

I wish to acknowledge the people of the first dawn. Elders, past and present and those here today. May your foresight and wisdom, guide our thoughts and wishes for a better shared future.

I envy you.

I marvel at the world of education that you have or soon will enter.

I applaud you.

This is a marvellous opportunity for me to recognise and thank those educators who prepared me for a world in education over 40 years ago as well as those I work with today and every day I have worked in and for schools. I also know that you are even better prepared today for an educational world that is in a state of constant change.

I encourage you to always embrace the change and be prepared to change yourself, your practice, your expectations and the way you shape students' lives and learning.

Most of you will have commenced your work in schools already. My advice be wary of those who will say to you, "Oh, you'll understand when you have been teaching long enough." I'm not sure even Methuselah will have lived enough years to moderate that thinking. It is not the number of years teaching but what you do with that time.

You may have read about the 10,000 hours of practice to master a skill. Malcolm Gladwell argued that the key to success in any field, is simply a matter of practicing a specific task for 10,000 hours, 20 hours of work a week for 10 years. Consider this in terms of teaching practice. My concern is that Gladwell is only partly correct; as practising a skill incorrectly or badly for 10,000 hours may also result in high level inefficiency and ineffectiveness. That lesson you taught in 2019 will not be a 'cracker' in 2020 without reflection on your part about what worked and what did not. It certainly will not work in 2029.

As is my nature, and this is an essential element of my teaching practice, I use narrative to make my points memorable and sometimes contextual as well.

*The story of a second-year-out teacher managing the issue of hats in the classroom. The ubiquitous baseball cap hat appeared to be superglued to many students' heads.*

She reached inside the box to think outside the box.

My advice, be drawn to those who are excited by teaching. Who feel blessed to be working with children and young people. Who are passionate about the subjects they teach and want to share that passion with others. Who know that the next best thing is always around the corner. Who embrace possibilities and are willing to take considered and planned risks.

Who are educational leaders of children, young people and other teachers ... because at some stage you too may well lead.

No doubt many of you have heard of the work of John Hattie. One of his tenants is “Know thy impact!” Even his choice of words has a Biblical ring to it.

And Hattie is right. We do need to know our impact and the capacity we have to build and shape, and sadly, if misdirected or ill-thought, to hurt and harm.

But do not be entirely waylaid by the demand to know what impact you are having in the ‘now’ because sometimes we do not truly sense the ongoing influence we have on our students’ lives until much later.

The story of Teak and teeth then 10 years on.

Never underestimate the cleverness of children or their ability to manage the most extraordinary challenges and, sadly at times, pain. They are generally more capable, braver and cleverer than we ever give them credit for. But cleverness and confidence comes with your support, your care, your central role as a person who is there for them. Be aware that you share this responsibility with your colleagues and embrace what they can bring to make you even more effective in your role as a teacher.

*The story of Jess and her 100% attendance.*

Remember that in assessing the impact of education, we know that for our Aboriginal students who complete Year 12, we add 10 years to their life expectancy and improve wellbeing as well.

My final message comes from a colleague and friend whose mantra resonates with me more than Hattie’s ever has:

**Students do not care what you know if they do not know that you care.**

I wish you joy in your chosen career. You will face any number of challenges as each day will be filled with the possibilities and pathways; choose the right ones for you and the children and young people to whom you have determined to devote your professional lives.

**Matthew Brown**

R/Executive Director, School Performance

Rural South and West Operational Directorate