ICP

International Confederation of Principals

"The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new."
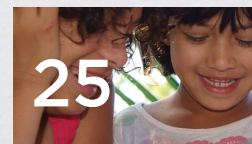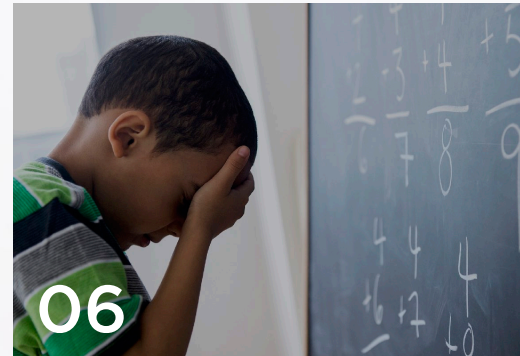
Socrates

Building Forward Better

April 2021 Edition

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Message from ICP President

The effect of Covid-19 was still felt all over the world when we started 2021. In most countries the new year celebrations were cancelled and all major events were called off. The ICP executive too had to shelve their hopes of meeting with members face-to-face and have therefore, continued to serve members digitally.

One of the things that the Covid pandemic highlighted in Education is inequity. The ICP's 2020 final edition of the magazine therefore, focused on equity and the webinar series for 2021 started with a conversation with Mary Robinson around the same topic.

Mary had a number of key messages for her audience and one of those was to 'Build Forward Better'. We have therefore, decided to use this message as the theme for this magazine and many of the articles describe how different organizations are doing just that.

After a very long period of restrictions in the world to try to curb the spread of the Covid-virus, there seems to be renewed hope that with the advent of vaccinations, countries will recover to be economically viable in a vibrant interactive society, free of Covid restrictions.

Prompted by the various International Organizations, world leaders are adjusting their stance on global concerns such as environmental issues, humanitarian matters and the plight of children throughout the world, especially in war- ravaged countries. Ultimately, the obvious disparity in schooling across the globe has placed the spotlight on the important role of educationists.

The pandemic has taught us to take care of one another and Paulina Etxeberria says that Education is the vaccine that the world can use to remove inequity in society.

50%

of the difference in lifetime earnings can be attributed to qualities and knowledge obtained before the age of 18. *Nobel Prize-winning economist, J Heckman*

As educationists we know that we can improve the lives of people by sharing knowledge, learning to care for the planet, bolstering education in the values of respect, tolerance and cooperation. We are proving that we have the resources, tools, and creative capacity to develop and spread education through different learning formulas. The vaccine for inequity already exists; we just have to use it. (Paulina Etxeberria)

Another valuable lesson we learned in the midst of Covid-19 is that 'school' endured even without access to buildings, thanks to the people – parents, students and dedicated teachers, who remained committed to growth and learning, caring and community regardless of the challenges faced. We've strengthened our resilience, extended our awareness, deepened our gratitude for each other, and reaffirmed our commitment to our children and each other — and we will be all the better for it for years to come. (Tim Tennesz)

While it is true that the effects of the pandemic have altered our 'modus operandi' it has not shifted 'the light at the end of the tunnel', which is becoming brighter by the day. Let's be strong together and emerge from the tunnel to continue to 'Build Forward Better'!

Alta Van Heerden

What have leaders across the world learnt from the Pandemic?

Dr Peter Kent
Head Teacher: Lawrence Sheriff
School

Having been involved at several conferences looking at the impact of the Pandemic, I was delighted to be given the opportunity to contribute to a conference organised by colleagues based in India from the Global talk Education Foundation. Entitled 'POST PANDEMIC CHALLENGES AND DESIGN FOR SCHOOLS' the event focused upon how school around the world were dealing with the impact of Covid-19.

It might well have been thought that an event bringing together speakers from India, Ukraine, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Abu Dhabi, Malaysia, Switzerland, Singapore, Canada, Maldives and the UK would serve to highlight the differences in experiences of Covid across the globe. To some extent this was true, with different countries finding themselves at different stages of Covid infection and vaccination experiencing a range of different impacts upon education. Hence as a speaker from England I spent some time discussing how we were about to re-open our schools, whilst in other parts of the world they had remained open throughout and a significant third group were still largely making use of remote education.

Despite all of this, I think that what stood out were the similarities rather than the differences between us. Firstly, we were all responding to a set of practical challenges that Covid had posed for schools. For example, all of us were considering how to re-design our schools so that they allowed for greater social distancing. One speaker from the United Arab Emirates discussed the need to *re-structure existing classrooms to accommodate fewer children, and repurpose non-teaching spaces such as gyms and canteens. Age-appropriate graphics could also be added to the floors and walls to remind children to wash their hands and maintain social distancing rules.*

Another challenge featuring prominently in presentations from across the world was how to make the best use of technology to support remote education. In some cases the technology involved was relatively simple, making use of platforms such as Google Classroom in order to draw together the learning for each student. Other speakers demonstrated some remarkably sophisticated uses of online learning, including a demonstration of how aspiring medical students could see the techniques used by surgeons in a virtual reality simulation.

Having heard all of this, I was rather embarrassed to find that my own use of fairly basic technology was found wanting. I had thought that I had sent a picture of myself looking rather serious and scholarly for the event publicity. However, I think I had instead sent a picture from my personal WhatsApp account of me attending a football match with my two sons. My family told me not to worry- they said they had never seen a picture of me

looking so happy (not surprising, since it was a game that Liverpool won 4-0!)

Within all of these discussions there was a general recognition of the challenges produced by remote learning, summarised by one speaker as *Higher need for parents collaboration, The challenge of developing an academic environment at home , Keeping students safe online , Students struggling with isolation , Handling the tone of passivity that develops in children.* A parent at my school described teaching lessons over Zoom as being like *'teaching through a letterbox'* and I think that this is a very effective image for the limitations of teaching over a video-conferencing platform.

As might be expected, my presentation focused upon the challenges for school leaders arising from the Pandemic. I think the point that drew the strongest response was when I shared Steve Munby's advice that we should not be afraid to be imperfect leaders (echoing the title of his excellent book, which I would very strongly recommend). Steve's focus upon the need to work as a team and his comment that 'at times of crisis it is especially important not to pretend that you know it all' seemed to strike a chord with everyone at the event.

In a similar manner the slide below captured a sentiment expressed by every speaker, wherever they came from in the world:

Whether it is changing the design of schools, making greater use of technology or more fundamentally, showing a renewed focus upon equity and the closing of gaps between different groups of students, everyone agreed that we wanted the future to be different and that in this sense schools would never be the same again. We didn't want to 'go back to normal' but rather to create a better normal.

All of which takes us to one final point. Despite all of our discussion of technology and our desire that the future needed to be different, there was also general agreement that responding to the Pandemic had taken us back to a set of fundamental values. One was the need to focus upon the elements that make up high quality teaching. Whatever platform or technology we employ, the need to be a skilled teacher constantly seeking to develop your practice remains unaltered. In this respect, the new Global Teaching Insights platform from the OECD is an invaluable resource, giving teachers from around the world the opportunity to share best practice and to upload examples of high effective teaching (www.globaleteachinginishgts.org)

A similar point emerged about leadership. Despite all of the new and unexpected challenges that leaders across the world have faced over the past 18 months, when a group of worldwide leaders were asked to sum up the most important practices they had shown during the Pandemic, this was the picture that emerged:

In other words, despite everything that has happened and wherever we find ourselves in the world, the fundamental skills of leadership, such as collaboration, flexibility, a willingness to listen and remaining calm in a crisis, remain unaltered, important practices they had shown during the Pandemic, this was the picture that emerged:

Dismantling Inequity in Education: ICP in Conversation with Mary Robinson

The conversation was facilitated by Maria Doyle – European Regional Representative

Setting the context for the conversation:

As the only global School Principals' Umbrella Professional Organisation, ICP has identified a number of key priorities that inform our strategic plan. The centrality of equity as a collective action for ICP has probably been our most consistent focus as it speaks to the heart of our purpose -to empower purposeful global leadership.

Dismantling is about taking action in a structured way opposed to taking a wrecking ball to our current scenario. As school leaders this is our challenge.

