Galina Zenin demonstrates wellbeing practices for life at the Innovation Showcase

TEACHERS FINDING NEW WAYS TO INSPIRE

Select any school across the length and breadth of this state and you'll find great work going on behind the scenes: teachers adapting the flood of new technology to meet classroom needs, teachers developing new ways to engage students and teachers thinking their way through a diversity of challenges. Every school has its innovators, and just some of these people were on display last month at the Melbourne Convention Centre as part of the 2011 Innovation Showcase, presented by DEECD.

This annual event presents a selection of keynote speakers and workshop presentations by teachers, outstanding students and various educational organisations. The Showcase was abuzz with inspiring ideas, collegial knowledge-sharing, and a real sense of collective energy emanating from these everyday heroes of the classroom.

Certain themes clearly predominated. New technology was always going to be a focus, but it was inspiring to see the way teachers have shaped technology to energise curriculum, rather than just as empty trinkets of modernity. 'Learning through Games' was an all-day experiential session run by teachers from primary schools at Meredith, Pentland, Ringwood North and Dallas. All four schools use the gaming environment to engage students and deliver authentic learning experiences. At Dallas, for instance, the students participate in a collaborative global project entitled 'DeforestACTION'. In another presentation River Gum Primary School demonstrated how their students and teachers are now using multimedia in their classrooms each week, linking it to all areas of the curriculum.

professional PRACTICE

victorian institute of teaching

Value learning. Value teaching.

NEWSLETTER

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Professional Practice is the official newsletter of the Victorian Institute of Teaching and is used to communicate important policy decisions and developments that may affect a teacher's registration. It provides a forum for the discussion of professional issues most relevant to teachers: their learning, their practice and values. The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not of the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

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Victoria The Place To Be

The DEECD Innovation Showcase brought together teachers, students and other educational organisations to demonstrate the latest exciting initiatives

Various forms of virtual learning were also on display, indicating how teachers have thought laterally and adapted the widescreen communication potential of technology like Skype, Wikis and elluminate.

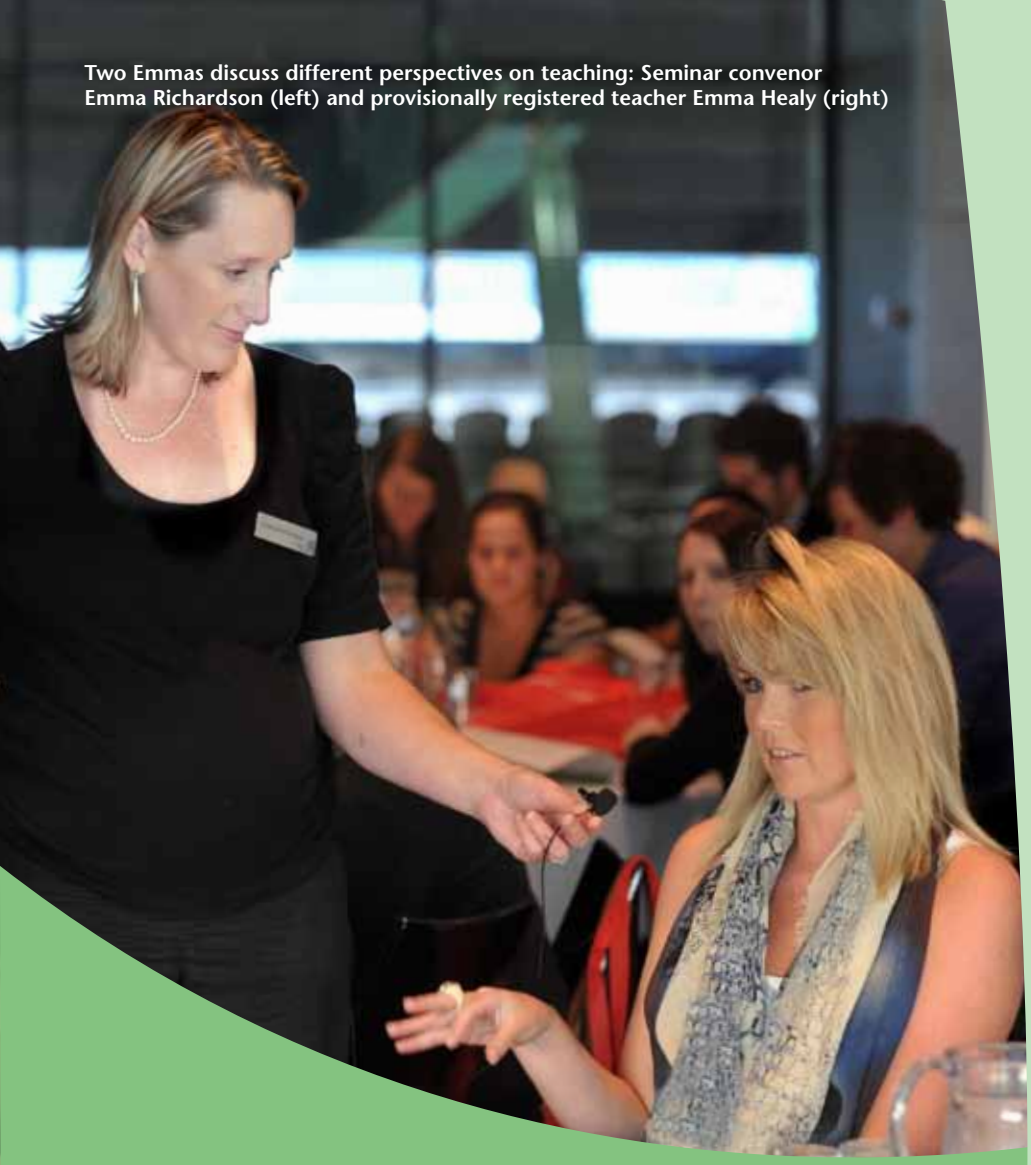
The work of the Country Education Project at various schools was highlighted, including the global learning taking place at Hawkesdale Primary School (which was featured in the last edition of *Professional Practice*) and the 'eKids VCE Biology' developed in partnership with a number of rural schools. In support of such innovation, DEECD demonstrated 'FUSE', a website with a range of teaching and learning content and Web 2.0 tools.

