows students to unselfconsciously express themselves through music and dance and they're exercising without even realising it."

JUMP JAM's Linda Devereau reads some of the comments on the student feedback forms: "I feel really great about JUMP JAM and my fitness has really improved" and "It makes you healthy and makes you feel good about yourself."

The success of the program at South Ballajura is not a huge surprise for Brett Fairweather. The program is currently running in more than 90 per cent of primary schools in New Zealand and 50 per cent of primary schools in Singapore.

The former world aerobics champion is passionate about encouraging children to exercise.

"My goal is to excite children into moving and exercising through simple, safe and fun aerobic-based choreographed routines," says Brett. "I try to sugar-coat exercise for children – not like when I was a kid when we were told to run around the oval, which no-one really enjoyed except the fast runners."

"This is simple, repetitive movement to fun music that children relate to. It has mass appeal and tends to turn on children who are not necessarily sports oriented or never feel confident."

"On mass or as part of an assembly, they just move in time with everyone else. This is especially true of education support students because they absolutely relate to the music and really let their spirits go."



02



03



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"I want children to grow up enjoying exercising to music and not feeling like they've got two left feet."

Brett explains that the other important consideration in developing the program was that it had to be teacher-friendly.

"The curriculum is so full that teachers are pressured to be experts in every area," he says.

"This resource is very simple and teachers don't need to be professional group fitness instructors to teach it."

Students can also learn routines and teach younger students as part of a leadership development program. The kit comprises six routines each about four minutes long, giving teachers the flexibility to use it in short bursts or back-to-back as part of a fitness program.

Brett says that many teachers have found it effective in managing rowdy students.

"Teachers tell me that just a few minutes

of JUMP JAM helps students to get pent-up energy out of their system so that they can respond better in class," he says.

Angela reports similar experiences where the program has been effective in settling students' challenging behaviours and high sensory needs.

"I love the versatility of this program which can be done inside or outside – and even behind students' desks," she says.

"It offers an alternative on some of those days when it's raining and the students are cooped up inside."

Brett was in Perth recently to see for himself how successful the program has been at South Ballajura Primary School. He also visited several other schools keen to see it in action. Such was the response that Brett is now planning to officially launch JUMP JAM in Australia in November this year when he returns to Perth. [sm](#)

W: kidzaerobix.com

"It has mass appeal and tends to turn on children who are not necessarily sports oriented or never feel confident."

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- 01 Angela Guise and students at South Ballajura Primary School and Education Support Centre.
- 02 Students enjoying JUMP JAM.
- 03 Angela Guise.
- 04 Creator of JUMP JAM Brett Fairweather.



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The road to Rio

A lifelong love of sport has seen former Duncraig Senior High School student Chad Perris rise among the ranks to train for the 2016 Paralympics in Rio.

Rosie Hanson speaks with Chad about achieving his dreams.

At just 21 years old, Chad Perris has achieved extraordinary success since his first visit to the local athletics club just 12 months ago.

He is now proudly representing Australia in international championships and training for the 2016 Paralympics is in full swing.

For those who know Chad, this doesn't come as a surprise – sport has always been a huge influence in his life.

The former Duncraig Senior High School student admits that physical education lessons were the main reason he attended school.

"The only thing I really excelled in at school was PE because I've always been into sport," says Chad.

"PE was the highlight of my week and I definitely latched onto it. To make schoolwork easier and more interesting I would try to relate other subjects to sport. If I had to write an essay in English, I would write about sport.

"For the rest of the week I probably gave my teachers a hard time, which is something I regret."

Chad was born with the genetic condition of Albanism which has left him with about eight per cent vision.

"My condition affected me most at school as there were always one or two kids who gave me a hard time – but I never let it get to me. I look at where some of those people are now and I know that I'm better off for having ignored it," he says.

Duncraig Senior High School's Structured

Workplace Learning program was a valuable pathway for Chad, allowing him one day a week out of school to experience the working world and test out possible career paths.

"I completed work experience at Subiaco Football Club where my role was to visit primary schools and conduct coaching sessions to teach young children the basics of AFL," he recalls.

"The work experience showed me that sport could be more than a hobby – I could make it my career.

"It gave me something to look forward to at school – not to mention that it was great fun and I met some fantastic people."

