

YOUR SAY

Wrecked by tech

Eve FISHER



THE high school classroom beckoned recently, and I returned to teaching for a few weeks.

To say things have changed since I left would be a massive understatement.

An opportunity in the media enabled me to leave my full time role as a year 10 and 12 English teacher nine years ago and I have never looked back ... until I was offered the a four-week stint teaching mostly junior high school kids.

Cue my first sojourn into the technology-based education system. To say it was hard would be another one of those pesky understatements.

Losing my voice in the first week not withstanding, allow me to reiterate how tough it is to stand in front of a bunch of attention-deficient teenagers and attempt to inject random information into their brains — knowledge they couldn't be less interested in acquiring because it isn't coming straight from the mouth of Siri or Alexa.

People reckon teachers have an easy job because they get so many holidays. I'd like to drop those critics into a classroom so they can see what it's like being an educator, counsellor, mediator, health expert, good cop, bad cop and sound-board for ideas and abuse.

Add to the mix computers, phones and iPads and you have a hotbed of distraction and distress that has invariably led to the decline of educational progress.

The incoming ban on phones in schools is great news. Now it's time to assess the reliance on other devices.

In my almost-decade absence, technology has become a part of the classroom — not just an add-on to be used when necessary for research or assignments.

Now every lesson is a balancing act as teachers deal with kids continually, constantly and compulsively on their devices, coupled with those students who don't have a device when actually needed.

From my outsider perspective, it's easy to see that the addition of technology in the classroom has led to an incredible decline in the

ability for students to think critically and solve problems. It's like they've forgotten to ask questions.

Of course technology has its value; I'm not too much of a Luddite to admit that. It makes learning more fun and engaging, and it also takes pressure off teachers and most certainly has its merits. Information is easily transferable into student workbooks or, as is often the case, forever consigned to the rabbit hole that is Google Classroom, a messaging and file-sharing service where teachers have direct contact with their students.

I'm not saying banish technology altogether. It's been revolutionary, but it has come at the expense of our kids' brains.

And handwriting. The ability to question everything has been replaced by an innate desire to Google everything.

There is no more wonder, curiosity or desire to explore.

This has been replaced by nothing more than a passing interest in learning anything; aim for depth and the kids tune out faster than a dropped guitar.

Technology has its place, just like so many other teaching aids. It's a valuable resource for references and research but nothing is more important than a teacher having time and scope to encourage students to find connections, apply ideas and dig further in their quest for understanding.

Education has become a surface-level pursuit.

Ask students to have an opinion or infer some meaning and blank stares with awkward blinks are often all you'll get in return, not because they're idiots but because they haven't been taught to trust their own minds.

I don't care how much of the curriculum we cover as long as I can teach the kids to learn how to think. And learn to like themselves.

So many of the students I taught think they're stupid. That couldn't be further from the truth. They have simply become casualties of an outcomes-based system that doesn't cater for those outlier learners who don't conform to traditional expectations.

Technology doesn't help those learners integrate better into the classroom. It just provides an escape from the tedium and further exacerbates their isolation.

In a world based around virtual reality, it's time to make schools a place of connection in real life.



Geelong Advertiser EDITORIAL

Water clarity needed

THERE has been much discussion this week about the suppression of information by government authorities and the public's right to access facts that affect their daily lives.

While much of the #righttoknow campaign has dealt with governments censoring information or the growth of legislation that makes it difficult for journalists to do their jobs, the issue of misinforming the public is equally concerning.

Today we reveal a local instance of misinformation on the Barwon Water website, where the public has been told that the Black Rock water reclamation plant has been providing Class A recycled water to local homes.

We understand why the government would wish for this to be the case — the \$42 million plant was touted as being expected to pump recycled water to Armstrong Creek and North Torquay homes in early 2014. Five years on, not a drop of Class A water has reached the growth areas — despite the government authority's website saying otherwise.

At best the erroneous website information is embarrassing. At worst it is a deliberate act to cover up the fact that the project is more than five years behind schedule.