However, to counteract the impression that innovation simply means 'technology', there were many other fascinating and highly instructive examples of teachers and schools finding new ways to meet the needs of their students. Dr Cheryl McKenzie from Ashburton Primary School gave insights into the 'World Wise' program, which takes students along an investigative journey over five continents to look at global interdependence, diverse cultures, human rights, peace building and sustainable futures. The Victorian Institute of SRC Teacher Advisors discussed a range of issues, including how the work of student councils can extend beyond the school fence boundary.

There were examples of schools dealing with the diverse issues of the student community. These included Gisborne Secondary College's 'Live4Life' whole-of-school approach to student mental health and wellbeing; Warracknabeal Secondary College's 'Turning Point' satellite VCAL program to encourage disengaged youth back to a relevant education; an enlightening demonstration of learning in the dance space at Sunshine Special Developmental School; and the educational partnership developed between Eltham High School, Doreen and Arthur's Creek Primary Schools and the Indigenous schools and communities of Donydji and Gapuwiyak in North East Arnhem Land. Closer to home, the challenges of teaching in a community of over 30 different cultures were explored in a presentation about Footscray Primary School's bilingual education immersion program.

Of course this is only a snapshot of the work going on in classrooms across the state, and as a DEECD initiative, its focus was government schools. But it is indicative of how visionary thinking is being applied by teachers to meet the demands of an ever challenging profession.

The Innovation Showcase demonstrated the capacity of some truly bright educational minds, and provided an eye-opening experience and lots of great ideas for all educators. It is well worth marking next year's showcase in your calendar.



Two Emmas discuss different perspectives on teaching: Seminar convenor Emma Richardson (left) and provisionally registered teacher Emma Healy (right)

TOMORROW'S STARS AT ETIHAD

The achievement of full registration is a significant milestone in a teacher's career. But it's not just a rubber stamp, nor should it be seen as an onerous adjunct to a teacher's considerable workload. The move from provisional to full registration is a crucial part of a teacher's development, signifying that they have met the standards of professional practice.

Last month over 200 aspiring classroom leaders gathered at Etihad Stadium for term one's final Provisionally Registered Teachers Seminar. Convened by experienced teachers, the two-hour session was just one in a series of such seminars, and part of a program provided by the Victorian Institute of Teaching and supported across the education sectors. The program is available for all provisionally registered teachers each year and includes two days of professional development support for mentors and seminars for provisionally registered teachers. These are held at various locations across the state.

One of the seminar leaders is the Institute's Manager of Professional Standards Rhonda McPhee. Rhonda, along with the rest of the team who present the seminars, is a registered teacher, with over 20 years experience including school leadership roles and work as a CRT.

Rhonda outlines the range of activities the Institute provides to facilitate the process:

'We do a whole range of things, including mentor days and principal briefings to make sure our leaders in schools know what is expected. We run seminars for provisionally registered teachers state wide in after school hours.'

'Our focus is giving the key messages of what is required for full registration and what the Institute expects. We give a broad outline of what the process involves, including ways teachers can document evidence from everyday practice to demonstrate the standards as independent practitioners. This is a significant step from teacher training, where they were always under supervision.

'It's such an important process, because it assures the community that all our teachers are capable practitioners and meet professional standards.'

The program seeks to demystify the process, which can seem intimidating for some inexperienced teachers:

'The feedback we most often get at the sessions is relief. Teachers realise that what might have seemed a little overwhelming is in fact what they are already doing in their schools and classrooms.'

