

# AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION DIGEST

Volume 2 Number 1, 5 February 2008

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*We welcome all our readers to this first edition for 2008. Topics covered include:*

- [Launch of UN International Year of Planet Earth 2008](#)
- [A new resource for new parents](#)
- [Review of family financial contributions to education in Victoria](#)
- [What's in the news around the States](#)
- [Overseas perspectives: USA and UK](#)
- [Information about Student Online Conferences February - June 2008 on the theme: "Whose World Is It Anyway?"](#)
- [Reminders about other conferences and events.](#)

*Happy reading!*

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## 2008 - INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF PLANET EARTH

### UNESCO to Launch International Year of Planet Earth 12-13 February 2008

The General Assembly of the United Nations has proclaimed 2008 as the International Year of Planet Earth (IYPE). Its subtitle 'Earth Sciences for Society' reflects the IYPE's main ambition: to make our planet a safer, healthier and wealthier place for its human societies by ensuring a greater and more effective use of the knowledge accumulated by the world's 400,000 Earth scientists.

On 12 and 13 February 2008, the International Year of Planet Earth will be officially launched at UNESCO's headquarters in Paris. This event will be co-organized by the IYPE Corporation and the National Committee of the IYPE in France, together with IUGS and UNESCO. UNESCO's Director General Koïchiro Matsuura will host the Event and some Heads of State will be invited to address the audience.

This Global Launch Event includes discussions on three challenging topics (provisional titles):

- Population Growth & Climate Change: Challenges for Planet Earth
- Resources: Threat or Treat?
- Geo-hazards: Minimising risk - maximizing awareness.

These issues will be discussed by top scientists, CEOs of leading industries and leading politicians. Such discussions will be preceded by selected essays or poems from a crowd of 350 invited, award-winning students from across the globe. National Committees will play a key role in selecting the best students. Significant time has been scheduled for the participants to be involved in the discussions.

During this Event world leaders in politics, science and industry will share their views and visions on these challenges and raise issues concerning their solution or mitigation.

Apart from these VIPs, a maximum of 350 students from all around the world will be invited to participate in the Global Launch Event. It is considered that the creativity and perception of these students will contribute to new perspectives on the major themes of the International Year of Planet Earth.

Earth scientists are today's key players in building a sustainable world. For our children's sake we must be able to use the Earth's riches without wasting resources that cannot be replenished, and without upsetting the dynamic equilibrium of the Earth System that sustains us all.

IYPE Website with further information: <http://www.yearofplanetearth.org/>

*While 2008 is the "focus year", related activities commenced in 2007 and will continue through 2009. The themes of IYPE link with the Australian Framework on Environmental Education for Sustainable Development, and will be of major interest to schools. Each issue of "Australian Education Digest" in 2008 will carry one or more items relating to IYPE - see below, a few items to start the ball rolling".*

*And we would be keen to hear from schools around the country about related events you will be running, so we can also feature your school event in our newsletter.*

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## **Our sixth-warmest year on record**

***The Australian, January 03, 2008***

AUSTRALIA'S warmer and wilder weather in 2007 was in line with international projections for man-made climate change, the Climate Institute said.

The Bureau of Meteorology released its annual Australian Climate Statement today revealing Australia had experienced its sixth-warmest year on record - more than half a degree above the annual average temperature.

Some areas, including NSW and the Murray-Darling Basin, recorded their warmest-ever year since records have been kept.

The bureau also said Australia had now recorded a warmer-than-average year for 16 of the past 18 years and this pattern was not surprising given that Australia's climate was warming in line with the rest of the globe.

"Unfortunately, the reality is stacking up with all the projections," Climate Institute chief executive John Connor told AAP. "Certainly across southern and eastern Australia we had one of the warmest years on record.

"It also shows that global weather is not just about warmer weather, it's about wilder weather. The projections are for intense storms, flooding, droughts and bushfires and we had all of those in 2007."

The annual mean maximum temperature for 2007 of 28.6C was 0.73C above normal.

