

Putting your Principal knowledge and experience to good use

Jim McAlpine

Since taking my superannuation I have had ample opportunity to use some of the many skills and experiences that I acquired in 41 years with the Department, 21 of those at Principal level. My advice to those planning for a full life after the principalship is to maintain relationships with a broad range of people as it is through those contacts that I have been able to continue to be involved in education and schools.

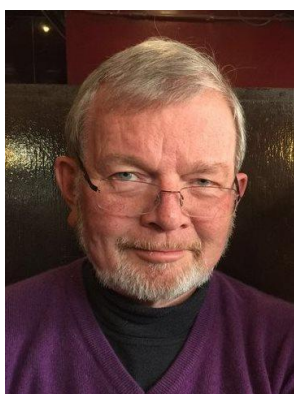
Opportunities have included liaising with schools on behalf of the School of Education at UNSW, providing advice to companies wishing to tender for Departmental contracts (giving them the right language to use), assisting with implementation of the Digital Education Revolution, helping the SPC in liaising with English Heads visiting NSW, promoting relationships between the SPC and Korea, and providing advice to SPC executive when requested. The last three have been done in an honorary capacity but with the odd good meal thrown in with great company.

For the last four years I have had the pleasure of working in schools whose principals have requested evaluations. This has been done by a small partnership (SPICE Education Evaluations – three retired principals – me, Terry O’Brien and Bruce Stavert). The three of us developed positive working relationships over many years as Board Liaison Officers followed by working together as principals on the SPC. We have been able to use our broad experiences in a range of quite different settings to help principals have evaluations or reviews of programs and faculties. By the way, we don’t do this for the money as we always do many more days than we budget for when striking an agreement with a principal, but we do enjoy the feeling that we are doing something to help students in schools.

All of these experiences and opportunities have been made possible because of my involvement with the SPC from the beginning of my principalship at Tumut High in 1990. Attending regional meetings, then state activities and reference groups led to my getting to know lots of very talented principals and to learn lots from them. This in turn led to election to the SPC executive and finally SPC President. These SPC opportunities also involved national and international experiences which would not have been possible if I had remained cloistered in the principal’s office in the two schools I led.

Of course when I took my superannuation I had no great plans for using my extra time. Opportunities found me or developed with a great deal of serendipity, but this was because of the friendships and working relationships that I had formed with colleagues. For principals who are approaching post-Department life, my advice is to ensure that you commit as much as you can to your fellow principals through the SPC, go to regional meetings, conferences, professional learning days, State Assembly, reference groups, working parties, or even find extra time to stand for election to an executive position.

Contributor details



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Jim was Principal of Tumut High (1990-2001) and Moss Vale High (2001-2008). He was also President of the NSWSPC (2006-2010) and Deputy President of ASPA (2006-2009). Jim is a Life Member of the NSWSPC, honoured with the Bill Kennedy Award in 2010 and a recipient of the Meritorious Service Award. He was awarded his AM in 2012.