



Small Schools Newsletter

September 2013

New committee members

The committee welcomes Jennifer Lawlor (Brungle Public School) and Danny Spillane (Kentucky Public School) to the committee following their election at June and August Councils. The committee hopes Jen and Danny enjoy their time representing our small school members. Their experience will be a valuable resource.

Small schools survey

Members will soon receive a small schools survey. The responses to this survey will inform the priorities of the Small Schools Restricted Committee. Your involvement in the survey is encouraged and should not take more than 15 minutes. The higher the number of responses from small schools members, the more accurately the committee will be able to interpret and act on the data.

Rural Education Conference

The Rural Education Conference will be held on November 2. The closing date for applications is October 14. For further details contact the Bathurst Federation office on (02) 6331 5761.

Gonski campaign

Instead of \$10 billion flowing to schools over six years (the legislated Gonski model), the Abbott Government has only committed to spending \$2.8 billion over four years. The Coalition's policy would maintain the status quo plus consumer price index (CPI), leaving schools billions of dollars worse off and money continuing to fail to reach where it is needed most.

The Gonski campaign must focus on ensur-

ing the Abbott Government delivers on its election pledge for the next four years, and to convince it to honour the final two years of the six year NSW agreement.

Use the igiveagonski.com.au website to find the exact dollar figures your school could expect under the legislated "full Gonski" six year funding model. The model sets a base figure of funding a primary school student at \$9271 and a high school student at \$12,193. On top of the base figures come loadings for Aboriginal students, disability students, low socio-economic status families, low English language proficiency students, school size, and school location. Small schools will satisfy many of these categories and can expect multiple loadings.

Access the Campaigns section of the Federation website and "unpack" Gonski for yourself and your school community by downloading the "New Schools Funding Plan" PowerPoint. Follow these steps:

1. Go to www.nswtf.org.au
2. Click on the Campaigns tab and select "Gonski"
3. Scroll to the bottom of the page to Campaign Resources and select "New Schools Funding Plan slideshow"
4. Click on "New School Funding Plan (PowerPoint)" to download.

Teacher Improvement Program

One aspect of concern in a small school is the implementation of informal support plans and the Teacher Improvement Program (TIP). The size of the school staff and community can sometimes lead to difficulties in terms of support and supervision for teachers.

In April the Small Schools Restricted Committee met with Federation Organisers and representatives from Employee Performance and Conduct Unit to discuss the Teacher Improvement Program. Principals are urged to contact EPAC as soon as problems occur and to ensure they separate conduct from efficiency when looking at putting teachers on a Teacher Improvement Program. It is important that teacher efficiency is linked to the teacher standards from the Teacher Improvement Program, not the standards within the NSW Institute of Teachers.

Formal improvement programs come with support, consisting of additional funding of 20 days. This funding supports the implementation of a TIP. This might allow a school executive from a nearby school to assist with the evaluation of the program. A foundation of the process is to ensure the teacher receives procedural fairness.

Assistance can also be sought from the Communications/Welfare Section of the Federation.

Documents that may assist include:

- *Legal Issues Bulletin 3: Procedural fairness in the Department of Education and Communities* (Department of Education and Communities)
- *Legal Issues Bulletin 33: Good practice when conducting difficult interviews and related issues* (Department of Education and Communities)
- Information leaflet, *The role of a support person in an interview or meeting* (Federation)
- *M1 Advice for new scheme teachers* (Federation)
- *M5 Maintenance of accreditation at proficient/professional competence* (Federation)
- *TR5 Advice to members in regards to witness statements* (Federation)
- *TR6 Complaints and allegations (compliant handling policy guidelines) in the schools sector* (Federation)
- *TR 10 Teacher efficiency (full time and part time permanent teachers, temporary and casual school teachers, executive staff and principals)* (Federation)
- *TR 11 Teacher efficiency (teachers in their first year of employment or re-employment)* (Federation)
- *TR 15 Teacher, the Department/TAFE and the use of social media* (Federation).

Staffing

In May the Small Schools Restricted Committee met with Staffing Services Director Mark Anderson and others at the Blacktown Staffing Services Directorate.

P6 relieving principal positions

Discussion centred on the large number of relieving principals in P6 schools. There are about 61 around the state, some of which have been in place for more than 18 months. There is no set rule for advertising positions as substantive. This is under the control of the relevant Director and Executive Director Public Schools, who look at the viability of the school and firm enrolment numbers. Staffing plays no part in this process. It is told when to advertise or act on nominated transfers in the case of the recess, closure or reclassification of a school.

Supplementary staffing when numbers increase

The committee was reassured that when student numbers in a P6 school increase to between 21 and 25, 0.04 supplementary staffing will be granted irrespective of when the increase occurs. It is not reliant on census data. Principals should always keep their enrolment data up to date on the Online Management of School Enrolments and Entitlements (OMSEE) website so this can be tracked.

Other matters

Staffing has been looking at incentives for attracting new recruits to teaching in rural areas. Beginning teachers attending the Blacktown office were asked to complete a questionnaire as to what incentives would attract them to schools west of the line.

With National Partnerships there are many teachers in temporary positions. These numbers will decrease at the end of this year when most National Partnership funding ceases.

The committee discussed the procedure for appointments to principal vacancies. Incentive transfers are always matched first as is the case with classroom teacher vacancies where incentive transfers and Aboriginal employment applicants are matched first.

Mark Anderson talked about job applications and how applicants should read school plans

and annual school reports and have a good look at the school's website to specifically tailor their application to the advertisement. A good place to look is the Teach NSW website, or alternatively applicants should subscribe to JobFeed, a weekly digest. Teach NSW also has a promotional booklet online.

Some discussions proceeded about codes and their relevance. The Primary Principals' Association would like to see a rural code but this is not really practical. Applicants for jobs in rural communities need to familiarise themselves with the local community and environment through community websites.

Recess or closure of P6 schools

The committee met with Department of Education and Communities Operations Manager Debbie Hocking and Customer Relations Manager Michael Costello at Bridge Street on August 29 to discuss the lack of consistency in the recess or closure of P6 schools.

Ms Hocking tabled a document released by the Office of Schools through the Primary Principals' Association and Secondary Principals' Council entitled "Protocols for schools where recess, closure, amalgamation or other educational provision models area to be considered".

Independent public schools

The federal Coalition's policy is that up to a quarter of all government schools will be run as independent schools within four years. The model proposed is similar to that operating in

Western Australia.

A useful read on this matter is the Melbourne Graduate School of Education's *Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative: Final report*. One interesting feature identified in the study is the inequity in staffing schools created by the independent public school model. It became evident that the more remote a school was, the more difficult it was for it to attract staff.

These schools will be answerable to school boards comprising parents and community members.

The Small Schools Restricted Committee would be interested to hear the views of members currently in small schools on the scenario their school would face should it be declared an independent public school answerable to a board of parents and community members. Please email bathurst@nswtf.org.au or fax your responses to (02) 6331 8217.

Support Stewart House

Support the commitment Stewart House has made to NSW public school children in need through a regular deduction from your bank account and hosting schools fundraising events such as the envelope donation drive, mufti days and discos.

Charity donations support the out of school hours care program and each year 1800 public school children in need, from all over NSW and the ACT, stay at Stewart House.

Contact Stewart House at www.stewarthouse.org.au or by phoning (02) 9938 3100 or (02) 9938 3021.

Should you wish to contribute in any way to the committee's discussions contact the Bathurst Federation office on (02) 6331 5761.