The following identifies some of the key messages provided by Mary Robinson in response to questions posed by the facilitator, we encourage you to visit https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ia9XS5S7XNktoOERyfbvyC9FlsL23737/view to develop a personal professional response to Mary Robinson's presentation.

Key messages:

Education is preparation for life especially in the context of crises – COVID, climate and nuclear.

Prepare students to speak out and up. 'This year is probably one of the most important year for humanity' with the Convention on Biological Diversity https://www.cbd.int/ will be held in China in October 2021 (rescheduled from May), and the UN Climate Change Conference will be held in Glascow https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/conferences/glasgow-climate-change-conference

There are layers of injustice that we need to address – NOW.

We have to see equity in the context of COVID, it is effecting schools world wide, some more than others due to inbuilt inequities - Intergenerational injustice and inequity, (poverty, race, gender, ability) has been exacerbated by COVID.

Use students' voices as they can educate the broader community- it is about their world. The children are the drivers – they are the voice, empower them and it levels out the playing field.

'Build Forward Better' create education systems that are more resilient to disruptions, more flexible in education delivery and focused on meeting the real needs of all children and youth.

As educators we must take greater responsibility: school is part of the community, we are influenced by community and we influence our communities. COVID showed everyone- students, parents, governments that schools are essential and there is a very real sense of appreciation of the role of school, of teaching and their importance to life.

COVID 19 has placed a significant spotlight on the centrality of students being in school and how essential education and schools are in every community. It has also highlighted once again the inequities in our global education systems. It is imperative that we grasp the opportunity now to proactively amplify these inequalities, eg Students with special needs need to go back to school earlier. Girls dropping out of school has been exacerbated by COVID and they drop out more quickly than boys as they often have care responsibilies, they are pushed into early marriages and early pregnancies.

Principals must see and use the appreciation that has emerged for their role.

This is not just a 'developing world' problem, it is a global problem during the pandemic indigenous population have suffered more than other groups. COVID has exacerbated all of the inequalities.

> **"We have to make connections for students to remove all inequities- we need to be taken out of our silos and work together: collective responsibility for building forward with equality and justice. We need to come out of our comfort zones."**

ICP as an influencer importance of education, schools and therefore school principals and the importance of their voice in their community – the need to ensure that the city and country are on track for making a safe world of students in the future. Principals' voice is now more respected post COVID.

Collaborative partnerships will help us as we face these crises. We need to talk more and network more.

Taking more courage from the recognition of the importance of education – the COVID crisis will pass but addressing the climate crisis – principals can be thought leaders working with in the community to build understanding and action.

The power is in the hands of the school leader now – COVID has elevated education to a higher platform, change can be very localised – ICP can support those leaders – empower them, determine the one or two key areas you want to influence and take action.

Top down and bottom up – community effort to engage with the circular economy, green jobs – whole of community approach so as to ensure that the transition to a greener world does not create further inequities.

Strategies for building forward better:

All of us can take three steps

Make the climate crisis a reality in your own life

Get angry with those who have moral responsibility – governments, cities, corporations – use your voice, join organisations.

Imagine the world that we need to be hurrying towards – much healthier, green jobs and different jobs – make sure there is an equality, Injustice of climate change and the layers of that we have to encounter, and COVID has brought this to the surface.

Schools need to conduct gender and social inclusion analysis to understand the real risks for girls and boys and for sub groups.

Collect and monitor disaggrevated gender data, and work together to make the necessary changes.

Involve communities – especially women and children; develop and provide appropriate digital learning solutions – digital divide is very much a part of equity; incorporate flexible learning – to recognise and accommodate different circumstance, maintain essential health services.

Go the extra mile to re- engage/ more outreach, more deliberate engagement with the more marginalised groups within individual communities .

What matters or what we have learned

Collective human behaviour matters – schools and education matter and have a role to play

Governments matter and they have to have good policies for equity

Science matters – STEM – reinforce how important Science is for everyone especially disadvantaged students and communities.

Compassion matters – more empathy and openness, greater willingness to address the inequities.

Conclusion

Dismantling inequity is both feasible and aspirational but we can't underestimate the difficulties and differences across contexts, all principals can take heart in the perception of what is important in our world – greater voice and can be a stronger voice for equity – principals are not only thought leaders within their schools, they can also be thought leaders in their community.

Build forward with equality and justice.

ICP could be described as The Elders or custodians of global education or global leadership of education;

Why?

We are independent – no one owns us except our members. We work together to shape a better future for all. We bring together collective experience or wisdom from across the globe. We are committed to improving educational outcomes for students irrespective of their age, gender, race, ability, context through a focus on school leadership

ELEVATE

Together let's frame the leadership experience

NEW DATES

In light of health and safety concerns related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the organizing committee has postponed ICP to 2022.
See our website for more details.

#ELEVATE2022

JULY 25-29, 2022

TORONTO, CANADA

WWW.PRINCIPALS.CA/ICP

Photo: Toronto Tourism

Ontario Principals' Council   in partnership with   adfo   Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes   CATHOLIC PRINCIPALS' COUNCIL ONTARIO

ELEVATING Education Leaders
2022 ICP WORLD CONVENTION

The following word cloud captures members' responses to the three questions that were posed at the end of the Mary Robinson webinar – they are our challenges.

- What <u>five</u> things can you personally commit to doing to help us 'Build Forward Better' and dismantle inequity in education?

- What <u>five</u> things can your association commit to doing to help us Build Forward Better' and dismantle inequity in education?

- What <u>five</u> things do you want the ICP to commit to doing to help Build Forward Better' and dismantle inequity in education?

If you have not had an opportunity to write a response please click **here** or send your thoughts to admin@icponline.org

In one or two words, what have been your most important leadership practices over the past 12 months?

In other words, despite everything that has happened and wherever we find ourselves in the world, the fundamental skills of leadership, such as collaboration, flexibility, a willingness to listen and remaining calm in a crisis, remain unaltered.

Optimising the Classroom Climate
Why environment is essential

Gavin Keller
Education Thought Leader, Author
and Founder of Keller Education

Brain STATES are like weather in the brain. They change constantly depending on numerous factors. There is no such thing as an UNMOTIVATED student, but there are students who are temporarily in an unmotivated state.

Now states change in seconds. Some states take precedence over other states and you can be in more than one but only be aware of being in a single state. When a student is stressed, anxious, despondent or distracted very little learning happens. We cannot expect the brain to engage in a deep thinking exercise that will lead to understanding if the brain is not in an optimal state for learning. But

The art and science of instructional teaching is creating the optimal climate - creating the correct FLOW for learning. In Csikszentmihalyi book, Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience (1990), he reports that FLOW - the state of consciousness) is the primary criteria for optimising learning.

The question is …. How do we are teachers create FLOW in a class full of different students? We can't will our students into the state, but my experience has been that you can create the state of FLOW by making sure that student lose themselves in an activity. Many of us will remember occasions when time just flew by because we were lost in the activity. Awareness of time fades and we become so absorbed that the experience is pure pleasure. In fact, it is easier for children, teenagers - the people we teach every day, and athletes to find themselves in this flow state - than adults. Those of us who work with adults know how hard it is to create the environment (climate) for delegates to become lost in a FLOW state.

Definition of FLOW
A pattern of activity in which individual or group goals emerge (as opposed to being mandated) as a result of a pleasurable activity and interaction with the environment. When your skills, attention, environment, and will are aligned, flow is much more likely to occur. Creativity and learning emerge in an accelerated fashion when learners are encouraged to go with the flow while enjoying themselves and defining and reining in their own learning challenges.

Creating FLOW in the Classroom:

1. Set material that is intrinsically challenging. It must not be too easy, but not too hard and have an element where there is choice. The moment we empower the student to make a choice it becomes personally relevant. The

brain desires to thinking about relevant material.

2. Determine the stress level. The brain does not think clearly under high levels of stress. Ensure that the stress-o-metre is reading low to moderate. A little stress can be useful at times.
3. Focus attention on thinking and doing.
4. Generate curiosity and when a student latches onto something allow them to explore it.
5. Build in anticipation. "I wander what would happen if …..?"
6. Allow a little confusion from time to time. Confusion serves as a good motivator when it is used occasionally.

What does the science say?