Chad chose to leave school at the end of Year 11 to pursue a career in sport. He began studying two



“The work experience showed me that sport could be more than a hobby – I could make it my career.”



25

- 01** Chad Perris (centre) in action.
- 02** Chad started sprinting just 12 months ago and has already represented Australia in international championships.

courses – the Certificate IV in Sport Development and Certificate IV in Athlete Support Services – hoping to find employment in the sports industry, but never believing he would be a sports star.

It was purely by chance that he joined the North Beach Athletics Club. While looking for a way to stay fit during the AFL season break, Chad decided to try running at the club and soon caught the eye of coach Paul Edmiston.

“I’d always been pretty fast as an AFL player in my local team but never thought my talent was in sprinting,” says Chad.

Winning the club’s Best Performing Athlete award was just the beginning for Chad. He started competing in October 2012 in national championships and was soon selected to represent

Australia in the T13 division of the 100m and 200m sprints in Lyon at the IPC World Championships.

Doing Australia proud, he finished fifth overall in the finals of the 100m sprint: a tied third and fourth place and an incredible 0.05 seconds between him and a silver medal.

Chad is now set on competing in the 2016 Paralympics in Rio, and hopes to compete in the World Championships in 2015 in Doha as well. His coach has developed a training regime and, for the foreseeable future, Chad will be focusing on making his dreams of becoming a Paralympian come true.

“My condition can limit opportunities but it also opens up others. So far I’ve made the most of the opportunities that have come my way,” he admits.

“After only starting sprinting in October last year, I never believed I would be in the position I am now. To be chosen to represent Australia is a dream come true – I didn’t think I would get that chance.

“I’ve met so many inspirational people in the last year and I hope to continue competing strongly in the future.

“Being able to compete as a para-sport athlete is simply awesome.” **sm**



A model school

26

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Butler College opened its doors for the first time in February and is one of the new models of schools in Western Australia that has students with special needs learning alongside mainstream students. **Maria D'Agostino** takes a tour with principal Armando Giglia and associate principal Helen Macri.

Fifty students from Butler College are on school camp and one Year 7 student with cerebral palsy is about to do something she has never done before. With the help of classmates she will climb a tower they have built from crates. It's not easy but by working together – which is the camp's focus – she reaches the top and they all celebrate their success.

For another student who is partially verbal, a big change has been made. He is often seen interacting with students and participating in various activities around Butler College – always wearing a big smile.

These are the amazing outcomes the college has seen in just a few months thanks to its special design. A school within a school – rather than two separate campuses for mainstream and special needs students with their own principals – is how principal Armando Giglia proudly describes the new college.

"Our college is how an inclusive school should be," he explains. "Students have all started here as Year 8s with specialist teachers in all areas of the curriculum.

"Building the school like this provides greater opportunities for the diversity of our students. We can be proactive in the programs we provide for them and really make a difference."

It's impressive – the \$51.4million Butler College is certainly state-of-the-art. And it's modelled on a

"Knowledge, integrity and respect are our college values – it doesn't matter who you are, they are the same for everybody."

contemporary learning environment that sees an education support school built on its grounds.

Facilities include an eight-classroom block with an adapted specialist classroom for diverse student needs; technology and enterprise facilities; chemistry and multi-purpose laboratories; food and textile studios; music and media teaching areas; student services facilities; a library resource centre; performing arts centre; sports hall; and cafeteria.

Even more impressive is the college's specialist education support facilities. Purpose-built inclusive classrooms, adapted furniture and independent living areas with adjustable sinks and ovens are complemented by a hydrotherapy pool and gymnasium. All in all, a high quality learning and therapy environment.

Armando's enthusiasm for this model is clear.

The Independent Public School opened in February with 268 Year 8 students. This is expected to increase to about 2000 students, including more than 90 special needs students as the school grows from Years 7 to 12 by 2017.

All students interact with one another, having lunch in the cafeteria and sharing classes. Enclosed, quiet areas are located around the campus and are open to any students feeling vulnerable or not up to socialising.

"This is a particular strength of the college's model," says Armando. "All students have access to every class where appropriate. This can be seen, for example, in our targeted woodwork group for students with disability and the use of the hydrotherapy pool for training marine studies students.

"We want our students to be 21st century learners so it's important they understand real world issues.

"To develop these skills and communicate effectively we encourage students to focus on the college values of knowledge, integrity and respect. We are all part of a community and we want our students to be tolerant and respectful of each other and work and learn together."