'We explain how to use working documents as well as pro formas from the resource folder teachers receive at the seminars. Our new teachers are required to work with experienced teachers and to reflect on their practice.'

The Etihad session discussed the question: what does it mean to be a professional? Intrinsic to this are the Code of Conduct and the Code of Ethics as well as professional standards. The Code of Conduct is an integral part of understanding professionalism, and forms part of the discussion at seminars:

'We briefly touch on the Code. We have a professional obligation to remind teachers of this document, and help guide the choices they make.'

How does an inexperienced teacher, coping with a new career and its attendant workload demands, find the time to think about meeting the requirements for full registration? Rhonda explains the way to approach it. It doesn't have to be that difficult:

'We talk about time framing the process. It's not an assignment on top of teaching; it's an accumulation of what is already being done.

'We talk about how this is not starting from scratch. It's continuing the learning begun at uni. We go through the eight standards and help teachers understand how these are embedded in their everyday work. We emphasise that this is about the day-to-day work of a teacher, which is undertaken with support from experienced colleagues.'

One of the first points made at the Etihad seminar was that Victoria is a leader in the development of professional standards for beginning teachers and Victorian teachers will be well prepared for the move to national standards. The resource folder provided for all provisionally registered teachers deals with the eight standards currently in place. Just by choosing one of the three options to gather evidence of full registration ensures that teachers will be able to demonstrate all standards.

'With the first and most popular option, a sequence of teaching needs to be documented. Questions guide reflections on practice and student learning as well. The sequence of teaching documented will most probably be one that is already in place at the school. Teachers are reminded that it's important to take their "uni hat off" so they are not seeing this as an assignment. There is no word count and definitely no hand-in date. The process is about beginning teachers applying their knowledge from their tertiary education in the real world of the classroom and the school community. This is crucial to the ongoing development of being a teacher.'

An important aspect covered in the seminar is the recommendation process. The Institute outlines a preferred way for the school recommendation panel and process to proceed. It's an opportunity for collegial discussion, not a 'test' for the teacher.

Rhonda McPhee and the Institute's team of experienced teachers are there to reassure provisionally registered teachers, guide them through this important process, and help them to see it as a natural part of their development:

'Remember – this is about your work, with your students. It's using what you're doing and reflecting on it. It's a learning process, and it's about continuing the learning. And we are here at the Institute to reassure you on the phone or via email. If you need to talk through things, make contact. We're here to help.'

YOUR CARD. YOUR PROFESSION.

It may seem like just another card, unobtrusive among the proliferation in any teacher's belongings. But if you own one, or you employ someone who does, it is worth focusing on what a teacher's registration card really means. The card should be a source of pride, because it signifies that its owner, as a member of the teaching profession, makes a vital contribution to the communities in which they work. That card is for teachers but it is also for principals, students, parents and the wider community.

Why should we attach so much importance to a teacher's registration card? Victorian Institute of Teaching CEO Melanie Saba is unequivocal about its significance:

'Your card is a public demonstration of your registration to teach. It means that you hold a current registration or a current Permission to Teach, and have a current National Criminal History Record Check (NCHRC). By holding this card, we say that you have met the standards required to achieve registration as a teacher, and it says you are maintaining those standards to continue to hold registration.

'In achieving ownership of a registration card, a teacher does not have to undergo a separate Working With Children (WWC) check. Only teachers and police are exempt from this. This is a privileged position to be in.

'As a country we have a strong history of regulation. We can be confident that there is a system in place to regulate professions and demand certain standards. In Victoria we were a leading agency in the development of standards for the teaching profession nationally. Victorian teachers make a difference.

'We can be confident that we have qualified professionals leading our Victorian classrooms. Because of the work that the Institute does in accreditation, those qualifications are being kept in line with global standards.'

'Employers should check the register to make sure every teacher they employ holds a current card. The card, *VITonline* and the public register are tools to use to show that a person is able to teach in Victoria. If you employ someone who tells you that they don't have a card it's absolutely imperative that you check their status. This checking should be done on a regular basis to ensure only registered teachers are teaching.'

The card is for principals. But also, the community at large can be assured that each teacher has the right qualifications, meets the accepted standards and has a current criminal record check.

Parents Victoria Executive Officer Gail McHardy discusses the registration card's significance from a community perspective:

'For parents and the community in general, the card is an assurance that teachers have ticked all the boxes. We can be confident that we have qualified professionals leading our Victorian classrooms. Because of the work that the Institute does in accreditation, those qualifications are being kept in line with global standards. Victoria is well-known for that.'

'When it comes to the Code of Conduct, it's in the public interest to know we can trust the investigative process. Discipline is crucial, and the public expects due diligence in investigative matters. The Institute is fair and appropriate in dealing with breaches of conduct, and I'm confident in sharing that with the community.'