Sophisticated imaging equipment shows that when students are given mental tasks that are increased in difficultly as well as complexity, brain activity increases. Increased brain activity means multiple pathways are being laid to different areas of the brain. Interestingly, even if the student is unsuccessful with the task and finds it challenging, the brain will be activated. Many of us know that when we compete against someone who challenges us, we play a better game. However if we play against someone who is much weaker than us or much stronger, we lose interest. Again, the art of teaching to to set the tasks to be engaging, relevant and challenging, but not too challenging to reduce interest.

What do I do when my student is in an unproductive state?

This is the intervention moment when you change the weather. It demands an alert teacher who is constantly watching her students engaged in their task. Allow those that get into the FLOW to continue uninterrupted. Quickly identify the student who plunges into confusion and resolve it before it drops further into apathy. Too often we ignore the confused and we end up with a third of our class who we label as being apathetic! Timing is very important.

According to Eric Jensen (PhD), the most common student states are:
Fear, Anxiety, Boredom, Apathy, Frustration, Confusion

The most desirable student states are:
Anticipation, Self-convincer, Excitement, Curiosity, Celebration, Enlightenment.

Now work your magic. Do everything possible to keep your students out of their "Common" states and create opportunities for them to be in the "Desirable" states.

How do I ensure students remain in the desirable states:

1. Music and Movement. Music is a great state changer. Movie soundtracks play an important part in the audience's connection to the story. Every classroom should have a music device where the State can be influenced. I like to play up-tempo music when the students enter my classroom so that the energy is high while I am greeting them and welcoming them to my classroom. Movement should take place regularly. Sometimes this movement activity may stop the FLOW, but the need for oxygen in the blood is more important and they will rapidly return to the FLOW state. If you have a data projector in your class and wifi access, use the You Tube Just Dance videos. Students copy the dancers. Just preview the songs as some of the lyrics may be questionable.

2. Environment: The classroom environment can be optimised by carefully pondering what your classroom looks like in terms of state management. Aromas (burning a lavender incense stick), fresh flowers, ionisers, plants, use of curtains or blinds to manage the light, wall paint colour, display board designs, poster selection all play a role in managing the state. Alway focus on air quality. I have walked into too many classrooms in my career where the teacher was cold so the windows were closed. Air quality is essential for learning and in a full class this means having all the windows open all the time.

3. Digital Ubiquity: Make use of your digital devices as part of the lesson to alter the state and add curiosity or anticipation.

4. Input Focus: Regularly change the focus. If you have been giving input for a while, shift to working in pairs to renew and highlight the key points. Make use of THINK PAIR SHARE - where a problem is presented to the entire class and everyone thinks of a suitable answer. Then co-ordinate the class into pairs where they share their idea and try to improve a possible solution.

5. Mindfulness: The power of breath work is amazing. Set your timer as a reminder, or appoint a Mindful Monitor to remind you when it is time for some breathing.

6. Manipulatives: Provide or allow students to make use of manipulative like presstick, paper clips or an elastic band (can be a problem with boys!!) that they can fiddle with during the lesson. Many of us like students to look at us when we talk without bering distracted by things on their desk. By giving them "permission" to fiddle with a manipulative you improve the state for learning

Reflections from European School Leaders during a Global Crisis

Maria Doyle - European Representative ICP

It is fair to say that COVID 19 has disrupted education globally in a most unexpected and profound way. Systems around the world have responded in a variety of ways to the pandemic with some more prepared than others for the significant challenges posed by distance learning.

Over the course of the past twelve months, school leaders from six European countries engaged virtually in discussions around the impact of Covid 19. The conversations began by focusing on their initial response to the closure of schools and the preparedness for on line learning and evolved into conversations around opportunities for equitable, sustainable and inclusive recovery.

It was generally acknowledged that the rapid response to the move to digital learning placed significant pressure on teachers and students to reimagine teaching and learning. The impact was described by one contributor as 'placing a magnifying glass on systems that immediately showed up the cracks'. Some of the most common challenges initially were identified as:

- Poor infrastructure – little or no access to broadband in many areas

- Lack of IT resources – particularly for those most marginalised students

- Teachers lacking IT skills and training in how to deliver successful on line content

- Poor student engagement often linked to parental capacity

- Confusion on how best to structure remote learning

- Lack of clarity and support from system leaders

- Drip feeding of information through media sources

The challenges listed above did not simply emerge in response to a global crisis. Instead they highlighted long overdue reforms which were accentuated during a critical time when immediate action was required. To Build Back Better as the crisis subsides, these matters must be addressed with a renewed urgency if we are serious about delivering a more purposeful and resilient education system in the future.

The European Leaders also discussed the centrality of schools and the critical importance of face to face teaching and learning. They acknowledged and accepted the importance of 'the School' as an integral part of the wider community. Consequently, while schools were closed it emerged that:

- Referrals to Child Protection Services decreased significantly.

- Authorities reported a worrying increase in instances of domestic abuse and substance abuse

- Students with SEN went without critical services such as occupational therapy, speech and language support etc. which in many instances had profound effects on their wellbeing

- Many SEN students found remote learning extremely challenging and at times impossible

- Students in general displayed significant anxieties around 'keeping up' and worried about learning gaps

- Equity gaps widened considerably and became more pronounced

- Parents acknowledged that supporting their children's learning while working themselves was extremely challenging

The groups' discussions also included many positive offerings and reflections. They highlighted opportunities to rethink practices and redesign outdated learning systems .They also acknowledged the deep impact the crisis has had on the wellbeing of school leaders, teachers, students and parents. Some of their reflections included:

- Renewed emphasis on teacher autonomy and opportunities for investment in upskilling

- Empowering school leaders to take greater control of their schools by identifying what the needs are and acting accordingly in collaboration with their leadership teams

- The emergence and capturing of the student voice particularly in matters such as National Examination Systems

- Revisiting and reforming National Examination Systems

- Revisiting and reforming school assessments

- Re-evaluating the purpose of homework

- Seizing opportunities to reconfigure curricula to accommodate more blended learning and more targeted learning

- Closer and more positive relationships with parents

- Commitment to development of significant on-line resources for future on-line learning

- Exploring targeted additional on line tuition for disadvantaged students

- Emphasizing greater collaboration and co-operation between system leaders and practitioners particularly around decision making

- Building and providing greater networking opportunities for global school leaders to encourage reflection and sharing of good practices

- Revisiting the necessity to conduct school meetings in person and consider using the on-line platforms to promote efficiency and brevity!

- Highlighting the importance of physical and mental wellbeing as central to teaching and learning

This group of leaders has committed to ongoing engagement both now and post pandemic. I have no doubt that the reflections summarised above will resonate with school leaders globally - not just those in Europe. The exercise has been invaluable in establishing positive relationships and sharing ideas. The professional generosity of the people involved is commendable and the conversation has always been enjoyable.

Thank you to those leaders from Finland, Denmark, The Netherlands, England, France & Ireland for their contributions thus far. We would be delighted to welcome other European school leaders into the group at any point.

VIEW AFRICA: The Pandemic, The New Normal, Effects on Education and Lessons Learnt

Thembekile Ndlovu - Africa Representative in ICP

The whole world has been ravaged by Covid 19 and Africa was not exempted. This brought about "The New Normal" in all parts of the world including the education sector.

Social distancing, regular handwashing, sanitizing, wearing of masks and classrooms disinfecting became a norm.

What effects did this 'new normal' have to African schooling systems? What options did we have to adapt, remain relevant and effective in the classroom or outside the classroom?

As countries in Africa experienced the lockdown in March 2020, traditional classes and face to face learning were halted. Online learning through various platforms such as social media, electronic and print media were introduced. This kind of learning was engulfed with numerous challenges, such as among others, the demographics of some of the schools to access network, equipping teachers and students with ICT skills, the availability of devices and connectivity for schools, teachers and students to access lessons and information, the financial muscle of parents to buy smartphones and newspapers for their children.

Swaziland: It became clear that a good percentage of learners did not have devices to access lessons whilst at home. A rotation system is presently used in Eswatini where learners come on alternate days for class lessons.

The Eswatini Principals Association (EPA) has commissioned a study on the effects of Covid 19 and lockdown on students learning, with focus on the completing class. Findings and recommendations are yet to be presented to education stakeholders.

Success: On the 14th of April 2021 Eswatini Principals Association (EPA) held an elective Conference within the confines of Covid 19 guidelines, for EPA National Executive Committee (NEC). Mr Welcome Mhlanga was re-elected to the new office as the President of EPA and six other executive members who joined the ranks.