The average annual mean temperature was 21.8C, with the annual mean minimum temperature 0.61C above normal. Despite widespread drought in the far southwest and southeast, annual mean rainfall was slightly more than average at 497mm (25mm above normal).

The report said La Nina conditions, which typically bring better rains, failed to deliver in 2007.

Mr Connor said the figures reinforced the case that debate on climate change was no longer about the science.

"Climate change is a growing reality in our lives," he said.

"It's heightened the urgency for action in 2008 - it promises to be, and it needs to be, a significant year of action on climate policy."

He said the institute wanted to see promises by politicians translated to action this year.

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23001962-11949,00.html>

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## Corals may move from warming seas

*Leigh Dayton, Science writer, The Australian, January 02, 2008*

IF their watery world continues to warm as climate change scientists predict, Western Australia's corals may head south to cooler climes.

That's the message from US and Australian researchers who compared the behaviour of the state's corals then and now.

Since "then" was 125,000 years ago, University of Queensland paleoecologist John Pandolfi and geologist Benjamin Greenstein of Cornell College in Iowa are confident their findings are not a short-term blip.

The implication is that conservation managers should help ensure that corals have an "escape route" beyond existing parks and protected areas, claimed Professor Pandolfi.

"Paving the way to southern refugia is a step in the right direction for coral conservation," he argued. "These refugia could be very important for reseeding northern reefs if the environmental conditions return to a more favourable state."

According to their research \_ reported in the journal *Global Change Biology* \_ fast-growing branching corals, *Acropora*, will likely be the first to move, possibly as far south as Margaret River or even around the corner to Albany.

"We've already seen some movement of the *Acropora*," said Professor Pandolfi, with UQ's Centre for Marine Studies. "Rottnest Island (off Perth) has *Acropora* coral and it didn't have any 20 years ago," he said.

Read article at: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,22996611-11949,00.html>

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## Down to the last croak

*Greg Roberts, The Australian, January 05, 2008*

*Rheobatrachus silus* was one of the world's truly remarkable animals. The so-called platypus frog was one of a kind. The only species of land vertebrate animal - amphibian, reptile, mammal or bird - to rear its young inside its stomach. That makes the small black frogs as special as kangaroos or koalas. They were found nowhere but in the rainforests of two mountain ranges in southern Queensland.

Zoologist and environmental consultant Glen Ingram was studying them in 1977 in the Conondale Range, in the Sunshine Coast hinterland. "There were plenty of frogs in the streams at that time," Ingram recalls now. A year later, he could find just two. In 1979, there were none, and none have been found since, anywhere, despite exhaustive searches. "Like the Tasmanian tiger, it is one of the great wildlife tragedies that this astonishing animal is extinct," Ingram says.

Also known as the gastric-brooding frog, *Rheobatrachus* was first discovered in 1972. A year later, its breeding biology was unearthed when a wildlife enthusiast watched enthralled as a female in an aquarium spewed fully developed baby frogs from her mouth. This was so bizarre - gastric juices would normally destroy young animals in a stomach - that scientists initially refused to believe it.

Between discovery and extinction, the frog was known to humankind for less than a decade - an infinitesimal fraction of its time on Earth.

By the early '90s, another seven Queensland frog species were also extinct. At the same time, frogs were disappearing from other continents. Observers declared that the phenomenon of the vanishing

frogs was the "canary in the coalmine": the harbinger of insidious and potentially catastrophic global climate changes.

The worldwide demise of amphibians continues, with a third of the 5700 frog and salamander species now considered at risk of extinction.

Read article at: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23007420-30417,00.html>

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## James Lovelock - A Life in Planetary Science

I always wanted to be a physicist but I'm dyslexic, so I became a chemist instead. The '50s was a wonderful time. I worked for the National Institute for Medical Research in London for 20 years, and though I loved my job I felt that I had tramlines going down to the grave, and I couldn't stand it.

Then out of the blue came a letter from NASA, asking me to help design instruments for the first lunar and Mars missions. It was so exciting; it was like getting a love letter. In 1961, NASA's main science lab, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in California consisted of a few shacks on a hillside - but it was a young lab, with enthusiastic staff. One day I was asked: "How would you look for life on Mars?" It didn't take me long to find an answer: we should analyse the atmosphere around Mars.

