

AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION DIGEST

Volume 1 Number 35, 28 November 2007

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FEDERAL ELECTION 2007

In forthcoming issues of Australian Education Digest, we will present some comment and analysis on the immediate and longer term ramifications of the result's of last weekend's Federal Election for public education.

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HOT TOPIC: LITERACY

Literacy research must look to the past

Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) 20 November 2007

An overly negative view of literacy and reluctance to take account of history has limited research and led indirectly to the advancement of some unproductive ideas about literacy, according to a new review of research on literacy education released today by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

Written by University of Sydney Professorial Research Fellow Peter Freebody, Australian Education Review 52 aims to expand our understanding of literacy at a time when public and private lives have become increasingly literacy dependent, and literacy demands more complex and sophisticated.

The review brings together a rich variety of past and current research and encourages policy makers, researchers, and practitioners not to exclude a historical perspective of literacy education research, arguing that from the past we can learn lessons that can lead us forward.

However, many young researchers have been taught to distrust any research that is more than a decade old and as such many valuable lessons from the past have been omitted in recent studies which are often simplistic and repetitive.

"Many of the studies encountered while reading for this review are conceptually trite, repetitive, to all intents and purposes, of earlier studies, or so limited in their theoretical scope and practical benefits that they yield little for educators working with a concept of literacy beyond letter or word reading," Professor Freebody says.

Read more at <http://www.acer.edu.au/news/index.html>

The (Literacy) lessons of Jonah

In this opinion article, originally published in Education Review, Professor Stephen Dinham looks at the lessons that can be learned from the character of Jonah in the recent hit television series Summer Heights High.

In the final episode of Chris Lilley's Summer Heights High we saw Jonah, the smart-arse Tongan break-dancer, dragged from the school. School was the source of much of Jonah's identity and his problems.

Like many, Jonah was always up against it. His family background was literacy poor. Reading material was lacking in the home and Jonah wasn't read to as a young child. Jonah didn't attend pre-school and by the time he entered primary he was already two to three years behind some of his peers in literacy development. This gap widened. Jonah moved from school to school and each transition had a negative effect on his learning.

Jonah was one of many and his teachers, well meaning and under pressure, didn't diagnose or deal with his literacy problems. Jonah didn't receive the individual attention, explicit teaching and feedback he needed. Jonah's lack of progress was attributed to his poor behaviour and attitude but his behaviour and attitude were largely a product of his lack of academic achievement.

Jonah couldn't master literacy and because so much of schooling is literacy based, he struggled in all curriculum areas. He knew he was falling behind and covered his inadequacy with bravado and over-confidence. Jonah avoided engaging with schoolwork as much as possible. He discovered he could make people laugh.

By the time he entered high school, Jonah was five years behind some of his peers. By year 8, he was seven years behind many in his year and found basic school work beyond him. His reading and writing skills were at year 3 level, lower than they had been in year 6. Jonah was going backwards.

Read more at http://www.acer.edu.au/enews/0711_jonah.html

Poor Readers Losers in Job Market

Sonya Neufeld, Canberra Times, 25 November 2007

The less time you spend with your nose in a book, the worse your reading ability gets, alarming new research shows.

The US-based National Endowment for the Arts collated statistics from more than 40 studies on the reading habits of Americans in a new study called "To Read or Not to Read" issued last week.

It found that on average, Americans aged 15-24 spent nearly two hours a day watching television - and only seven minutes of their free time reading.

According to the NEA, American 15 year olds ranked 15th in average reading scores for 31 industrialised nations, behind Canada, Ireland, Korea, Finland, Sweden and Poland. Australian 15 year olds came in fourth.

The percentage of even the best educated adults, who had attended college and rated proficient at reading prose, slipped by 20% from 1992 to 2003.

When it comes to looking for a job, that's bad news. A survey in the Report revealed that nearly 75% of employers who were polled, rated reading comprehension as "very important" for workers with two-year college degrees, and 90% said the same for graduates of four-year degrees.

In his preface to the report, NEA chairman Dana Gioia described the data as "simple, consistent - and alarming". He said it revealed a disturbing pattern. "As Americans, especially young Americans, read less, they read less well. Because they read less well, they have lower levels of academic achievement. With lower levels of reading and writing ability, people do less well in the job market."