South Africa: The education sector faced a straight four months lockdown from March 2020. School calendars were revised to phase in learners gradually. Curriculum was also revised to cover critical subjects and content. Schools were given options to use either Alternate days, Bi-weekly approach, platooning system or whole school return if space allows for social distancing.

Success: At the end of March 2021 the Department of Basic Education introduced a Three-year Curriculum Recovery Plan (2021-2023) and placed school principals at the forefront of its implementation. The plans and policies will address the identified gaps and improve the performance of learners across all grades in the system.

Key levers that ought to be used include alternative time tabling models to ensure compliance to Covid 19 protocols, the adjustment of the curriculum in order to manage loss of teaching time, the focus on fundamentals in managing curriculum coverage, the management of home learning and distance learning and an enhanced ICT integrated, digital teacher development programme. This is aimed at promoting uniformity in the Basic Education Sector. The Department of Basic Education has met with Zimbabwe, Kenya, Angola, Namibia, Rwanda and Botswana to share best practice on schooling in the time of COVID 19.

MALAWI: Due to the pandemic Malawi lost some hard-working teachers and principals. Schools were closed for six months, examinations postponed, school calendar were disturbed, as a result many girl-children fell pregnant, and more boy-children indulged in alcohol and drug abuse, lots of early-teenage marriages experienced and many children lost interest in school and dropped out. Due to economic difficulties, many parents could not afford to send their children back to schools.

Challenges in schools: Insufficient teachers and classrooms to cater for additional classes to observe social distancing. Limited boarding facilities.

Success: The Government provided guidelines for the schools before opening and MASSHA developed a training manual on Covid 19. Sensitization meetings were conducted for teachers and principals. Remedial classes took place and examinations were administered.

GHANA: Since the start of the pandemic the academic calendar was disrupted and kept on changing depending on the challenges encountered. This resulted in a whole sale promotion of some level of students as they stayed at home for over eight months. Recently, final year senior high school resumption of studies was postponed on the day of report to classes.

Success: Education system is in progress with strict observation of Covid 19 protocols. Presently the schools are broken into tracks. Students at the senior high level are currently compelled to practice track system where one track attends school over a period of time and break, then another track resumes classes. Class sizes have been reduced to between 25 and 30. The government is committed to improving infrastructure like classrooms, providing running water and personal protective equipment (PPEs).

Virgin Pulse

Let's
GO

BUILD FORWARD BETTER

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF PRINCIPALS
LEADING, LINKING, LEARNING

Destination GO Challenge Begins on
28th of July 2021

Available on the App Store

ANDROID APP ON Google Play

Virgin Pulse | GO

VP GO makes it easy to feel great and achieve your health goals. And it's fun!

What's it all about?

VP GO is a flexible six month wellbeing program that meets you where you're at. It's your own digital health coach, a way to connect with coworkers and healthy competition all wrapped up in an easy-to-use app.

- Move more, stress less and set your own individual wellbeing goals
- In your teams of 7, Embark on a 9-week virtual activity Challenge — Destination GO!
- Connect with friends and make new ones along the way

Social Groups

Getting healthier is easier with friends! Join or create a group to stay motivated, chat with others and achieve goals together.

Personal Challenges

Create your own Activity or Habit Challenges, invite co-workers to join. You choose the type of Challenge and use the chat feature to share motivation.

Journeys

Want to get your finances in check? Better manage a health issue? Use the digital coaching tool, Journeys, to make simple changes to your health, one small step at a time.

Daily Cards

Receive 2 new tips each day based on areas you are interested in to help you live well.

Destination GO Challenge Begins On 28th of July 2021

Moving Forward Better - Dismantling Inequity at Ngunnawal Primary School in Canberra Australia

Benjamin Hall, Deputy Principal ACT Education Directorate and Ed Institute Director.
Ian Thompson, Teacher ACT Education Directorate and Ed Institute Director.

As a Principal, you are really aware that all stakeholders in the engagement equation need to build knowledge and skills to cultivate and then sustain family-school partnerships. COVID 19 has been an enormous disruption that has forced many to rethink the traditional models of student, teacher and parental engagement. At Ngunnawal Primary School (NPS), a government system public school built upon the lands of the Ngunnawal people, the traditional owners of this land in Canberra, Australia, parents were required to engage with their child's learning during the mandated lockdown periods. What became apparent to teachers and school leaders at the school were the enormous inequities among many of the families' experiences. There was a sliding scale of engagement where some students were completely disengaged in any of the online learning while many others thrived in the new environment. After analysing participation and work completion data, there appeared a clear link between the parents socio-economic status and their child's engagement in learning. This is a clear equity issue that, of course, needed to be addressed.

The Principal at NPS wanted to explore this equity issue in an innovative way by asking a challenging question: What impact does parental engagement have in a child's educational experience and is this engagement influenced by levels of family disadvantage? She knew that deep diving into high-level action research was important but was not sure on how to do this effectively. Thinking creatively, the Principal wanted to explore the benefits of building a relationship with an industry partner that had design thinking expertise. She wanted to inspire her leadership team to create a space where powerful theory and engaging stakeholder experiences helped develop a new approach to parental engagement, and do so in a sustainable and scalable way. The Principal became aware of the innovative work done by an international consultancy firm with an authentic local history in helping other government systems such as Health. ThinkPlace and their subsidiary education specialists, the Ed Institute, became NPS's collaborative partners in this project with both being experts in user-centered design. Their core business is using processes that put human experience at the centre of the design solutions.

As a first step, a Core Design Team (CDP) was formed that included the Principal, the Community Engagement Officer, parent representatives and Design Thinking experts. Together we articulated the education inequity space we wanted to examine. In particular, the specific targeting of the vulnerable pocket of families already disadvantaged in many ways was to be our focus. Many of the low socio-economic status families had been highly disengaged pre-COVID and this was now being compounded in the new online context. Our intent was to critically analyse how these parents could collaborate with the school so that they were focused on the "big" issues facing their children. One of the issues identified was how we were building parents' capacity to help support their children towards learning online while avoiding things like digital addiction.

The Core Design Team (CDT) wanted to be dynamic and innovative in the way we engaged parents in this discussion. We designed our approach to be implemented over three stages: the Research, Ideation and Prototyping phases. The Research phase involved mixed-method research that included targeted observations, intercept interviews, typeform surveys, strategic phone interviews and online mural board invitations. The CDP wanted to understand the perceptions of the parents that were often voiceless in our school. The data collected was surprising once synthesized and translated into three distinct challenges. As is often the case when implementing a design thinking process, the experiences we think are the barriers for

change are not often representative of the views held by the end user. Put somewhat simply, the challenges and subsequent opportunities revealed to the team are listed in the following table.

Challenge	Opportunity
There is not a shared understanding on what the engagement expectations for parents are.	Co-design an inclusive engagement program that caters for the diversity of parents.
Many parents had limited educational backgrounds and felt guilty about their capacity to support their child's learning.	Design a differentiated capacity building program that assists parents in developing their skills to support student learning.
Parents had varying degrees of responsiveness to communication tools of the digital age: fast, live updates, unobtrusive and accessible being desirable.	Develop a common vision coupled with shared expectations for digital communication using consistent online platforms that are shared with all participants.

During the ideation phase, the CDT worked with groups of parents, staff and students in rapidly designing ideas that we thought may have a positive impact. This process was not about the quality or viability of any one idea but engaging each stakeholder in a meaningful experience around improving equitable parental engagement. This culminated in the team making, testing and then implementing multiple prototypes. Examining the impact each of these prototypes was significant and caused a significant shift by the school leadership teams especially around strategic design of solutions for complex problems.

This three-phase process empowered NPS to successfully design a multi-tiered engagement model that includes highly differentiated capacity building strategies for all parents. This was coupled with embedding a consistent technology platform that encouraged teachers, students and parents to communicate with each other about the learning occurring in classrooms. It was evident from the early stages that all of the parents involved valued education and saw teachers as a critical part of how a community must respond to the emerging societal challenges. It was clear that all parents were wanting to adapt to help support their children in this new online space, but they didn't always know how to, or have the right

tools to be able to do this well. By listening, learning, and working together, the CDT was able to engage parents in a deeper understanding of the engagement space with a lens towards equity and inclusion.

