

APPA Newsletter – October 2009

Dear Colleague

A h-u-g-e thank you to all the primary principals, deputies, etc who ventured to the Gold Coast for our annual conference last month. And, of course, an even h-u-g-e-r thank you to the wonderful conference committee who worked tirelessly organising a program to both challenge and support us.

It is critical that we gather in large numbers each year to make a collective statement about primary education and its importance. So where to next year? Perth.....from 21 - 24 September 2010.

Congratulations to Anthony McGruther (Queensland) and Patrick McGrath (ACT) for their APPA Life Membership and to Rensche Diggeden (WA) for winning the \$10,000 MSP / APPA International Travel Award for 2009. Rensche will be heading to Scotland which has implemented a country wide *Assessment for Learning Strategy*. Will it be your turn to win \$10,000 next year?

Building the Education Revolution Primary Schools for the 21st Century (P21)

A number of us have become a tad concerned about the negativity surrounding the Building the Education Revolution – Primary Schools for the 21st Century program and the fact that there have been some subtle suggestions that perhaps spending this amount of money on primary is a bit frivolous. There have even been some calls to bring the stimulus package to a halt.....eek!

At our conference, we asked principals to complete a very short survey about P21 in their school. It was excellent to see that 85% of principals rated it at the top end.

Comments such as: *“This is the best thing that has ever happened to primary”* and *“The excitement of parents, staff and kids is intoxicating”*. *“Children and teachers will thrive in these new learning areas – big, bold and beautiful”*.

A summary of the report and the press release we put out are both on our website www.appa.asn.au. Mind you, most journalists only want to hear about the problems rather than any good news stories.

Many of the principals acknowledged the glitches but it was a bit sad to see a number of you worrying about whether you will receive the funding.....

**The Australian National Audit Office has sent every primary principal a survey to complete about P21.
Can I please urge you to complete it? It's critical that your voice is heard.**

Another worrying outcome from our survey was the number of principals in an R-12 school where the money was supplementing the secondary sector rather than the primary. I would love to hear from you if this is your experience. Thank you so much – I know many of you cited the increased workload as an issue, but you could also see the final outcome which makes it all worthwhile.

Transparency and Accountability

The Government's transparency and accountability agenda is certainly dominating the landscape and keeping us very busy. At the conference, the following 2 motions were passed and have been sent to all Ministers:

Motion #1

APPA urges the Government to delay the publication of school performance information on a national website until it is able to post on the website the total per student funding allocated to each school.

Motion #2

APPA urges the Government to post the reliability and validity of the NAPLAN tests on the website and explicitly state the margin of error that must be taken into account when comparing individual student results and individual school results.

During the conference, I also shared a draft mock-up of what the national website template (which will include information on every school) could look like.

It was a bit staggering at the number of people who rushed over to the APPA booth to pick up a copy saying they hadn't seen it before!

I have attached a copy of the draft School Profile for Public Reporting template with the newsletter just in case you also haven't seen it. It's on our website as well.

Did you know, for example, that there are plans for this national website to group your school with 40 other *like* schools?

Using your NAPLAN data the website will show your school's mean, the national mean and your *like* schools' mean.

The schools will be colour coded; green for any schools ahead and red for those schools below.

There is a great deal happening and I do urge you to touch base with our website every now and again as we have heaps of information on it about transparency / accountability / league tables (our principles, position paper, Ken Boston's visit, articles, etc).

Your national executive council will be meeting with Barry McGaw on 29 October for an update on the **new national website**. We really need to keep in touch about this.

Parliamentary Friends of Primary Education

I am delighted to announce that Mike Symon, Member for Deakin in Victoria, has generously agreed to chair our Parliamentary Friends of Primary Education group which we are establishing. Senator Russell Trood, Senator for Queensland, has kindly agreed to be the group's deputy chair.

Gosh, this is such an exciting venture for us and our invitations to a breakfast at Parliament House have been sent to a large number of politicians. We will prepare a *package* for each *friend* and talk to them about how important we are in the educational journey and about our priorities and how valuable it is to have their support.

A number of you have contacted me suggesting your local member would be interested – please don't hesitate to do that.

Students with Disabilities

Full marks must go to the Liberal Party which held a policy forum and invited APPA to make a short presentation to the invited participants. Given that students with disabilities and extreme behaviours is a big priority for us, I was delighted to accept the invitation. My brief presentation is on our website www.appa.asn.au and identifies our many areas of concern (from our research) particularly the lack of funding and the way the sectors are treated quite differently..... Please, please don't hesitate to contact me at ltrimper@senet.com.au if you would like a say.

It's good that the Liberal Party has promised reform in this area.

Annual General Meeting

A copy of APPA's 2009 AGM Booklet is on our website in the *Meetings* section of the *APPA Business* tab. The booklet includes such items as the President's Report, Conference History, Secretariat and National Executive Council members, Life Members, a one page report from your state/territory association, etc. The really good news for APPA is that your state/territory association unanimously endorsed a fee increase for APPA from \$20 to \$30 per person. Each state/territory association will pay this to APPA according to their membership numbers.

APPA's future sustainability and capacity is a big challenge for us. As you would know, you cannot do any long term planning on income that is not guaranteed eg sponsorship, projects, etc. So as you can see, the only guaranteed money APPA receives is from your association's membership fee as outlined above.

We still are hoping that one day we will have a permanent office base in Canberra managed with the appropriate staff and, of course, more access to our lobbyist, etc etc.

We must make sure though that this happens sooner rather than later..... Your National Executive Council will continue to address this challenge so that we do not lose any momentum at the federal level.

On that note, we must acknowledge our fantastic sponsors who allow us to dream because of their support. I do know that without them we would not have been able to conduct a campaign to get primary on the federal agenda.

So, thank you to **Scholastic, MSP Photography, Education Works, R.E Batger Pty Ltd and Wattyl / Solver Paints.**

As usual, lots happening, so thank you, thank you, if you get time to do the BER – P21 survey from the Australian National Audit Office.

Leonie Trimper
President

PS Last month, our website had 412,694 hits! What was so popular?

- Sparkle box resources
- Writing Report Card comments. It doesn't have to be sooo stressful.
- Coxhoe Primary School (UK) – Numeracy
- Links to Literacy

It's worth a look – 906 cities located in 106 countries are now using our site on a regular basis. Wow!