Thanks to specialist facilities, students who previously had significant distances to travel can now go to this, their local school.

Associate principal Helen Macri shares Armando's praise for the college's design. She says it's a success that should be celebrated.

"Walking around the college you see students supporting one another and interacting – students with disability really belong," she says.

"The programs we offer are comprehensive and reflect student needs and contexts. All students



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04

have specialist teachers across the wide spectrum of the curriculum and are challenged and supported.

“Our model allows us to cater for students with mild and moderate educational needs through to exceptionally high needs. We are a distinctive college that has been built to incorporate inclusive education as a given right for all students. Nobody is isolated here.”

Helen has a background in education support and says the college should give confidence to

parents about how education for students with disability looks in the 21st century.

“We believe our college is characterised by an ethos of care for the whole child, the provision of an education that recognises and values diversity, and the opportunity for all students to succeed,” she says.

The second stage of the college, which incorporates senior school facilities, will be completed by 2016. **sm**

01 Butler College principal Armando Giglia and associate principal Helen Macri.

02 The college has specialist education support facilities.

03 Students work and learn together in state-of-the-art facilities.

04 The college's hydrotherapy pool.



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29

Support from the start

The acclaimed Graduate Teacher Induction Program run by the Institute for Professional Learning is giving new teachers the support they need to start their careers and make a difference in the lives of students. **Matthew Hogan** reports.

Above: Graduate teachers Amanda Jones of Beckenham Primary School, Elyce Kenevin of Burrendah Primary School and Glen Auzins of Gilmore College at the graduate teachers' professional learning seminar at the Institute for Professional Learning.

Graduates in any profession can take time to adapt to the daily challenges of their new careers.

Teaching graduates are no exception. That's why it is essential for teachers entering classrooms for the first time to be supported in a range of different ways through the Graduate Teacher Induction Program.

Almost 900 graduate teachers participated in 2011–12, with a further 976 taking part in 2012–13.

Glen Auzins is a first year teacher

at Gilmore College in Kwinana and is taking part in the program this semester at the Institute for Professional Learning in Leederville.

He says the program has helped him manage a range of different situations in his classrooms. One of these situations involves students who bring negative experiences from their home lives and communities to school.

"Some students seek positive interaction at school but that can mean misbehaving with other students which is a challenge," he says.

"The best way to manage students in these situations is to make learning a really positive experience for them. It's really effective when students themselves see the changes in their achievements from being interested and involved in lessons.

"The program is also a great opportunity to network with other graduate teachers and see exactly how they're facing similar situations."

Glen is supported by staff at Gilmore College as principals take part in the professional learning to

support their graduate teachers.

The intensive program also gives first-year teachers access to confidential support from a coach or advocate through the In-Class Coaching Program.

This successful way of developing and retaining new teachers has captured the attention of not for profit organisation Social Ventures Australia.

The organisation's Growing Great Teachers project aims to improve the quality of education

“We want to showcase this program around the nation because the results are great.”



Social Ventures' Nik Dawson is interested in the Graduate Teacher Induction Program for the Growing Great Teachers project.

for every student Australia-wide, especially those from difficult backgrounds.

Nik Dawson from Social Ventures Australia says the Graduate Teacher Induction Program is so outstanding that it has been selected by the organisation as a case study for other states to adopt.

“We’ve done an environmental scan of what is happening across different institutes and government departments around Australia and this program stands out as one that is demonstrating great practice,” he says.

“We want to showcase this program around the nation because the results are great.

“Ideally, we’d like to replicate it in other states and advocate for this work to be done outside Western Australia.”

Glen also praises the program and says the satisfaction of overcoming challenges is what first attracted him to teaching.

“I’ve had a few students who were really quite disengaged,” he explains. “But when they grasp a topic in a way they haven’t before, they are completely involved in the topic.

“A lot of being disconnected is due to a lack of understanding and missing the basics so when students grasp a topic they’re just so much more interested in it.

“I had one student who I couldn’t get to write and now she’s doing more work than any other student in half the time because she’s actually interested in that particular topic and that’s nice to see.”