By considering new opportunities for partnerships with expertise outside of an educational setting can have enormous impact. Using a Design Thinking process allowed us to strategically plan for how our parents could contribute to the solutions our students required. The Principal stated "That engaging in this style of deep investigation into the reasons why our parents are not fully connecting with us has been an essential part in developing a sustainable parent engagement model, one that is forged around equity and inclusion as core values".

Building a better education for all post pandemic

Virginia O'Mahony - Irish Primary Principals' Network and ICP President 2011-2012

As a pandemic - exhausted society it is natural for us to yearn for a return to life just as we knew it. In our hearts we know this will not happen as we face changes to our lifestyle we would never have envisaged. The crucial challenge now for policy makers, school leaders and educators is to ensure the change, forced upon us by the rapid and prolonged closure of schools to protect the spread of the virus, ultimately results in an improved more equitable and inclusive education system for the 1.5 billion students whose education has been so seriously interrupted.

The crucial importance of schools and teachers in the daily lives of their pupils was highlighted instantly following the enforced shift to remote learning. Many parents came on board with their child's school to ensure that daily learning continued and progressed remotely. With parents and teachers working together using the same online platform came a greater admiration for and understanding of the professional methodologies and teaching skills of teachers. Parents came to appreciate the importance of the teacher's professional approach and strategic planning and its impact on the pupil's learning. As we build forward better together, schools must ensure that this goodwill is nurtured and grows leading to more meaningful parent-teacher partnerships in the future.

Along with the child's family, the central role of school, teachers and friends in influencing and supporting the holistic development of the student is accepted and appreciated now more than ever.

The isolation and loneliness of a forced lockdown has had a negative impact on many young people. The demand for mental health services for students has doubled in many countries in recent months as a combination of isolation and enforced online learning takes its toll. Counselling and a range of psychological supports are the obvious solutions.

Lack of investment in developing a sufficient range of positive mental health services over the years has now compounded the pain for many young people. We now have a golden opportunity to prioritise the resilience and happiness of students by investing in high quality easily accessible counselling and psychological services for everybody.

While we are not yet sure how precisely remote teaching and learning has affected children's education, Pasi Sahlberg comments that early studies have revealed two important issues emerging both in Australia and Finland. Shift to remote teaching and learning has:

> (a) exposed and often amplified the existing social and educational inequalities, and
> (b) underlined the importance of ongoing individualised support to children with special educational needs as part of teaching.

We have known for some time that equity, and the quality of student outcomes at the level of education systems, are positively related to one another. The most successful education systems are those that combine equity and excellence in their education policies and practices. This is why growing inequality in education is bad news not just for those who suffer from the lack of fairness and inclusion, but for the entire society. In the longer term, there is also a need to reform the systems used to measure objectively the level of disadvantage among school pupils so that we are maximising the life chances for all our young people.

Universal provision of laptops and other devices are just one part of the picture. However, greater investment in the whole area of technology including appropriate CPD for teachers is essential for governments and policy makers to prioritise. It is surely time to expand the definition of the right to education so that it addresses the importance of connectivity and ease of access to knowledge and information.

As a global representative organisation of school leaders ICP is well placed, through its constituent principals' associations, to advocate for a universal commitment to strengthen education as a global gateway and as a bulwark against inequalities.

It is widely acknowledged that learning loss resulting from school closures during 2020 exacerbated inequality by impacting most on vulnerable pupils. This became obvious as the parents of children with Special Educational Needs saw their children's development had regressing due to the lack of structure, support and routine normally provided by the school. Greater resourcing of Early Childhood Education will be crucial in addressing inequality of opportunity early in a child's life.

Home school supports must be expanded to meet the needs of the many children for whom online learning alone will never have positive outcomes. The early years of a child's life provides a very narrow window of opportunity for positive development. Let all education partners seize this opportunity by coming together to make a difference in the future lives of all children from the very beginning.

Covid 19 has provided a further compelling reason to invest urgently in school infrastructure. Poor ventilation, overcrowded classrooms and limited recreational resources are a fact of life for many schools across the globe. It is a challenge to provide for an expanding population but having a suitable healthy physical environment is the right of every child and governments now have the opportunity to make it a priority.

If ever there was a time where school principals were rightly acclaimed as superheroes this extraordinary period has been it. School leaders were instrumental in sustaining the ongoing teaching and learning during the lockdown and ensuring the safe reopening of schools. This must result is a greater value being placed on school leadership, the teaching profession and indeed the critical importance of teacher collaboration.

There has been remarkable innovation in the responses of educators to the pandemic crisis, with those systems most engaged with families and communities showing the most resilience. Regrettably the health of many principals has been adversely affected throughout the pandemic by the increased responsibility, long days and relentless stress. Even in normal times, much rests on the shoulders of the school principal as they strive to be leaders, administrators, fund raisers, social workers, GDPR gurus, legal authorities and much more.

Unfortunately, Covid 19 has required them to be public health experts as well. The current crisis has made clear that additional In- School Management posts, along with other support roles, are essential if school leaders are to focus on their primary role of ensuring the highest standards of teaching and learning are prioritised across the school community. The harsh reality is that Covid19 may not be the last global challenge facing society. By ensuring school leaders are always adequately supported they will have hope for the future along with the confidence and resilience they need to be strong and powerful leaders in their school communities.

This global pandemic has the potential to radically reshape our world, and as leaders we cannot be passive observers. We are in a privileged position, in our principals' associations and in ICP, to influence public debate and policy to ensure a positive exciting future for all our young people. In education we flourish when everybody flourishes. We must ensure everybody will flourish together in the years to come.

The inequities faced by Māori of New Zealand - at the root of these inequities is racism.

Liz Hawes – Executive Officer – New Zealand Principals Federation

Global pandemics are not common. In our history, we have been infected by the Spanish Flu (1918), killing 9,000 New Zealanders, the polio epidemic (1920s – 1960s), with an estimated death rate of 2 – 10% of those contracting the disease, and last year the Novel Coronavirus COVID 19, which continues to threaten us.

Much has been learned from these events. Whilst the Spanish flu resulted in the 1920 Health Act, described as a model piece of legislation which continues to influence our country's health system today, the Novel Coronavirus COVID 19 has sharpened our awareness of societal inequities.

NZ Principal (June 2020, v. 35, (2)) covered the coronavirus global pandemic and reported the stories of eleven principals leading a variety of schools from different regions of the country. Without exception, as they described their home-learning plans for school lockdown, they highlighted inequities. Schools central to low socio-economic areas had a disproportionate number of young people with no or limited access to internet connectivity and devices. They were also the families whose children participated in breakfast and lunch programmes at school. Top of mind for principals of these schools was the health and wellbeing of their families who would be suffering most. Delivering care packs was just as important as delivering learning packs for the children.

Māori communities were over-represented in these areas and a year later, we find, despite a remarkable recovery in general, that Māori are suffering disproportionately in the unemployment statistics, resulting from job losses through COVID.

These inequities for Māori extend beyond education and employment and show up in our health and crime statistics too. So stark are the gaps, we can no longer ignore them.

At the root of these inequities is racism. Our colonial past traumatised Māori rendering them powerless, second class citizens and over time systematically stripped Māori of their resources, culture and language. Despite the Treaty of Waitangi, which was about protecting Māori mana and resources in partnership with the Crown, racism has taken hold and become well embedded.

Following many Māori uprisings over time – land marches, occupations, protests and hikoi, the roots of racism have hardly loosened. What these actions have done though is given us a collective awareness of the way in which Māori have been treated in the past and continue to be treated.

Public media is another contributor to enduring racism and last year, here in Āotearoa New Zealand, a large media company publicly apologised for the way its reportage has misrepresented Māori. The company admitted that it had contributed to divisiveness, racist stereotypes and marginalisation of Māori by reporting through a

monocultural lens and at times, a downright racist lens.

Underachievement of Māori has concerned school principals for decades. Just as the media investigation found, racist practices and attitudes also exist in schools. As long as tamariki Māori (Māori children) feel marginalised and undervalued in the school setting, their achievement will suffer.

