

# AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION DIGEST

Volume 1 Number 30, 23 October 2007

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## RESEARCH

### ASG Student Social & Emotional Health Report

*Michael Bernard, Andrew Stephanou & Daniel Urbach (October 2007)*

This longitudinal study of the social and emotional health, resilience and well-being of more than 10,000 students from 81 schools across Australia was conducted from 2003 by a team from the Education Faculty at the University of Melbourne and the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) and carried through with funding support from the Australian Scholarships Group (ASG).

The report identifies and explores the extent to which a significant number of students are feeling worried or depressed, particularly in the secondary years of schooling: and the ways in which these negative emotions manifest themselves in negative behaviours. Students who show low levels of resilience, positive social connections, self-esteem show negative attitudes to learning which affects their progress and thus further reinforces their negative outlook. As well as academic under-achievement, other negative behaviours can include bullying, getting into trouble with teachers, absenteeism and so on.

Because students who are not feeling OK are not positioned to cope successfully with either with learning or personal development opportunities, there is a need to make social and emotional well-being as important to the purpose of education as academic achievement.

The report focuses on the shared central role both of teachers and of parents in this process.

"It is clear from the data that the actions of parents have a significant impact on the social and emotional well-being of their children. When students perceive the relative absence of positive parenting, they are likely to display many negative and few positive indicators of social and emotional well-being ... At federal, state and local levels, a priority needs to be increased investment in parents with a particular focus on strengthening home-school links ..."

These findings strongly reinforce and support the action research work of ACSSO and APC over a number of years, which also clearly demonstrates the importance of building sustainable family-school and community partnerships which focus on the student's resilience, well-being and positive personal development, as well as their academic development.

This important study, its findings and recommendations, should inform, shape and drive policy, programs and practice at the national, state and local levels.

Download the report at:

[http://www.asg.com.au/images/hidden\\_directory/asg\\_student\\_se\\_report/ASG\\_Student\\_Social\\_Emotional\\_Health\\_Report\\_Full.pdf](http://www.asg.com.au/images/hidden_directory/asg_student_se_report/ASG_Student_Social_Emotional_Health_Report_Full.pdf)

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### In the Balance: The Future of Australia's Primary Schools

*Max Angus, Harriet Olney & John Ainley (October 2007)*

Released this week, this study, (funded via the Department of Education, Science & Training, commissioned by the Australian Primary Principals' Association and conducted by a research team from Edith Cowan University and the Australian Council for Educational Research), is the fourth in a series of studies investigating the resourcing of Australia's primary schools.

The first study surveyed the views of principals, the second explored relative levels of funding for primary and secondary schooling from the nineteenth century to the present; and the third presented intensive case studies of resourcing in 30 schools. This study builds on those earlier studies and examines the capacity of Australian primary schools to meet the challenges facing them.

Sadly, the findings conclude that Australian primary schools do not have sufficient resources to achieve fully the goals set for them by government. In many of the schools serving low socio-economic communities, the shortage is acute.

However, the report also finds that some of the challenges facing primary schools are not due to a resource insufficiency: and explores a range of implications relating to such aspects as: curriculum content and time allocation; staffing recruitment difficulties in respect both of permanent and relief teachers; impacts of students with special learning needs; impacts of communities with high proportions of low SES families and students; etc.

Given that the overall policy document for education is the National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century (1999) adopted by the national council of Education Ministers (MCEETYA), the report addresses its sixteen recommendations primarily for their consideration and action to progress the issues.

Download the report at: <http://www.jhonline.net/images/appa/inthebalance2007.pdf>

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## **RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES**

### **Little Ears: Poems and Stories for Children**

Research around the world into young people's literacy skills development demonstrates the centrally important role of parents (and grandparents) in this process. The key activity is to read to young children, read with them, and let them read to you as an interactive and fun experience, from their earliest years and through the early years of schooling.

What families then need is a supply of suitable reading materials, preferably with strong and engaging visual presentation to catch children's interest and imagination.

A new publication seeks to meet this need: "Little Ears: Poems and Stories for Children".

Their first issue earlier this year (Australian Education Digest 24 July) was a great success and the second edition is now in production. A subscription service is readily available.

Read more at <http://www.LittleEars.com.au>

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## **AROUND THE STATES**

### **South Australia: New schools to boost trades**

*16 October The Advertiser*

The locations of 10 SA trade schools offering apprenticeships to high school students from next year have been announced by the State Government.

Classes are scheduled to start in 2010 and Premier Mike Rann yesterday declared locations for the final seven schools, some of which are spread across two campuses.

The new locations are:

- GLOSSOP High School (Berri campus)
- GRANT High School, Mount Gambier
- CHRISTIES Beach High School
- MURRAY Bridge High School and Heathfield High School
- CHARLES Campbell Secondary School and Windsor Gardens Vocational College
- HAMILTON Secondary College
- KADINA Memorial High School

A total of 20 apprenticeship brokers will be based at the schools, charged with finding jobs in local industry.

"It is absolutely essential for the future of our children and this state that we create better skills and better job opportunities for our young people, starting when they are still at school," Mr Rann said.

