

Paper Plane

November 12, 2018

At 12.30pm on the Sunday before any school term resumes, you can guarantee an email from the principal welcoming you back.

Underpinning the attempt at a light-hearted tone and commentary on the weather is the harsh reality that the holidays are over and the rest of Sunday loses its shine.

The relaxed state you have worked so hard to achieve starts to dissipate and the guaranteed restless sleep that ensues ensures that you return to school feeling disheveled, tired, resentful and confused.

I wonder if this is the start of the term-long state of fatigue that sets in around the end of week one?

I feel that these emails should be put on hold until around 8am on the first day back.

You are then either already at school, or at least on your way, and the impact is going to be far less than an unwanted dent to the last day of your break.

Term 4 at my school is often referred to as the “party term” in reference to the large number of social events that occur and the fact that Muck Up Day (we can’t call it that, but we all know that’s what it is) and graduation/valedictory nights fall within it.

Our first briefing for the term starts off with a bang and I already feel uninspired.

“Now, I know that we are officially in the party term, but there is still lots of work to be done and classes need to be structured and challenging. Showing films to a class as a form of entertainment is not acceptable. Students need to be given relevant and meaningful work right up until the last day of term.”

We have this speech delivered at the start of every term 4.

In fact, it is the same speech I have heard every principal at every school I’ve ever worked at deliver at this time of year.

No one wants to be seen to be doing the wrong thing but sometimes, when all the work for the year has been finished, reports have been written and tiredness is at an all-time high, putting on a film can feel like the best idea you’ve ever had.

“I will also be meeting with the year 12 students this week to warn them about their plans for the celebration day in a few weeks’ time. As you know, last year’s group, on the whole, was very respectful of the school community and the buildings. With the exception of the pigeon-hole incident, students conducted themselves



very well. I will be setting some very clear boundaries.”

In the lead up to the end, junior students are forced to tiptoe around the school while the senior kids sit their exams. Yard duty teachers end up being the official enforcers of silence, redirecting kids to more appropriate play areas.

“But it’s lunchtime, Miss!”

“Yeah, we’re allowed to be loud at lunch!”

“Sssssshh. There are exams.”

“At lunchtime?”

“Yessshhhhh.”

The party is officially over.

Christina Adams is a member of the Australian Education Union (Victoria) and a stand-up comedian