Four years later I was working with the astronomer Carl Sagan in the space science division of JPL when another astronomer, Louis Caplan, came in carrying armfuls of data from the Pic du Midi observatory in France. These contained a complete analysis of the Martian and Venusian atmospheres, and we saw for the first time that both planets had atmospheres dominated by carbon dioxide. Then my mind flipped and I thought: "By comparison, Earth's atmosphere is incredible. It consists of oxygen mixed with methane, which, combined in different proportions, would explode. Looked at as a whole, our atmosphere is a combustible mixture." It came to me in a flash of enlightenment - that for the atmosphere to persist and keep stable, something must be regulating it. And if most of the gases came from living organisms, life at the surface must be doing the regulating."

All this burst out of my mouth at once, and Carl said: 'I don't believe that life can possibly regulate the atmosphere.' Then he added: "But it would explain the 'cool sun' problem." Astronomers have long known that the sun was far cooler when life on Earth began. By now my heart was pounding and I said: "My God! The Earth is regulating the climate as well as the atmospheric composition!" A neighbour of mine, the writer William Golding [author of *The Lord of the Flies*] later suggested that I name my theory Gaia, after the Greek goddess of the earth. I was consumed with Gaia from then, and the gathering together of numerous apparently unconnected facts has shaped my life ever since. Gaia theory is really a new theory of evolution, and runs contrary to everything that had gone before. The biologists and geologists attacked it violently. Only the climatologists were positive about it.

But it was by no means a miserable period, because everywhere I looked, from zoology to biology, I found things to back up my theory. The rules of Gaia are very simple: any species that fouls its environment lessens the chance of its progeny flourishing and will become extinct.

Gaia - the point when the Earth started to regulate the atmosphere to sustain life - is around 4 billion years old. In human terms she's about 80, so we're pretty certain she has at most one billion years to go. Nothing in science is certain, but I believe we've pushed Gaia beyond the point where self-regulation is possible. The Earth is already on course for a new hot state about 8 degrees Celsius warmer than it is now. It will mean a world largely denuded of life.

Like Gaia, were she sentient, I know my time is shortening. I have no belief in the hereafter, but it's comforting to think I will merge with the chemistry of this living planet. Gaia will repair herself, but slowly. Over the course of 200,000 years the atmosphere will climb back down, and what life remains will migrate from the poles and start again - as it has many times before.

Interview by Caroline Scott - published in *Weekend Australian*, 24 March 2007 James Lovelock's most recent work, "The Revenge of Gaia: Why the Earth is Fighting Back - and How we can still Save Humanity" (2006) is published by Allen Lane rrp \$29.95

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## RESOURCES FOR NEW PARENTS

### "No One Right Way: A Handbook for Parents" - Rhodanthe Lipsett

The internationally respected work of Dr Fraser Mustard firmly demonstrates the importance of the very early years in a child's development - starting from day one. The period from 0-2 years provides important stepping stones for the future.

Of course these early days are always a time of anxiety for new parents in particular. And in a real sense, parents become new parents for each child, as each child is different.

In her review of this book in the Canberra Times 7 January, Kirsten Lawson writes that "thousands of Canberra mothers have crossed Rhodanthe Lipsett's doorstep dishevelled and distressed, even in despair. These new mothers are so confused by conflicting advice and the realities of motherhood that they cannot make head nor tail of their babies. They've lost confidence and desperately need the kind of help that Lipsett can provide". It's a common problem" made worse by modern expectations that our lives will go according to plan. Babies of course never do that.

"When she retired, Lipsett wrote a book about the first three months of a baby's life, the toughest time for mothers. The book was so much in demand that she's now release a new edition.

"The book is called "No One Right Way" and that is the core of Lipsett's message to new mums: ignore the advice you don't like, trust yourself and go with your instinct. This might seem hazardous advice, but Lipsett says every baby is different. She insists a mother knows her baby best".