School leaders can find out more about the Graduate Teacher Induction Program, and learn about their responsibilities in supporting graduates to achieve full registration as teachers, by participating in the Great Start for Grads half-day workshop delivered by the Institute for Professional Learning. [sm](http://det.wa.edu.au/professionallearning)

W: det.wa.edu.au/professionallearning



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Back to nature

Mount Hawthorn Primary School's outdoor play space for young students is expanding from the traditional monkey bars and sand pit to incorporate a fully-formed natural play space. **Matthew Hogan** speaks with Pre-primary teacher Heather Kerr about the importance of outdoor play.

With many inner city housing blocks being subdivided, for some children the only exploration they do outdoors happens in the school playground.

Mount Hawthorn Primary School, just five kilometres north of the city, is creating a play area for Pre-primary students in keeping with worldwide trends in children's play and outdoor spaces.

"International trends show that many children want opportunities to explore and play with natural materials," explains teacher and grounds/garden committee member Heather Kerr.

"My education assistant Shellie Carter and I are both interested in using natural materials to create a play space for our students and getting parents more involved."

After extensive research and collaboration with Pre-primary staff, Heather and Shellie are developing a new play space that uses the existing landscape including a slope. The slope is an important design element to allow for rain to run off and create puddles and pools in the stone creek bed.

Use of natural materials is also critical as staff want to expose students to stones, bark and sawn wood.

"It has been fantastic watching the students instinctively balance and respond to the challenges of uneven surfaces, differing heights and irregular lines," she explains.

"We wanted to develop an outdoor learning environment that reflected our commitment to planning and achievement of education outcomes inside our classrooms."

The project to develop the natural play space has involved the whole community. Since it started during the summer holidays, several busy bees have taken place along with fundraising events to help build the environment.

"Parents helped remove old fencing, and then plant deciduous trees and lay paths," says Heather.

An award-winning landscaper who is a parent at the school is also on board to help. Staff worked with the landscaper to come up with a concept before going to tender. The concept included using recycled materials to make play equipment.

With limestone blocks, tree cookies (slices of tree trunks of varying thickness that look like biscuits), rocks and logs now combined with the traditional playground infrastructure, staff are witnessing some unexpected outcomes for students.

"The students respond to the natural play space materials in very different ways to the more traditional metal and fibreglass playground structures," Heather says.

"The more traditional structures like monkey bars, ladders and poles lend themselves to restricted, convergent and pre-determined play.

"The new play space provides opportunities for open ended, divergent and imaginative play by students.

"One of the first groups of students to play on the scramble course created a river with our creek bed and the students lay down as crocodiles pretending to swim. The following week the creek bed, rock and logs were incorporated into the weekly obstacle course to practice balance and teach the traditional game of Follow the Leader which enhances social skills.

"We find we have more injuries on the established playground equipment. But when students play on the rocks and the wood, they immediately correct themselves."



The school's natural play space includes recycled materials to make play equipment.

It's not just recess and lunch that sees the playground get the most attention. The Early Years Learning Framework places equal importance on learning outdoors and indoors.

"We plan for five learning areas: literacy focus, maths, social and emotional, creative, and fundamental movement skills," says Heather.

With 108 Pre-primary students, five teachers work together to make the most of the natural play space.

"During outdoor learning time the students go out with their teacher and education assistant who

are aware of specific focus areas. They help in the play and the learning that is happening through guidance and observation," explains Heather.

With the four-stage project nearing completion, Heather still has a couple of ideas for the natural play space.

"We still have a lot of vacant areas that we want to transform into a more dynamic space for the students to play in," she says. "We need landscaping and want to include artwork and visual prompts for the students." **sm**

"The new play space provides opportunities for open ended, divergent and imaginative play by students."

Pre-primary teacher Heather Kerr uses the outdoor play space to read to students.



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PREMIER'S SUMMER READING CHALLENGE

(in support of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of WA)

The Premier's Summer Reading Challenge runs from 2 December 2013 until 31 January 2014. This year's Challenge is open to children from early childhood (from birth to a year before school) through to secondary school students in Year 10.

The goal is for children to read for 15 hours during the Challenge period.

Students who complete the Challenge will go in the draw to win return economy airfares for a family of four to a Qatar Airways destination in Europe, North America, South America, the Middle East or Africa, with \$2,500 towards accommodation.

Keep an eye out for information about the Challenge which will be sent out to schools next month.

Discover more: summerreadingchallenge.org.au

Reading takes you places.