Read more at <http://www.nea.gov/news/news07/TRNR.html>

RESOURCES

Safe Schools Report

Making Australian Schools Safer: A Summary Report of the Outcomes from the National Safe Schools Framework Best Practice Grants Programme (2004-2005) Dr Helen McGrath Faculty of Education Deakin University, Melbourne

All children have a right to receive an education in a secure and happy learning environment, free from all forms of bullying, harassment, violence, abuse and neglect. To this end, the National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) was endorsed by all Australian Ministers of Education in July 2003. The NSSF represents a social vision of how schools can be when they address the issue of bullying and focus on student safety and wellbeing.

In 2004, legislation was passed which requires the NSSF to be implemented in all Australian schools by 1 January 2006. Education Ministers further agreed that implementation of the NSSF will be reported on annually, through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs' (MCEETYA) Annual National Report on Schooling in Australia (ANR).

The NSSF is guided by the social vision that 'All Australian schools are safe and supportive environments', and provides advice and strategies which schools may use to ensure such environments are in place. The eleven guiding principles of the NSSF are that all Australian schools:

- affirm the right of all school community members to feel safe at school
- promote care, respect, and cooperation and value diversity
- implement policies, programmes and processes to nurture a safe and supportive school environment

- recognise that quality leadership is an essential element that underpins the creation of a safe and supportive school environment
- develop and implement policies and programmes through processes that engage the whole school community
- ensure that the roles and responsibilities of all members of the school community in promoting a safe and supportive environment are explicit, clearly understood and disseminated
- recognise the critical importance of pre-service and ongoing professional development in creating a safe and supportive school environment
- have a responsibility to provide opportunities for students to learn through the formal curriculum the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed for positive relationships
- focus on policies that are proactive and oriented towards prevention and intervention
- regularly monitor and evaluate their policies and programmes so that evidence-based practice
- take action to protect children from all forms of abuse and neglect.

Read more at

http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/publications_resources/profiles/National_Safe_Schools_Framework_Best_Practice.htm

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AROUND THE STATES AND TERRITORIES

SA: Legislation Passed on New High School Certificate

State Parliament has today passed legislation to support the Rann Government's \$54.5 million revamp of South Australia's high school certificate. The legislation was passed with minor amendments supported by the State Government.

The Rann Government is updating the South Australian Certificate of Education, which is nearly two decades old, to make it more relevant to students, employers and the community in the twenty-first Century.

Education Minister Jane Lomax-Smith says updating the 24 year-old SSABSA Act will provide a foundation for the governance and management of a new SACE. "This Bill supports a new SACE that will be more responsive to the aspirations of all young people while maintaining high standards expected by the community.

"Our government is embarking on an \$84m program of senior secondary reforms as part of our aspirations to make sure all young people are learning or earning.

"This approach includes a new SACE, 10 Trade Schools for the Future and a new requirement for young people to be learning or earning until they turn 17 from 2009.

"Legislative change is a significant part of our reform agenda and has been the subject of research and extensive consultation across the State. Changes to the Act were

recommended in the SACE Review and an independent examination of the current act, together with a discussion paper distributed earlier this year."

The new measures follow extensive consultation with Catholic, Independent and Government school sectors, unions, parent groups, universities and further education. Changes include:

- o A new SACE Board, replacing the current Senior Secondary Assessment Board of SA, and systems to enable the introduction of a new SACE from 2009.

- o Sharpening the Board's powers to accredit a wide range of subjects that students can undertake at school and beyond the classroom through university, further education and the workplace.

- o Provisions that recognise the need for cooperation and collaboration between the SACE Board, the Government, Independent and Catholic school sectors and the responsible Minister.

Senior school students in Government, Catholic and Independent schools will begin the new SACE from 2009, with the first students graduating in 2011.

SA: School Redevelopment with an Environmental Focus

A \$5.1 million redevelopment at Willunga Primary School is reaping benefits not only for staff and students but also for the environment.

The redevelopment was built using principles of ecologically sustainable development and includes a new administration building with reception area, two classrooms and an outdoor area. The classroom windows face north, letting in more natural light, and rooms include window shades and insulation to make the rooms cooler in summer and warmer in winter.

Solar panels will provide electricity for the school's new buildings, while four new rainwater tanks collect water for the school to use in its new toilet blocks.