"She insists mothers need to worry about just five things: your baby should be growing, feeling comfortable and feeling secure. It needs lots of body closeness and cuddling - little babies cannot be "spoiled" - and lots of interaction. Beyond that it's up to you. Measure everything you are told against those five fundamentals, and if you're not happy with the advice you are being given, ignore it. Trust yourself."

"No One Right Way: A Handbook for Parents" by Rhodanthe Lipsett, Sea Change Publishing. 424pp. \$49.95

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## FAMILY FUNDING OF EDUCATION

### Voluntary school fees under the gun

*Peter Ker, The Age, January 3, 2008*

A CRACKDOWN on government schools misleading parents and charging hidden fees should become an annual check, a leading parents group says.

Victorian Education Minister Bronwyn Pike launched a crackdown on fees yesterday amid fears many parents were being pressured or misled over the payment of voluntary fees at their child's school.

Voluntary fees vary from school to school and are often levied to pay for things such as schoolyard beautification or extra computers, but parents are not obliged to pay them.

"The Education Department will be conducting an annual audit starting off with about 100 schools just to put schools on notice that we do want them to follow the fund-raising guidelines," Ms Pike said.

The Government plans to measure the success of this year's audit before committing to future ones.

Parents Victoria president Elaine Crowle said the move was overdue. "It would be good if it was ongoing " we would want to see that it wasn't just a one-off," she said.

"A lot of the schools have become very inventive in the way they describe their fees. It makes it very vague for parents to understand. Many schools just lump it in one charge and they don't set out which are the voluntary bits and which are the compulsory bits."

Ms Pike said parents spent an average of \$316 each year for each child in a state school.

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## **Voluntary-fee schools face scrutiny**

*The Age, January 2, 2008*

Voluntary fees collected by Victorian public schools will be audited in the wake of complaints from parents about inappropriate requests for funds.

State Education Minister Bronwyn Pike said 100 schools would initially be involved in the audit, to start in March and be held annually. Auditors will target schools with a history of wrongly charging fees while other schools will be chosen randomly.

The crackdown will identify any breaches of the Government's fundraising policies, which specify what schools can ask parents to pay for, including text books, musical tuition or contributions to upkeep of school grounds.

"We want to make sure that schools are operating within the guidelines, and that's why we're conducting this audit," Ms Pike told reporters.

She said the education department wanted to ensure through the audit that parents weren't being charged for items that were not part of schools' "essential learning" environments.

"There have been some schools in the past that haven't followed the guidelines and parents have complained," Ms Pike said.

"Schools have been put on notice and if we do find schools are operating outside the guidelines and they have charged parents inappropriately, then they will be asked to reimburse parents."

Ms Pike said parents contributed on average \$316 a year to their children's education.

The figure includes voluntary contributions and essential items such as stationery and books.

The audit comes after figures published by News Limited today showed Victorian government schools collected \$168 million in voluntary funds last year.

"One hundred and sixty eight million dollars represents all of the contributions made by parents to schools, (including) voluntary contributions and the cost of books and stationery," Ms Pike said.

"It certainly isn't overcharging; it's the contribution that parents make, an average of \$316 per parent."

Ms Pike refused to comment on what portion of the \$168 million had been wrongly charged, saying the department had received a few minor complaints which it had acted on before announcing the audit.

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## **AROUND THE STATES**

**SA: Promoting Teaching as Lifestyle**

Teachers across the world can see the many benefits of teaching in South Australia thanks to a new website designed to attract teachers to the State. The website, officially switched on today, is part of the Rann Government's recruitment campaign to boost teacher numbers ahead of an expected exodus of retirees over the next 10 years. It comes as the University of Adelaide is undertaking a major analysis of South Australia's public school workforce to plan teacher recruitment needs into the future.

Education Minister Jane Lomax-Smith says it is the first time the State Government has strategically expanded its teacher recruitment activities outside of the State. "Over the last five years, we have employed hundreds of extra teachers through a range of initiatives, including smaller class sizes and intensive literacy programs in the early years of school. However, we recognise that many teachers are approaching retirement age and we need to plan ahead to make sure we have enough teachers to fill the demand this expected exodus creates.