Principals recognised that another intervention, another programme to address what was described as 'Māori deficit' was pointless and doomed to further failure. What was needed was a change of hearts and minds – a change to the culture of schools. The answer lay in recognising and eradicating racism.

A way forward in the form of the Māori Achievement Collaborations (MACs) was developed in partnership between Te Akatea, the Māori Principals' Association, the Ministry of Education and NZPF. The MACs have operated with great success for the past eight years. They involve principals taking a cultural journey. In collaboratively supported groups, they look inwards, to understand and acknowledge their own world view, share their world view in a facilitated and supported environment and from there, learn to understand, value and accept a different world view – that of Māori. It is about changing attitudes which in turn the principals take back to their own schools to create a new culture which values Māori alongside Pākehā cultures.

In this way, tamariki Māori feel school is their place, that their culture matters and has value and they have equality with their Pākehā (non- Māori) peers. Once this happens, tamariki Māori are ready and open to learning. Principals who have undertaken this cultural journey all agree it is transformational and that tamariki Māori in their schools have lifted their attendance rates, their

engagement with learning and their achievement levels. They recognise that the key to the MACs success is that it truly changes hearts and minds.

We recognise that here in Āotearoa New Zealand we are not a lone voice in acknowledging racist practices. We commend the ICP for republishing the excellent article on racism, "What's Fair, What's Right, What's Just", first published by the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) in 2020. We also acknowledge the OPC for making recordings of webinars and workshops on anti-racism available to members through their OPC website and for IPC similarly promulgating resources on racism. Racism is a global issue and it will take all of us to successfully address it.

We have not welcomed the invasion of the COVID 19 coronavirus and have high hopes that the vaccinations, now approved by our medical authorities, will deliver on their promise to eliminate threats to our physical health and jettison the virus from our collective shores. On the other hand, COVID has highlighted societal inequities and shone a light on the equally destructive virus we call racism. Let's hope we will now vigorously pursue an antidote to racism, not just for our public media and schools, but for the health of humanity everywhere.

What is it that we as a community are doing, or not doing, to ensure Kindergarten students are not suspended from school?

Malcolm Elliot – President: Australian Primary Principals Association

The issue of suspension of students from school has been a concern in Australia for many years. It arose again recently when a figure of 961 suspensions of students enrolled in Kindergarten in the state of New South Wales (2020 data) was published.

How do so many young children find themselves being suspended so early on their education path?

The main reason we see is that more and more children head into kindergarten and primary school before they are "school ready".

Each year we will see a cohort of children entering an education setting for the first time, some of whom will not even respond to their own name. Others begin their school life a significant distance behind other students in terms of their social skills.

Some students struggle to the point of being in fight, flight or freeze modes of behaviour. Many schools are completely fenced and gated, some are not. "Fight" brings safety issues for all, including, of course the child themselves, and the "freeze" can be missed or misunderstood. These are known now as trauma-related responses and therefore need careful and sensitive planning involving families and usually other support personnel. Compromised safety can lead to a period of suspension. The aim of keeping a child away from school is to facilitate formulation of, or changes to, plans. Systems quite rightly insist that suspensions be formalised so that data can be kept and monitored transparently, and as an influencer of policy, including expenditure.

Schools though, are finding that more and more parents are struggling to enact the necessary changes required at home to address the behavioural issues at school. It is important to note that the level of family resources available to parents, and their social, physical and emotional context varies widely.

One major factor that all school leaders are reporting is the rise in anxiety among students from a very young age. In our recent survey of school leaders, dealing with anxious students was the No. 1 concern of educators within our schools. Parents, many of whom may be suffering from anxiety themselves, are turning to their schools for help but, as much as schools do all they can, there is limited resourcing and a lack of skills to deal with such serious and widespread issues.

Given the escalation in the number of suspensions as children transition to secondary school (more than half of all suspensions in NSW in 2020 occurred in years 7 -9) it's clear that we need to do more as a community to support teachers, parents and, most importantly, our youngest students.

Through interceding at the earliest point in a child's life with the right support, we are most likely to see better behavioural outcomes for our children.

Today there is a lack of resourcing to support our teachers and parents, with too many delays between issues being identified and support enacted. Every school must have immediate access to a skilled psychologist, youth and social workers, who can provide effective support to both the student and the parent.

Suspension should be an act of last resort within the school system. If we invest, and get in early enough with proper support, this will go a long way to reducing problems that are far more difficult to deal with once those children reach their teenage years.

Big Picture Education Australia – An Introduction

Michael Hall: Asia-Oceania Representative ICP Executive

Back in 2006 I ran into an acquaintance at a meeting of the Australian Secondary Principals Association (ASPA), of which I was a Director. This person coincidentally, was a good friend of my wife Jennifer and had worked with Jennifer for many years during her school leadership journey and early Principalship. This person was an innovative educational leader in her own rights and from that time, she became a mentor, provocateur and inspirational colleague. Her support as we both embarked as Principals to change the education experiences of children and young people in schools in Canberra, across Australia, and in countries around the world we visited, Viv White, CEO and co-founder of Big Picture Australia (BPEA), also became a life-long friend of mine.

At this 2006 meeting, Viv outlined an educational design that focussed on the passions of young people as a way of making school pertinent and for developing the things they needed to be successful post-schooling. I was enthralled as she detailed the fundamental elements of the design and I was quick to invite her to join me at my senior secondary college to introduce Big Picture Education.

After that first meeting, Viv and the co-founder of BPEA, John Hogan, guided our team to forge relevant, significant and rewarding educational opportunities for our students. Naturally, they continue to counsel Principals in numerous schools in so many different contexts, who in turn, are fostering such pathways for thousands of students in Australia. Indeed, many of these students faced or continue to face disadvantage in so many forms. This BPEA design addressed the inequities that have been traditional barriers to success. Importantly, the Big Picture design is now available in many countries around the globe, evolving beyond its original home in the USA and the first off-shoot in Australia.

As one of the innovative Principals in Australia who introduced Big Picture into his school reflected;
"I often mention BP education in conversations when educational policies crop up. The most heartening aspect of the story from my own perspective is that you found principals who were risk takers. I think it is almost a miracle that, given the propensity to select people for promotion on the basis of their willingness to comply with political policies and priorities, there are still school leaders who are prepared to put the educational welfare of students first."

The following article is the Big Picture Education story, written by members of the BPEA team. Included are some defining narratives of the work done by some of the innovative Principals in Australia who are 'putting students first'.

Big Picture: A Learning Design for All Students
Writer: Joanne Pettit: Researchers: Suzanne Bower and Zoe Erbacher: April 2021

Currently, systems of secondary education around the world are struggling to keep pace with both technological and social change. Principals are urged to continuously produce outstanding results in national and international testing regimes; and to equip students for success in the Digital Age, while saddled with school structures designed for the Industrial Age.

Meanwhile students are reacting to a perceived lack of relevance and choice in increasingly crowded curricula, and feeling excluded from school structures that do not value nor accommodate their interests, learning styles, aptitudes or cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.

Teachers are frustrated by the lack of time to connect with students and to engender genuine enjoyment of learning in the face of

constant pressure to prepare students for yet another standardised exam.

What's more, the one-size-fits-all assessment regimes, much favoured for final year certification around the world, carry inherent cultural biases (both unconsciously and intentionally) that benefit some students very well, while disenfranchising the many; usually those from low socio-economic, migrant, or racially diverse backgrounds, those from first nations communities, or those with mental health issues or disabilities.

Unfortunately, we also know that many students do not make it as far as the senior years, as they have already been streamed or tracked out in the early years, or have disengaged from school in the middle school years and are facing alone the difficult task of transitioning to life outside of school.

It is a depressing portrait of education in the twenty first century, but fear not! Internationally, a transformative approach to secondary education and assessment, known as the 'Big Picture design for learning and school', is quietly and patiently restoring the balance for students from ALL walks of life, and assisting them to activate their potential.

The Big Picture design for learning is all about personalising learning so that students learn through their passions and interests; are part of an inclusive learning community; learn both in school and outside on a regular basis; build supportive relationships with a range of adult mentors; develop diverse knowledge and skill-sets where the academic is valued alongside the hands-on or creative; and learn to be ethical and respectful members of their community.

The goal of such an approach is to rekindle young people's interest in learning, and through choice and agency, equip them to transition successfully to rewarding careers, further study or other opportunities beyond school.