Education Minister Dr Jane Lomax-Smith says the redevelopment, which boasts a mix of open multi-purpose learning spaces as well as smaller areas for group tuition, complements the school's focuses on health and physical education, Japanese, music and the arts.

"I am delighted to be opening this redevelopment which will accommodate up to 450 students and provide modern and comfortable teaching and learning areas for staff and students.

"I am also very proud that this school has been built with a focus on the environment and will reduce the costs of electricity and water.

"The upgraded facility represents a huge effort by the whole school community since planning began about four years ago.

"The department has started a feasibility study into the upgrade of Willunga High School after strong lobbying from the local member, Mr Bignell." The project received \$4.12 million from the State Government and \$1 million from the Federal Government.

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CONFERENCES & EVENTS

International Day of People with Disability

3 December

Celebrating the achievements of people with disability (For further information: <http://www.idpwd.com.au/> phone 1800 677 427).]

2007 UN theme for the day: 'Decent work for persons with disabilities' (<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/disiddp.htm>)

E-Learning Symposium

RMIT University, Melbourne, 9-11 December

For educators from all sectors (teachers, principals, teacher educators and researchers) to explore new directions in e-learning.

Main speakers at the Symposium will include leading thinkers in the field of e-learning, as well as numerous paper, colloquium and workshop presentations.

Key questions will be addressed about the nature of learning using digital media and tools.

For further information: <http://www.LearningSymposium.com>

Human Rights Day

10 December

On December 10, 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the full text of which appears at: <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html> .

Following this historic act the Assembly called upon all Member countries to publicize the text of the Declaration and "to cause it to be disseminated, displayed, read and expounded principally in schools and other educational institutions, without distinction based on the political status of countries or territories."

Quantitative Analysis of Teaching and Learning Forum

Melbourne, 8 February

Run by the Teaching and Learning Unit in conjunction with the Department of Economics at the University of Melbourne.

The Forum, one of the few national forums for quantitative research in teaching and learning, is now in its fourth year.

Registration http://tlu.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/contact_us/register.html

Paper titles are listed:http://tlu.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/teaching_staff/forum/.

Previous paper titles can be viewed here and copies of previous proceedings can be purchased for \$30. T

here are no parallel sessions at the Forum and normally around 100+ people attend from 38 universities nationwide.

For further information please contact Sonia Borg: sborg@unimelb.edu.au or Dr Martin Davies: wmdavies@unimelb.edu.au

International Conference on Learning

Chicago, USA, 3-6 June

The 15th annual Learning Conference is to be held at the University of Illinois, Chicago, Illinois, USA,. Details at <http://www.LearningConference.com>

Being, Becoming and Belonging

26-28 June 2008, Adelaide

World Education Forum SA – International Conference

How do we care for and educate children and young people for the world in which they live now and in which we hope they will flourish as citizens of tomorrow?

The World Education Forum, South Australia, thinks that it is time to take stock of the effectiveness of the effort that has been made to date.

They urge you to join them and share your expertise and re-examine the values which underpin many of the assumptions that drive modern educational policy.

For more information, go to <http://www.infront.com.au/evt/wef/>

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.. AND FROM THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON

Private Education's Great Feat

ACEL publication "Ed-Vine"26 October 2007

The Whittlesea Leader has reported on a uniform crackdown at St Monica's College, Epping, Victoria, in which some 15 students were sent home for wearing incorrect shoes.

A parent told the newspaper she was shocked and upset when her son phoned her at work to tell her he had been sent home because his black dress shoes had no laces - his regular laced school shoes had worn out.

Principal Brian Hanley was reported as saying: "Due to our strict enforcement of the rules, there is an overwhelming majority compliance by students which gives the college the high reputation it enjoys today".

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REMINDERS

25-27 July 2008: **NSW Federation of Parents & Citizens Associations State Conference**, Albury NSW. <http://www.pandc.org.au/>

27-29 August 2008: **Society for Provision of Education in Rural Australia (SPERA) Conference**, Melbourne

20-21 October 2008: **Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) National Education Conference**, Brisbane. <http://www.acsso.org.au>

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RESOURCES

Fundraising Directory - www.fundraisingdirectory.com.au Also: www.fetesandfestivals.com.au

Drug Awareness Website - www.drugawareness.com.au/

Australian Schools Directory - www.australianschoolsdirectory.com.au

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