Key events for your diary



SMARTER THAN SMOKING

A competition for students aged 13 to 17 years is promoting the Smarter than Smoking health message and offering prizes. Students can simply 'like' the Hockey WA page on facebook and fill out the entry page to win a Go-Pro camera or iPod shuffle.

W: facebook.com/HockeyWA

WRITING'S ON THE WALL

The City of Melville has launched an education resource The Writing's on the Wall which gets students discussing poor decision making and unhealthy risk-taking behaviour such as engaging in graffiti, drug and alcohol use and other crime. The script based resource is for teachers of Year 9 and 10 students and links with the Australian Curriculum in English, health and physical education.

W: melvillecity.com.au/twotw



RECYCLING WEEK

Planet Ark is encouraging students to take action by getting involved in National Recycling Week from 11 to 17 November. A number of initiatives are being held as part of the event. The Schools Recycle Right Challenge will be held this year from 14 October to 15 November. Planet Ark provides free recycling activity guides, lesson plans and Australian school event ideas such as recycling or re-using events; art and craft activities; guest speakers from councils or recycling organisations; and starting a new recycling system. Popular events also include The Big Aussie Swap and the Friday File Fling which get schools and businesses recycling. The Schools Recycle Right Challenge also offers a range of recycling-themed activities, lesson plans and events ideas that have been developed specifically for Australian schools. Each resource has been developed to enable learning by doing and having fun!

W: recyclingWeek.PlanetArk.org

NO MATTER WHAT

The Starlight Foundation and No Matter What are calling on teachers to plan and deliver school holiday programs for primary school children in Princess Margaret Hospital's Oncology Ward. The programs are educational and fun, and address the working memory issues of children undergoing cancer treatment. These innovative programs will be the first of their kind anywhere in Australia and are being conducted with the full support of PMH School Services. They are also supported by Scitech, which is providing science education packs for the program. Interested teachers can contact No Matter What.

E: oninfo@nomatterwhat.com.au

T: 0437 202 242

SCITECH SCIENCE AWARDS

The Woodside Scitech Science Awards give primary schools the chance to reward two of their top graduating science students for showing: curiosity about the world around them; desire to experiment and investigate; ability to use science to solve problems; and enthusiasm for science. Registered schools receive two free science awards for their students. Each award includes a science book, certificate, family day pass to Scitech and Horizon – the Planetarium, a copy of The Helix magazine, and an exclusive offer for discounted membership of CSIRO's Double Helix Science Club. Registrations close 28 October.

W: scitech.org.au



GUIDED WALKING TOURS

Two Feet & a Heartbeat has been conducting guided walking tours of Perth and Fremantle since 2007, winning numerous tourism and heritage awards. Tour content is directly aligned with the school curriculum and many schools have participated in the tours which complement history and geography classes. Professional development for teachers is available so they can participate in a walking tour and see first hand how beneficial they are. Guides have Working With Children Checks and tours can be made for specific age groups.

W: twofeet.com.au



CHILD WRITES

Primary school students can enter the Child Writes Competition for the chance to see their name in print! The winning writer will be paired with the winning illustrator to produce a book which will be published and distributed by Child Writes, a Queensland-based children's writing organisation. Royalties will be paid to the author and illustrator for book sales. Entries will be judged on their originality, creativity and literary or artistic skill, and close on 30 November.

W: childwrites.com.au/competition

ROTARY RAMBLE

The 2013 Rotary Ramble is on 20 October and is a great way to discover Perth while raising funds for Telethon, Australian Rotary Health and The Amanda Young Foundation. Armed with a map and smart phone, teams of two to six people will tackle challenges, riddles and puzzles at some of Perth's quirkiest hidden locations and best known landmarks. Register and donate online.

W: rotaryramble.com



Olympic chat

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02



03



04

Esperance Primary School students jumped online to chat with with Australian alpine skier and 2014 Olympic Winter Games hopeful Greta Small recently.

The primary school was one of three in Australia selected to speak with Greta. Students followed her online, read her blogs, looked at personal images and videos, and followed competition performances before chatting on web video conferences.

“When I was in Year 4 we studied the 2004 Olympic Games. We emailed the athletes and it was great to get a response,” said Greta.

“I hope I can convey a similar message that encourages students to lead active and healthy lifestyles.”

Chat to a Champ is part of the Australian Olympic Committee’s education program that teaches life values and life skills through the Olympic sport traditions and values.

