

MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT

DR JIM WATTERSTON, FACEL



There is an enormous amount of activity gathering momentum across the country as we progress towards a national curriculum and the development of standards to guide teaching; leadership; professional learning; and pre-service teacher education. Throw in national testing, the MySchool website, National Partnerships and the many new

initiatives within each state or territory and it is a completely full agenda. It is arguable that school and system administrators have never been busier but is this frenetic activity having a positive impact on classrooms and student learning?

My judgement is that the answer is mixed. That is, where schools are alive to the agenda around them and where people are engaged in some of the big picture thinking then classrooms and schools are changing wholeheartedly for the better. In other locations however, it appears teachers are so busy that it is hard to look beyond the day to day reality and the 'new world' is evolving without their input. The quality of education across this country is undoubtedly very high but most indicators reveal that we are not making the progress that many stakeholders expect. The answer cannot be to expect teachers to work harder, so the improvement that is required must be related to enhanced practice which will only come through capacity building. In that respect, ACEL is incredibly well positioned to lead and provide help as we have a smorgasbord of relevant and worthwhile learning opportunities available to help leaders and their schools tap into contemporary innovation, research and professional development, in order to work smarter and not harder.

One such tool available through ACEL, in partnership with USQ, is the **Diagnostic Inventory of School Alignment (DISA)** which can be utilised to base collaborative judgements about leverages for school improvement. DISA is an online tool that can be used to examine your school's overall alignment and is comprised of three surveys customised for staff, parents, and students. DISA is grounded in The Research-based Framework for Organisational Alignment. The implementation of the Diagnostic Inventory enables you to understand your school in terms of the relative levels of social, organisational and intellectual capital.

On the quality professional learning front, we are now taking registrations for our prestigious annual conference which is renowned for its leading edge focus and incisive thought leadership. This year's conference, **Learning Landscapes**, will be held in South Australia at the Adelaide Convention Centre from 5-7 October. A key feature of this year's proceedings will be the integration of the education community in a dialogue with business and political leaders to ensure that we create a shared way forward to ensure that every Australian receives the best educational opportunities throughout their life. This promises to be a unique opportunity to engage with prominent business identities; not-for-profit organisations; key politicians and educators; to explore new opportunities that can be achieved



through emerging and improved synergies. I urge all members to be part of this landmark meeting and look forward to seeing you there.

A visit to the ACEL website will acquaint you with a multitude of outstanding opportunities and resources designed to help you as we seek to exploit the opportunities that currently exist to improve our practice. Examples include **Good Schools to Great Schools** with Richard Gerver. Richard will present learnings around creating tomorrow's schools today in Brisbane and Sydney in June. This program has been specifically designed for leaders currently leading teams at the senior leadership level and those in system leadership. Based on his bestselling book, Richard will share his own journey as a school leader through transforming a school from failing to outstanding. He will explore the key thinking behind future education models and principles and look at the leadership challenges facing school leaders everywhere as they seek to find their own solutions for the unique challenges they face.

In my view, ACEL has never been more relevant and important as educational leaders and teachers grapple with the demands and complexities in the current environment. As members I urge you to engage with us as we strive to support and lead. In order to maintain our capacity to continue to develop member services I would ask all of you to mention the benefits of your association with ACEL to a colleague or two as we seek to grow our membership.

I wish you all well as we continue to search for new answers to old problems but I urge you to look after yourself in the process. I see too many educators working long hours and committing themselves in ways that do not foster a sustainable work-life balance. Investing in quality time for yourself will pay dividends to your school and those around you (not to mention your family and friends!). We need fit, healthy and well-balanced people leading Australian education and to achieve that takes good planning and care. I believe that to help others effectively you need to invest in yourself physically, socially, mentally and spiritually. I practice what I preach and hope you provide the same modelling to others. There will always be too much work to get through so stress less and prioritise more.

Life is short so take the time to purposefully enjoy every second!