Either way, the public has a right to expect information provided on government authority websites is accurate.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1861 - First US transcontinental telegraph message sent from San Francisco to President Abraham Lincoln in Washington

1946 - The United Nations General Assembly convenes in New York for the first time, at an auditorium in Flushing Meadow

1994 - A bomb blast at an election rally in Colombo, Sri Lanka, kills at least 50 people, including the opposition candidate for president

2006 - Former Enron Corp chief executive Jeff Skilling is sentenced to more than 24 years in prison for leading a financial fraud that destroyed the company

ADDY READERS HAVE THEIR SAY - LETTERS AND TEXTS

ANTI-DOG CAMPAIGN WILL CREATE 'LUDICROUS' MESS

DESPITE repeated focus groups and surveys showing that residents and visitors to Ocean Grove highly value the current off-lead dog-walking areas, an unelected body continues to propose restriction on these areas.

Last year a survey of 1700 people found that the community believed dog-management issues were overstated. Barwon Coast Committee of Management clearly did not get the answer it wanted from the survey it ran and the earlier focus groups it convened.

It is now pressing on with its anti-dog campaign, proposing to have the Collendina area between 7W and 8W changed to an on-leash area. This will create a ludicrous mishmash of differently classified areas along the beach.

I am happy to see areas where dogs are prohibited or maintained. But please leave the well-functioning 7W to 8W area, where many people enter with their dogs, just as it is.

Paul Malone, Ocean Grove

SILENCE AMONG WORKERS WIDENS GENDER PAY GAP

AS a young, proactive student, I have recently become more aware of the appalling situation known as the gender pay gap.

On average, women working full-time earned \$1484.80, while men working full-time earned \$1726.30 a week — a difference of \$241.50.

A key reason for this shocking statistic is the fundamental lack of awareness and understanding about the existence and nature of the issue.

It is not all that common for colleagues to talk about their salary to each other, let alone to their friends and family, which means many people may not know that their pay is different for doing the same job.

As a young Australian female, what disturbs me most is the fact that every dollar a man makes a woman makes just 79 cents in our country. The female citizens of Australia do not deserve to succumb to this issue — they deserve better.

Currently I am 14 years old, so I am searching and applying for jobs

wherever I can, just like my peers. However, knowing these statistics and horrifying facts makes me wonder: Will I be a victim of the gap?

I hope that this very small action and request for change is recognised and acknowledged on the behalf of everyone suffering in silence.

Anna Keogh, Geelong

NO EXCUSE FOR IGNORANCE ABOUT CRUEL RACE GAME

IF EVER there was an time for ignoring the cruel reality of the horseracing industry, then that day has well passed.

And who did I see promoting a local race meeting at a city shopping centre Friday afternoon? None other than our formerly esteemed Deputy Mayor Peter Murrhly.

Does Mr Murrhly know that the vast majority of Geelong people do not attend this event and do not participate in any way?

Does he know or care that most people are disgusted by the images we have all seen by now of the un-

terable cruelty inflicted on those noble animals?

It is my sincere hope that anyone who still is sitting on the fence acquaints themselves with the facts about this barbaric so-called industry.

Kevin V. Russell, Geelong

IT ONLY TAKES A LITTLE POISON TO HARM YOU

KATHLEEN Hart, you imply (Your Say, GA 21/10) that the percentage of CO2 in the atmosphere, at 0.04 per cent, is so small as to have no influence.

So, if I have a tablet containing 200mg of potassium cyanide which is only about 0.0003 per cent of a 75kg person — that is many times more diluted than the CO2 in the atmosphere — would you swallow it?

I would advise you to answer no, as 200mg of potassium cyanide is enough to kill a 75kg person. Tiny amounts are not necessarily insignificant!

Trevor Pickles, Torquay

ADDY ONLINE POLL

Yesterday's question:
Will you have a bet on the Geelong Cup today?
YES 14% NO 86%
Register your vote at geelongadvertiser.com.au

WRITE TO:

POST: PO BOX 91, GEELONG 3220 or yoursay@geelongadvertiser.com.au

Letters should be less than 300 words, carry full name, address and phone number of writer and be signed. We reserve the right to edit letters.

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