It was established for the 2008 Olympic Games and in an Olympic first connected athletes with school students live from the Olympic Village in Beijing. More than 3000 students have participated in the program since then, with many more watching online.

Students will be able to chat exclusively with Greta live from the Olympic Village in Sochi, Russia, during the Winter Games in Term 1, 2014.

sm

- 01** Australian alpine skier Greta Small.
- 02** Esperance Primary School students watch excitedly as they prepare to chat with Greta.
- 03** A student gets his chance to ask Greta a question.
- 04** Students get into the Olympic spirit.



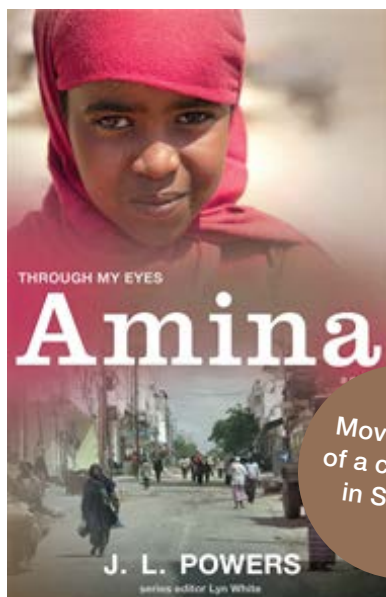
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By Jennifer McBride and Lynda Nixon

Kora is a powerful genie sent away against her will. Her homeland is threatened and she's been banished to earth for her own safety. David's life is in chaos and Kora might be just what he needs. But commanding a genie is notoriously tricky – especially when she's also an angry teenage girl. Unable to move more than 100 metres apart, and with their loved ones in danger, Kora and David must learn that the best way of helping themselves is to first help each other. This fantasy story that touches on real-life current affairs will appeal to younger readers aged nine to 13 years. Free teaching notes are available.

Thanks to Fremantle Press



Moving story
of a child's life
in Somalia

Amina: Through my eyes

By J.L. Powers

Amina lives on the edges of Mogadishu, Somalia. Her family's house has been damaged in Somalia's long civil war but they continue to live there, reluctant to leave their home. Amina's world is shattered when government forces come to arrest her father because his art has been officially censored and deemed too political. Then rebel forces kidnap Amina's brother, forcing him to become a soldier in Somalia's brutal ongoing war. Suitable for students aged 11 to 14.

Thanks to Allen & Unwin



Hard-hitting
look at our
times

A big circle of friends

By Erica Bentel

It starts with a few good friends, so small that the world doesn't feel a ripple. From Perth to Sydney, Delhi to New York and Pakistan, this is a fast-paced, hard-hitting look at our times, taking readers from driving lessons with parents to terrorism. It will have readers thinking seriously about the future of our world and the power we as individuals have to change it.

Thanks to Dennis Jones and Associates

WIN

To win these books simply send an email to schoolmatters@education.wa.edu.au by 1 November and write Book Competition in the subject line. The winner will be drawn and notified on 4 November.

Congratulations to the latest principal appointments.

Level 5

Timothy Sewell to Rockingham Lakes Primary School
Peter Blackwell to Ocean Reef Primary School
David Womersley to Connolly Primary School
David Knox to South Padbury Primary School

Level 4

Hilary Palmer to Sir David Brand School
Karin Van Dongen to Beachlands Primary School

Level 3

Norah Flanders to Coorow Primary School
Marion Wright to Koorana Education Support Centre
Shannon Wasmann to Ballidu Primary School

WA Education Awards State finalists

Congratulations to this year's WA Education Awards State finalists! Winners will be announced on 2 December.

WA Premier's Early Childhood Teacher of the Year

Sharon Miller, Gingin District High School
Erin Russell, Medina Primary School
Monique Thomas, Applecross Primary School
Paula Wiley, Bannister Creek Primary School

WA Premier's Primary Teacher of the Year

Erica Graca, Coolbinia Primary School
Amy Jose, Neerabup Primary School
Tiana Purba-Barnard, Mount Tarcoola Primary School
Sharon Walton, Westminster Junior Primary School

WA Premier's Secondary Teacher of the Year

Jeremy Bruse, Cecil Andrews Senior High School
Athena Hawkins, Newton Moore Senior High School
Anthony Herbert, Applecross Senior High School
Glenn Jones, Swan View Senior High School