"Already, we have been experiencing shortages of qualified teachers in mathematics and science in some of our country schools and have been progressively rolling out recruitment initiatives (attached). While population projections anticipate 28,000 fewer children will be born in SA over the next 10 years, we still need a plentiful supply of teachers to fill our classrooms.

"As South Australia's regional areas grow, the need for quality teachers also grows. We want to attract teachers who will settle in South Australia for the longer term."

The website, [www.teachinginsa.sa.edu.au](http://www.teachinginsa.sa.edu.au), is linked to the Department of Education and Children's Services and SA tourism websites and users can explore teaching vacancies in DECS.

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## **SA: \$1.9m for schools to prepare for S.A Certificate of Education**

Secondary schools will share an initial \$1.9 million next year to prepare for the start of the new South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) in 2009. Government, Catholic and Independent schools will use the funds to prepare for the introduction of the compulsory Personal Learning Plan subject for all Year 10 students from 2009.

Education Minister Jane Lomax-Smith says the subject will help each student to set goals, improve their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, plan their SACE studies and consider future careers.

"This year, 42 schools have trialled elements of the new Personal Learning Plan and ways to ensure all students have strong literacy and numeracy skills," Dr Lomax-Smith says. "We will build on this work next year by giving all secondary schools the opportunity to plan for the introduction of this new subject in 2009.

"Schools also will consider how they will help their students to meet the literacy and numeracy requirements of the new SACE. Students will need to pass English and mathematics courses to complete the certificate. Further workshops will be held during 2008 in metropolitan and regional areas to provide more detailed information to teachers.

The future SACE Office will work with school staff as they examine what they need to teach as part of the new certificate. Good examples and information from pilot programs will be shared with schools across the State."

The new SACE Board will finalise the Personal Learning Plan in 2008 following consultation with school leaders, subject associations, universities and TAFE. The State Government is investing \$54.5 million to create a new certificate of education which builds on the strengths of the current SACE. The new certificate will include compulsory English and mathematics subjects, a broader range of choices for students and agreed performance standards that students will need to achieve to gain the certificate. The first students will graduate in 2011 with the new SACE 'passport' to a better future as part of the Government's 'school to work' strategy.

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## **ACT: Calls to Retain Closed School Sites for Community Use**

With the completion of the community consultation on the future of closed ACT school sites, education advocacy group Save Our Schools (SOS) has called for the sites to be retained for community use and not sold to increase the Budget surplus. SOS spokeswoman, Jane Tullis, said that the recent consultations show strong support to retain the school sites for community use.

"During the consultation, no community thought their local asset should be sold off. Local communities and broader community groups were virtually unanimous in stating that the closed school sites should be retained for community use.

"There is strong demand from ACT community groups for low-cost premises. Over 120 community groups are on the waiting list.

"Each community consulted wants to have a central voice about the ongoing use of school land and buildings in their area."

"Hopefully, the consultant has heard the community message, a message that the ACT Government should also heed. SOS calls on the Government to prove it is prepared to listen to the people of Canberra and retain all of the sites for community use."

Ms. Tullis said that the Consolidated Financial Report recently issued by the ACT Treasury demonstrates that there is no financial exigency that would require a sell off the sites.

"The ACT Government is rolling in cash. There is no need to add to the large surplus by selling off school sites. They should be used to support local community services and other demonstrated needs.

"Despite what the Government told everyone last year, it continues to run large Budget surpluses. The new Treasury statement shows a surplus for the financial year to date of \$169 million - \$55 million more than the Budget estimate.

"The Budget surplus for 2006-07 was \$90 million instead of the deficit of \$80 million the Government said we faced unless schools were closed - a turnaround of \$170 million.

"The total aggregate surplus achieved for 2001-02 to 2006-07 was over \$500 million and large surpluses are projected for the next 3 years."

Ms. Tullis said that the Government should be looking at using the sites to serve the specific and evolving needs of local communities.

"Different community needs could be delivered by innovative strategies without any need to sell off land. The Government should also be looking to retain key sites for possible future uses as schools when birth rates increase as they have in some areas already."