Education Minister Jane Lomax-Smith said the schools, named as "work skills centres", would specialise in meeting local skills shortages and offer opportunities for students from other schools to take part.

The \$29.5 million Trade Schools for the Future will allow students to start learning a trade while they finish their South Australian Certificate of Education.

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## **Western Australia: Teachers hear the call of the west**

*The Age 15 October*

Western Australia's push to poach Victoria's best and brightest teachers has attracted a modest return so far - 17 inquiries in three days.

The West Australian Education Minister, Mark McGowan, was in Melbourne last week - as enterprise bargaining talks continued between the Australian Education Union and the Brumby Government - to launch a campaign to lure Victorian teachers west with the promise of better pay and conditions.

Mr McGowan's spokeswoman, Kim Coolhaas, says the Victorian inquiries were encouraging as formal application dates had not been set.

The national advertising campaign is aimed at teachers from Victoria, Tasmania and Queensland, which all pay their graduate teachers less than Western Australia.

Under the scheme, graduates are being offered annual salaries of more than \$50,000, about \$3900 more than they would earn in Victoria.

Teachers who choose to work at selected country and remote schools will earn an extra \$19,800 in location allowances and have their moving costs met.

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/news/education-news/teachers-hear-the-call-of-the-west/2007/10/12/1191696183062.html>

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## **NSW - Undercover Rangers Patrolling the School Zones**

*Sydney Morning Herald 14 October*

Plain-clothes council rangers will patrol school zones to snare misbehaving drivers, including parents dropping off and picking up children.

Undercover City of Sydney rangers will begin focusing on schools - private, public and primary - within the council area in the second week of the new term.

The rangers will only disclose their true identity when issuing on-the-spot fines to the errant drivers in the school zones.

Fines will be posted to drivers who leave before being told of their misdemeanour.

City of Sydney director of operations Garry Harding said increasingly poor driver behaviour had forced the council into the undercover operation.

Monitoring showed illegal parking and double-parking were prevalent outside many Sydney schools, reducing visibility for drivers and pedestrians and increasing the risk of accidents.

"The city found drivers were generally compliant in school zones during uniformed ranger patrols. However this changed when there was no visible ranger presence," Mr Harding said.

Read more at <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/undercover-rangers-in-school-zone-sting/2007/10/13/1191696235793.html>

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## **VIEW FROM THE USA**

### **New York: Small's best - tale from the Bronx**

*The Guardian 15 October*

In the school size debate, the New York model is instructive, writes John Crace.

It may not have the burnt-out tenements of Bonfire of the Vanities but the north Bronx is still the kind of neighbourhood that looks to have seen much better days.

Then again, it's hard to know if the Kennedy High School campus ever had a good day; surrounded by high wire fencing and with a vast, eight-storey concrete structure at its core, it looks more like a correction centre. In fact, Kennedy has its own force of more than 160 full-time police officers, and all students go through airport-style security at the entrance, creating long queues and delays.

Yet education policy advisers are now wondering if this could be a model for other secondary schools. So what's going on?

The only clue is a series of five Hogwarts-style heraldic shields high up on the front wall. Kennedy isn't one school; it's five.

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/news/education-news/smalls-best--tale-from-the-bronx/2007/10/12/1191696183056.html?page=fullpage#contentSwap1>

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## **VIEW FROM THE UK**

### **London: School sports plan to combat looming obesity crisis**

*14 October AFP*

The government on Monday launched a campaign for greater participation in sports at school to combat the growing threat of obesity that the health secretary said was comparable to global warming.

According to government-commissioned research half of all Britons will be obese in 25 years if current trends are not halted; furthermore, 86 percent of men will be overweight in 15 years and 70 percent of women in 20, it suggested.

"For the first time, we are clear about the magnitude of the problem: we are facing a potential crisis on the scale of climate change, and it is in everybody's interest to turn things round," said Health Secretary Alan Johnson.

Prime Minister Gordon Brown launched a new 100-million-pound programme Monday aiming to increase from two to five the number of hours of physical education in schools per week.

Some 2.3 million pounds has already been set aside in the last 10 years to increase the number of hours of sport in school.

But Schools Secretary Ed Balls said sports facilities alone would not stop the phenomenon in its tracks. "There's a role for schools in showing leadership," he said. "But it's what parents and kids do at home and after school which matters most."

In particular, he said that more needed to be done to encourage girls to keep playing sport.

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## REMINDEERS

**UNICEF Day for Change** - 24 October <http://www.unicefdayforchange.org.au/>

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**Curriculum Corporation 14th Annual Conference** - Sydney - 12 & 13 November  
<http://www.curriculum.edu.au/conference/2007/conference.asp?id=19468>

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## RESOURCES

**Fundraising Directory** - [www.fundraisingdirectory.com.au](http://www.fundraisingdirectory.com.au) and [www.fetesandfestivals.com.au](http://www.fetesandfestivals.com.au)

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**Drug Awareness Website** - [www.drugawareness.com.au/](http://www.drugawareness.com.au/)

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**Australian Schools Directory** - [www.australianschoolsdirectory.com.au](http://www.australianschoolsdirectory.com.au)

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