As co-founder of Big Picture Learning Elliot Washor puts it, "It's all about interest, relationships and practice."

The design was first implemented in 1996, in the USA, when Principals Dennis Littky and Elliot Washor co-founded a not-for-profit school known as 'The Met' in Providence, Rhode Island. Their aim was to catalyse vital changes in education by generating and sustaining student-led schooling where every student knew that they 'mattered' and was encouraged to explore as deeply or as broadly as they wished in areas of intense, novel or obscure personal interest, free from the constraints of prescribed subjects, timetables, multiple teachers, standardised curricula and exams. The practice of out-learning with expert mentors in the community on internships was also a central part of the design, so that young people were able to 'road-test' their interests while still at school, while building specialist, technical or artisanal skills and the social capital (often difficult to access in disadvantaged communities) that would help them to get a step ahead upon leaving school.

Families and communities - integral to mentoring young people through internships and real-world projects - were embraced as assets, rather than seen as burdens to manage.

Since then, the Big Picture international network has grown to include over 160 schools (and growing) worldwide, with partners in countries including the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Italy, Kenya, India, Israel and China.

The Big Picture design for re-imagining education.

In Australia, Big Picture Education Australia (BPEA), led by co-founders Viv White and John Hogan, has been operating since 2006. With over 40 schools in urban, regional and remote locations around the country, Big Picture has been actively working with public systems, Principals, teachers and families to implement the design for all students, but particularly for

those who, for a variety of reasons, are poorly served by traditional schooling.

It is a problem of which Principals are acutely aware. Many have tried to find ways to better serve these young people but are hamstrung by restrictive funding formulas, resource allocations, narrow reporting requirements or policy settings. The answer is not to be found in tweaking existing settings, however. In the experience of BPEA and our international partners, wholesale and courageous renovation of the way in which education is structured is required.

"'At-risk' students who leave school early, and are not engaged in work or study, face a significant earnings gap for the rest of their lives. I believe that the Big Picture approach of 'one student at a time' in small personalised schools keeps education relevant for all students and prepares them uncommonly well for life beyond school."
(Viv White, CEO BPEA)

In effect, the Big Picture design for learning has radically transformed the grammar of schooling. From curriculum, pedagogy, school structures, to assessment and post-school pathways, Big Picture has flipped around the way things are done so that the student and their choices are the central units of organising learning.

"Coming from the mainstream education system where I felt completely lost and unnoticed, it made all the difference to have teachers and peers who believed in me and my academic ability. It really changed my life."

(Britt Gittus, former BPEA student from Hobart, Tasmania, now undertaking her Honours in History at the University of Tasmania.)

Working within the public system has been an important part of the strategy for Viv White, so that the most disadvantaged students in Australian communities can access the most potentially transformative style of learning offered by Big Picture.

Champion Principals
Let's take a look at three case studies of Big Picture schools in Australia led by dynamic Principals who are committed to addressing cultural and structural inequity in educational outcomes for their young people.

Michael Saxon Liverpool Boys High School, Western Sydney, NSW

Michael Saxon has been Principal of Liverpool Boys High School in South West Sydney for over 13 years. The school has over 580 boys, from 60 + different nationalities, many of whom are refugees from countries like Iraq and Syria, to name just a few. A significant proportion of students and their families are students from low socio-economic backgrounds, but with high expectations that their children will attend university and have successful careers in this new country.

For the first five years Michael ran the school along traditional lines, but soon realised that for a variety of reasons, including language and literacy issues, trauma, the compliance-based model of classroom behaviour and the narrowly academic curriculum, that many of his boys were disengaging at an alarming rate. They were either not remaining in school for the senior years, or were being forced to go through the motions of exhaustive final-year State exams and experiencing failure.

He looked for a radical solution, and found it in the more active, inquiry-based learning of the Big Picture design, where boys were free to choose the topics and projects that interested them, such as designing and building prototypes of cars, the history of the legal system, software engineering, augmented reality, real estate, cardiac nursing and even floristry. His boys who elected to be in the Big Picture Academy began to flourish in the culture of 'advisory' with a single teacher and 17 supportive peers; they explored interests both long-held and fleeting, learnt to organise and plan their own time and projects; had ongoing learning experiences in local workplaces with mentors, and gradually started to build up their visions of what their future could look like.

In 2020, when BPEA piloted its new International Big Picture Learning Credential (warranted by the University of Melbourne) for final-year students, based around an interactive Learner Profile showcasing their best work, and a new set of measures for assessing academic learning, anchored in demonstrations of capacity, skill and qualities, 5 boys signed up and succeeded in gaining entry to the universities of their choice, on the strength of their Profiles, while a further 15 successfully transitioned to further vocational training and employment.

According to Michael Saxon, the Big Picture design

> **"...has been transformational in the way it empowers the boys to take ownership of their learning. The changes I've seen are in the students themselves, who are now more engaged, resilient and driven to succeed."**
> **Jennifer Flowers – Five Islands Secondary College, Port Kembla, NSW**

On the coast south of Sydney in Port Kembla, host to a major steel works, and situated in a former vocational training college, Principal of Five Islands Secondary College (FISC) Jennifer Flowers set about radically transforming her school for the benefit of all those young people in the local area whose needs were not being met elsewhere.

With a population of students from indigenous, refugee and working class backgrounds, some of whom identified as LGBTI, were fresh out of English Language Learning centres, were experiencing trauma or mental health issues, or were simply quirky kids looking for a safe haven from the mainstream with its relentless pressure, testing and demands for compliance and social conformity, Jennifer and her team of committed Big Picture advisory teachers

have established a thriving, learning environment that is unique in the area. Walking the school corridors, it is a quiet, respectful, adult environment where everyone is going about their business in a purposeful manner, and adults and students are pausing in the corridors for serious and engaging conversations.

"We constantly receive positive feedback about the safe and welcoming environment here - class sizes tend to be smaller and calmer and students experiencing anxiety or school-reluctance, difficulty socialising, or other challenges, can often reintegrate successfully despite their past experiences. Importantly, Five Islands Secondary College is a public school, and course fees are in line with this, making us an accessible pathway for students seeking an education with a genuine difference."
(Jennifer Flowers, Principal at The Five Islands Secondary College, Wollongong, Australia.)

In 2020, four senior students were awarded the new IBPL Credential and gained entry to their university of choice. One such student was Em Black, formerly an anxious, perfectionist, high-achieving student at her traditional local high school. In 2020 she graduated from FISC as a fully qualified yoga instructor with 500 hours experience, she runs yoga classes in several locations, is preparing the yoga curriculum for a new

Healthy Lifestyle project for Big Picture Learning International, and she is currently studying exercise physiology at the University of Wollongong.

Sandy Robertson – Ngaanyatjarra Lands School, Central Australia

This success is not limited to urban schools. The Big Picture design is also implemented in remote indigenous areas, such as in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands School (known as The Lands School) which has eight campuses across remote Central and Western Australia, headed by Executive Principal, Sandy Robertson.

Unlike many indigenous communities in Australia, the people of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands have been fortunate to have remained on country into the 21st century and thus they retain unbroken connections with their tjukurrpa (dreaming stories), land, traditional knowledge and practices. English

is a second and sometimes third or fourth language. Families are often on the move between communities for 'sorry business', ceremonies, or to access medical services, and so with the Big Picture design being used in all 8 campuses, and with each student working to a personal learning plan, they can go to any campus and pick up where they left off with their learning. There is no sense of 'missing out' or being left behind, because a student missed several days or weeks of school.

Sandy Robertson has found the Big Picture design a very flexible design for learning that values and 'counts' traditional ways of knowing, being in and understanding the world, alongside western knowledge. She refers to it as 'walking in two worlds'.

Students and teachers regularly go on-country with elders and bring those experiences back into the classroom, whether for art and design projects, or to connect with mathematical and science theories, or to use bush tucker in creative ways for those with an interest in food preparation and presentation.

Pic 8 Young people in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands tend not to leave their country. They do go out into the wider world for experiences, and they are well connected through internet and mobile phones, but in general, the young people tend to choose to stay.

The Lands School has a goal that was developed in tandem with the local indigenous community, 'Living well on the land', which, as Sandy explains, means:

"How is it that we can facilitate our kids being strong, involved, healthy adults in this country? What is it that is available here and what is going to serve them well in the life that they would like to live in the Lands?"