WA Primary Principal of the Year

Julie Bettenay, Coolbinia Primary School
Raymond Boyd, West Beechboro Primary School
Karen Duncan, Medina Primary School
Peter Mulcahy, Westminster Junior Primary School
Jacqui Quartermaine, Rangeway Primary School

WA Secondary Principal of the Year

Chris Booth, Willetton Senior High School
Janette Gee, Yule Brook College
Neil Hunt, Churchlands Senior High School
Mike Morgan, Shenton College

WA School Support Staff Member of the Year

Josie Hodgetts, Shenton College Deaf Education Centre
Tiffany McLean, John Tonkin College
Ronald MacNaughton, Swan View Senior High School
Tracey Sheikh, Yule Brook College

WA Primary School of the Year

Cassia Primary School
East Hamersley Primary School
Narembeen District High School
Westminster Junior Primary School

WA Secondary School of the Year

Churchlands Senior High School
Perth Modern School
Shenton College
Western Australian College of Agriculture – Cunderdin

Health benefits for staff

The Department has partnered with HBF and Medibank to bring staff great value on health cover.

Staff can save money on hospital and essentials with discounts of up to 12 per cent with HBF.

Further discounts of up to 23 per cent on general insurance are also available by linking health insurance to the corporate agreement and switching home and car insurance to HBF, which is an average saving of \$512 for this particular example.

Corporate benefits are available to all staff and more information is on the website.

Staff can join or switch to Medibank Corporate hospital and extras before 15 December to receive a \$95 EFTPOS gift card for singles or a \$190 EFTPOS gift card for couples and families.

This is on top of an ongoing 8.3 per cent corporate discount which is like getting one month of cover free every year.

The corporate health arrangements with HBF and Medibank do not preclude staff from remaining with their existing health funds or joining other funds not currently in the corporate health program such as Teachers Health Fund.

HBF T: 1300 132 549

W: hbf.com.au/corporatehealth/wadepartmentofeducation

Medibank T: 131 680

E: wacorporate@medibank.com.au

W: medibank.com.au/educationwa

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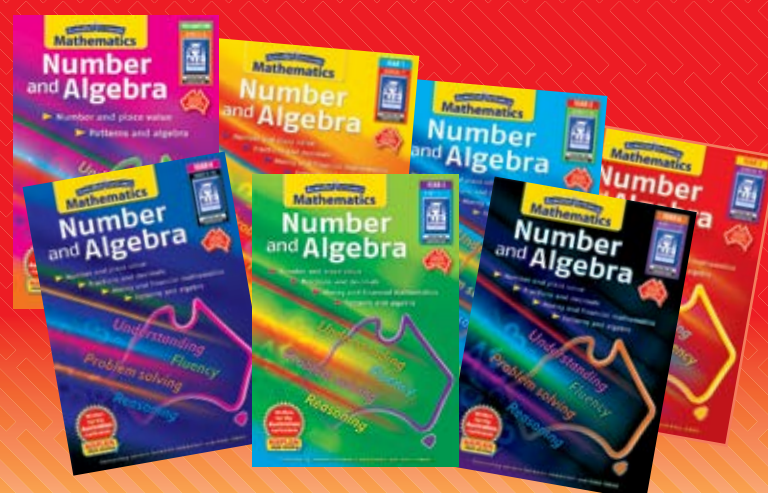
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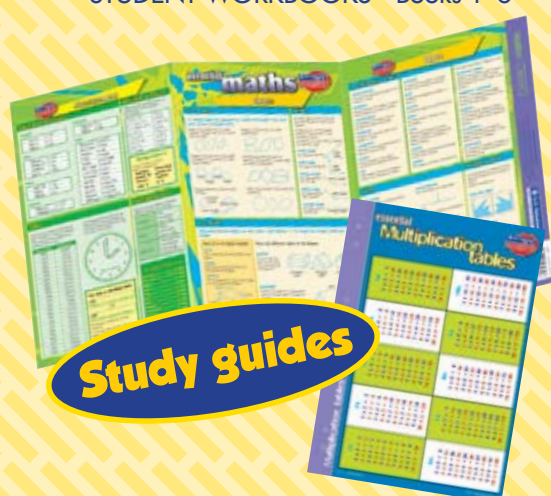
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