

## Message from our President – August 2020

### Principals supporting families, and families supporting principals

Hi everyone,

Earlier this month we celebrated National Principals Day - scroll down for our graphic - where we publicly recognised and appreciated the leadership and support our school principals provide. ACSSO staunchly advocates for our state school principals as community leaders.

Supportive principals are crucial to school staff, but perhaps even more crucial to other members of the school and local community. As leaders, principals are the school's public face – from presenting events or setting the vision and direction for the school, to resolving conflicts and managing emergencies.

The continued support principals provide for family engagement through school learning and external community development sets a clear course for a culture promoting a welcoming and respectful attitude.

#### Family engagement

Something we often discuss with school organisations is how they work with their principals. There is definitely a correlation between motivated and community-oriented principals and families who feel engaged in the school and student bodies that feel empowered.

I hear many stories of the fantastic outcomes and successful joint projects in school communities where there is clear and mutual support between the principal and families.

So to all the principals who work with their communities and build relationships to make their schools more than just a school, I thank you for that work – it is highly appreciated and you are a key part of the community.

#### Safe and respectful

Of course, it isn't just the responsibility of principals to develop the engagement. Deep interactions within school communities come from a shared culture of meaningful growth.

A core element of family and community engagement is to improve relationships between members of both the school and local community. This brings many benefits like spreading realistic expectations of parents, students, staff and principals. Often our mutual expectations are not clear or realistic, and this can result in even poorer interactions, including frustrations and unacceptable behaviour.

A Federal Government strategy to address violence and bullying in the school environment is being currently developed to improve the safety of the school environment.

I look forward to the outcomes of this strategy and for the acknowledgement that when family engagement is done well it creates positive learning outcomes. I hope it also captures the sometimes hidden benefits of quality family-school engagement, like reducing violence and bullying behaviours and providing a safe working and learning environment.

## **Pandemic-enhanced disadvantage**

In current times, a mention of COVID-19 and related impacts is expected and typically a leading item. This month I wanted to focus on our school leadership communities first.

As we continue to hear about the pandemic's affect on schools across the nation, we are all still feeling the lack of information. Position statements from all forms of government and organisations have changed based on available advice.

There are plenty of organisations and people crying out for more information on what can be done to help our least fortunate students and families or whole school communities. The true effect on disadvantaged students and families will not be fully realised for many years to come.

One way ACSSO has built information was our targeted survey to discern challenges faced by our represented families. There is significant material there to contribute to a model of impact that extends on our [initial summary](#). Where we can, this will be an ongoing focus for us and will allow more information to be gathered and analysed to help our most needy families. Watch this space!

As always, please look after yourself, and others in your community.

**Andrew Bidwell**

**Chair**

**Australian Council of State School Organisations**

**August 2020**