(Sandy Robertson, Executive Principal NG Lands school)

The school responds to varied cultural challenges. For example, between the ages 12 and 16, boys go through 'men's business', and upon return, are then seen as 'men'. As a result, these young men, called 'wadis', often stop attending school as it can be seen as too 'junior' for them. In response, in the Warburton campus, a separate classroom was created for them known as 'The Boys Senior College'. (The girls also have their own senior college). This has helped to sustain their education journey as

they pursue interests and take advantage of regular excursions and camps to the city to expose them to a variety of industries, technologies, and vocational training opportunities.

There have been big results: in 2019, after the introduction of Big Picture, the number of senior students graduating from The Lands school jumped from 0 to 10!

Watch a video about The Lands Schools here: https://www.bigpicture.org.au/file/ngaanyatjarra-lands-what-big-picture-design

Introducing the International Big Picture Learning Credential (IBPLC)

The latest change to the grammar of schooling by Big Picture Education Australia, has been the re-design of final-year assessment and credentialing.

While most students around the globe sit for standardised one-off exams, with a heavy emphasis on memorised bodies of culturally-bound content and written tests rather than authentic tasks, BPEA's new

Big Picture Kellogg Foundation Application
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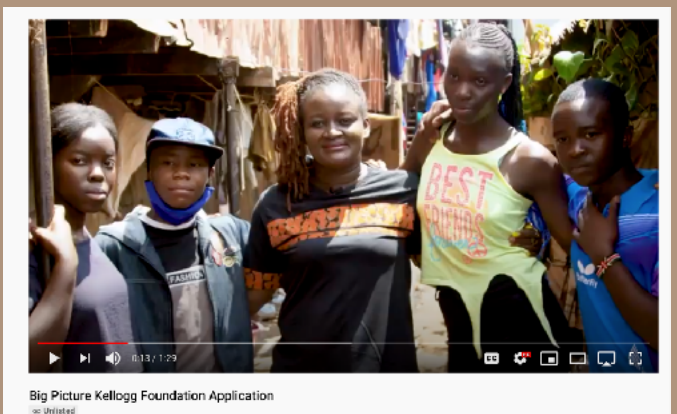
secondary education credential known as the 'International Big Picture Learning Credential' (IBPLC), addresses the inherent inequity embedded in assessment regimes, and recognises the capacities and potential of diverse populations.

The aim has been to put 'the person' back into educational assessment so that young people exit Big Picture settings with a credential that offers rich, meaningful information about their abilities to the wider community, provides students with significant agency in the way they represent themselves, and importantly, does not reduce them to a single numerical score arrived at through opaque algorithms. The Credential consists of a personalised digital transcript, known as a Learner Profile, that represents equally their academic results, and personalised

information curated by students in their Online Portfolio.

The assessment tools are warranted by the University of Melbourne's Assessment Research Centre, and the credential is now recognised by 18 Australian universities.

Academic results are drawn from psychometrically validated assessment tools that evaluate performance-based, standards-referenced authentic tasks performed on multiple occasions. Results are expressed as levels of developmental progression from 1 to 5.

Early evidence from the piloting of the new credential in Australia shows that end-readers of Learner Profiles in tertiary institutions, industry and the wider community are pleasantly surprised and enthused by the rich, meaningful insights into the candidates before them.

Another important feature of this approach to assessment is that the professional judgement of Advisory teachers, who know their students well, is valued. Consistency and reliability are supported through regular moderation and professional learning.

The plan is to scale the IBPLC across Australia while testing and then implement it in New Zealand, Kenya and the USA.

View a 90 second video pitch to the Kellogg Foundation to help fund the roll-out of the IBPLC internationally:
https://youtu.be/B-GEiWeMmYw

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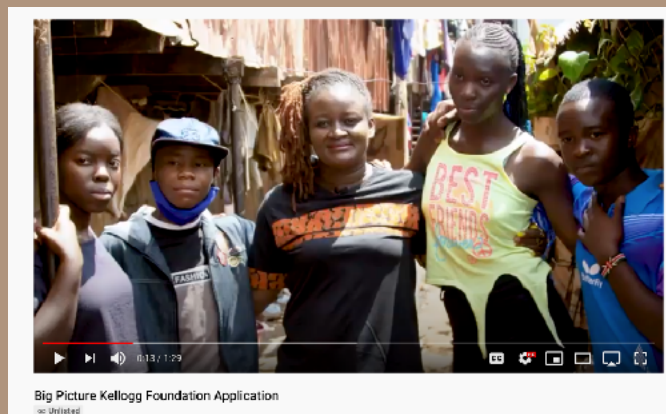
In conclusion, the innovation of the Big Picture design for learning and its new assessment credential lies in the potential for societies and economies alike to be enriched by the participation and elevation of talented young people from diverse backgrounds, while achieving the social justice goal of growing the access to numerous pathways for secondary school graduates around the globe.

What is the Big Picture design for learning?

passi♥n

Each student has a personalised learning plan endorsed by their family and designed around their interests and passions, with links to the curriculum.

Students take courses and work on a variety of projects in areas of personal interest that they design and manage.

Students learn in small groups of 17 known as an 'advisory' where there is a culture of belonging, support and respect.

COMMUNITY

They also complete practical projects while on internship with an expert mentor in the community, to gain experience in a field of interest.

Students collect evidence of their learning in a portfolio and regularly present their work at a public exhibition to teachers, mentors, peers and family. This is the basis of their assessment throughout school.

IBPLC

The International Big Picture Learning Credential is an education passport awarded to all senior students on pathways to employment, training and university.

Big Picture®
EDUCATION AUSTRALIA
ONE STUDENT AT A TIME IN
A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS

www.bigpicture.org.au

References:

Page 6 - 8: Dismantling Inequity in Education: ICP in Conversation with Mary Robinson
The conversation was facilitated by Maria Doyle
– European Regional Representative

1.Green Schools: https://www.greenschoolsalliance.org/home
2.https://www.girlsnotbrides.org
3.The Elders www.theelders.org are an independent group of global leaders working together for peace, justice and human rights. The Elder's vision is of a world where people live in peace, conscious of their common humanity and their shared responsibilities for each other, for the planet and for future generations.

4. Drive for five : A Global Call to Action for the educationof adolescent girls (with Bono and Mary Robinson).
The five actions are:
She has a desk – 12 years of free, quality education
She is confident – supporting girls confidence
She learns the skills she needs – quality relevant education
She is safe – keeping girls is safe in schools
She is healthy
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4WoxYG_yzE
5. He for She https://www.heforshe.org/en
Empowerment of boys and men to be champions and to stand up when they see or hear violence- this is not right or just.
6. Climate Justice: Hope, Resilience and the Fight for a Sustainable Future – Mary Robinson.
7. The Five Injustices
Injustice of climate -poorest countries, indigeneous, small island nations who were the least responsible for the current climate crisis hardest hit.
Injustice of Gender - Women have less power, less rights, less access to capital but they still need to put food on the table.
Intergenerational injustice – climate change has exacerbated current inequities – it demands deliberate intervention for todays' youth, the next generation, preparation for life.
Injustice of pathways to development – ensuring that policy and strategies support all to make the transition ie green jobs, home etc
Injustice to nature itself – lose of bio-diversity
8. Intersectionality is an analytical framework for understanding how aspects of a person's social and political identities combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege. Examples of these aspects include gender, caste, sex, race, class, sexuality, religion, disability, physical appearance, and height.
9. Equity is managing the inequalities within any given context, ensuring that potential discriminations that are part of the wider context don't happen in the school. Highlighting the inequalities that exist, focuses our attention on the actions that need to occur in our community – it takes us to the core of equity, inclusion and support and we can then focus at a community level which is more doable ie. Drive for Five.

Page 23 - 26 Building a better education for all post pandemic
Virginia O'Mahony - Irish Primary Principals' Network and ICP President 2011-2012

• Australian Academy of Science 2020; Graham and Sahlberg 2020; Finnish Education Evaluation Centre 2020; Noble 2020)
• (OECD 2018; Parker et al. 2018)
• UNESCO: Education in a post-COVID world: International Commission on the Futures of Education 2020.