Far from a humble card, a teacher's registration signifies a great deal – students, parents and the general public can have confidence that a teacher meets high standards, maintains professional development, and abides by a code of conduct. Should the need arise, there are disciplinary measures in place, as Melanie Saba points out:

'We've seen the first prosecution for unregistered teaching. A man working in a school hadn't completed his undergraduate degree, but claimed to have done so. He was heavily criticised by the Magistrate and fined $1,000 and required to contribute to the Institute's legal costs.

'Another case involved a woman who taught for three years without registration. She did not complete her undergraduate degree and falsified her registration details. The public needs assurance that people who commit fraudulent behavior will not be tolerated as part of this profession, and the school where they send their children will be vigilant about the standards met by their teaching staff. A current registration card, backed up by the public register, is the safeguard for this.

'There are no grey areas. For instance, a pending registration is not a registration. Not all pending applications will be approved. And in the case of Permission to Teach (PTT), this is only given for a specific purpose. If you possess a PTT for music, then you can't teach maths, no matter what extenuating circumstances exist.

'Significantly, registration safeguards a school's reputation. In an environment of constant scrutiny, public confidence is a fragile commodity. What message does it send to parents if a school allows an unregistered person to teach their children?'

VICTORIAN INSTITUTE OF TEACHING COUNCIL ELECTION 2011

This year an election of new members to the Victorian Institute of Teaching Council will take place.

Following last year's amendments to the Education and Training Reform Act, the number of Institute Council Members is to be reduced from 20 to 12. The terms of all current members expire on 28 November 2011.

Of the twelve members who will form the new Council, 6 will be appointed by the Governor-in-Council and 6 elected by and from registered teachers who are currently teaching. These 6 elected teachers will be drawn from the following:

- 3 from Government schools
- 1 from a Government school for students with impairments and disabilities
- 1 from a non-Government school operating under the auspices of the Catholic Education Commission
- 1 from a non-Government school (other than a school operating under the auspices of the Catholic Education Commission)

The Institute is responsible for ensuring that the elections take place and the Institute's Manager, Governance Geoff Coates is the electoral officer. Discussions have already commenced with the Victorian Electoral Commission, who will have conduct of the elections.

Electoral rolls in each category will be settled so that nomination of candidates can open in early September.

LATEST
UPDATES

The Age Careers Expo

This annual careers event at Caulfield Racecourse was held last month, with large, bustling crowds in attendance across the three days. Here is a breakdown of the attendance figures according to the organisers:

Friday	**9,526**	(of these 8,235 students attended in 91 school groups representing 17% of Victorian secondary schools. There were 9082 visitors on the Friday in 2010)
Saturday	**11,714**	(compared to 10,526 in 2010)
Sunday	**10,884**	(compared to 10,644 in 2010)

The total for three days was 32,124 compared to 30,322 in 2010.

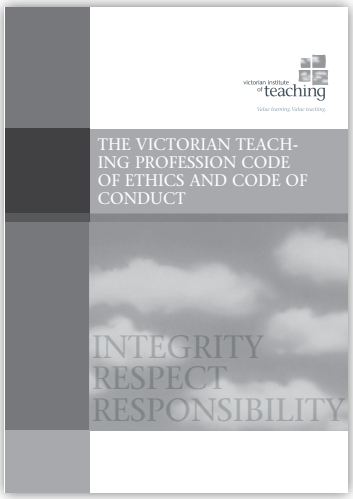
The Institute stand received many inquiries about a possible career in teaching from interested students and parents. On Saturday, the Institute's guest speaker was Sally Wilkinson, a fourth year teacher who presented a seminar entitled 'What About Teaching?' to a large audience. Sally's infectious enthusiasm for the profession, combined with her down-to-earth explanation of a teacher's day-to-day work truly engaged the audience – and the Institute stand saw inquiries grow immediately afterward.

UNESCO and our Code of Conduct

Victorian Institute of Teaching CEO Melanie Saba has presented a paper to UNESCO on the Institute's Code of Conduct for teachers in Victoria. The International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), a UNESCO centre for training and research, held its regional workshop on May 12–13 in Seoul. The workshop theme was 'Design and effective use of teacher codes of conduct: The Asia-Pacific region'.

Organised in collaboration with the Korean Society for the Study of Teacher Education, and hosted by the Korean Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the workshop sought to discuss the development of teacher codes of conduct in the region. Ministry representatives, members of teacher unions and professional teacher organisations were gathered to exchange experiences and discuss the international research conducted by IIEP. It was a prestigious invitation, to present as one of only two international delegates to the workshop.

Melanie's presentation focused on our development of The Victorian Institute of Teaching Code of Conduct, and the strategy employed by the Institute to educate teachers and other stakeholders on the importance of codes of conduct and how to use them.



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