



WANTED: GREY NOMADS TO RETURN TO WORK

Queensland Minister for Education Rod Welford hopes a new Grey Nomads Teacher Recruitment Program will get retired teachers back into schools to address an increase in teacher resignations. Welford announced in September last year that he wouldn't contest his seat of Everton at the next election – so it's possible the former lawyer and Attorney-General could soon be teaching Legal Studies at a school near you.

CYBERBULLYING 1...

MySpace.com, Australia, has established a new online code of conduct to combat cyberbullying. 'MySpace.com is committed to maintain the safety of the almost 2.4 million Australians that visit the site every month,' said David Batch, Director of Safety, MySpace.com, Australia, at the launch of the code of conduct. 'The technology on MySpace allows users to proactively combat cyberbullying. For example, all under-16-year olds automatically have their profile set to private, so only their friends can be within their network,' he pointed out. 'We encourage anyone who has been bullied to set their MySpace profile to private, block other users who have bullied them and to conceal their online now status, three tactics which can considerably minimise the occurrence of cyberbullying on MySpace.'

...AND CYBERBULLYING 2...

The MySpace code of conduct may respond to research like that of Damian Maher, a lecturer in the School of Education at Macquarie University. As we reported in our news pages last month, Maher found that cyberbullying occurs during both school-based and home-based interactions, that students who bully at school are also likely to bully online, that most cyberbullying is perpetrated by boys and that boys are more aggressive in their online interactions and bully each other online more than do girls. Despite all the bad press about cyberbullying through social networking sites like

MySpace, though, American researchers Sameer Hinduja and Justin Patchin, in *Bullying Beyond the Schoolyard: Preventing and responding to cyberbullying*, still report that social networking sites are comparatively safe.

...AND CYBERBULLYING 3...

It was a posting on Facebook, not MySpace, however, that led to litigation for a student in the United States. 'To those select students who have had the displeasure of (being taught by) Ms Sarah Phelps, or simply knowing her and her insane antics: here is the place to express your feelings of hatred,' Katherine Evans wrote on Facebook. The former student from Pembroke Pines Charter High School in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, removed the post a few days later, but was suspended two months later by principal Peter Bayer for cyberbullying. Now at the University of Florida, Evans is suing Bayer in order to have the suspension removed from her record. Evans's case will hinge on whether the suspension suppressed her right to free

expression. Similar cases in the US have typically rested on whether the student's expression results in a substantial disruption to the educational process. As Howard Simon, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida, asked the *New York Times's* Carmen Gentile, 'Since when did criticism of a teacher morph into assault? If Katie Evans said what she said over burgers with her friends at the mall, there is no question it would be protected by free speech.'

...AND CYBERBULLYING 4

All this cyberbullying – or alleged cyberbullying – suggests that online activity is on the up and up, but as Tanya Notley reported in her story, 'Restricted access: Young people, online networks and school,' last month, most teenagers like to consider themselves to be technologically savvy, but the fact is most are not, and few actually use the internet to share and create their own content.

This month's Grapevine is by Steve Holden, Editor of Teacher.



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