Jane Tullis 654 8031 (h) 0404 905 080 (m) <http://www.soscanberra.com/>

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## **INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES**

### **USA National Academy Report Stresses Importance of Teaching Evolution**

*By The Associated Press Washington*

Scientific advisers to the government emphasize in a report the importance of teaching evolution in public schools.

The report by the National Academy of Sciences and its Institute of Medicine follows up on similar past publications, the last of which came out in 1999. The new document includes recently discovered evidence supporting evolution, including an important fossil find.

The report released Thursday also takes swipes at creationism and other anti-evolution theories.

"Despite the lack of scientific evidence for creationist positions, some advocates continue to demand that various forms of creationism be taught together with or in place of evolution in science classes," the report says.

Evolution is a continuing topic of debate in some states. Florida officials are considering revisions in state science standards that would add the word "evolution" to the standards. The state Board of Education plans to vote on the guidelines next month.

In Texas, the state's director of science curriculum, Chris Comer, maintains she was forced to resign recently due to evolution politics. Comer said she came under pressure after forwarding an e-mail that her superiors felt made the agency appear to be biased against the instruction of intelligent design, an alternative to evolution favored by some religious conservatives.

Intelligent design holds that the universe's order and complexity are so great that evolution cannot explain it.

The Texas State Board of Education is expected to begin a review of the state science curriculum soon.

Josh Rosenau, a spokesman for the California-based National Center for Science Education, which supports the teaching of evolution, said the new report is important because the debate over evolution in school is not going away.

Casey Luskin, program officer for the Discovery Institute, a Seattle-based think tank that supports teaching students about the criticism of evolution, was critical of the document.

"Students should learn about the evidence for and against evolution," he said.

The Institute of Medicine is part of the National Academy of Sciences, a private organization chartered by Congress to advise the government of scientific matters.

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The summary Booklet "Science, Evolution & Creationism" can be accessed and downloaded at:  
<http://books.nap.edu/html/11876/SECbrochure.pdf>

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## **UK - Scientists urged back into class**

Ministers want Britain's top IT and science companies to encourage "career switchers" to go into teaching.

Ministers want professional scientists, mathematicians, information technology experts and engineers to help fill the skills gaps in classrooms.

Many of England's science teachers have not studied science to degree level.

A new programme linking the teacher training agency with employers hopes to ease the way for science experts planning teaching as a second career.

Schools Minister Jim Knight said: "Britain is a world leader in science and engineering - from traditional lab coats to Grand Prix racing and computer games designers.

"We now need this 'best of British' to get into our schools and colleges and bring on the next generation.

"We need companies to encourage career switchers to take the leap and go into teaching.

"These people can help bring science alive for kids who are in school today - and ensure that more of them decide to take up science as a career. In the long term it can only benefit the UK."

A Department for Children, Schools and Families spokeswoman rejected suggestions that employers might be reluctant to lose their staff to another profession.

She said the programme might suit someone seeking early retirement from the science industry. Industry support

Human resource departments might put such a person in touch with the Transition to Teaching programme, to be launched in the spring.

Head of recruitment at the Training and Development Agency for Schools, John Connolly, said the partnership would benefit potential teachers, pupils, and the science industry in the long term.

"It will enable employers to free up some of their brightest to teach the next generation of scientists and engineers that our businesses will need."

Firms including IT giant Cisco, pharmaceuticals company Astra Zeneca and BT have already signed up for the programme.

And the government has appointed the chief executive of IBM UK to head up a committee to design a programme to help graduates with science and maths degrees to go into teaching as a second career.

Recent government-funded research suggested that one in four science teachers was not a specialist.

The issue has drawn criticism from scientific organisations who argue that teachers without specialist training and knowledge often lack the confidence and ability to bring the subject to life.

Currently, just 19% of science teachers in England have a physics specialism and 25% a chemistry specialism - which equates to having studied either subject to degree level.

By 2014 the government wants that proportion to have risen to 25% and 31% respectively.

It also wants 95% of maths lessons to be taught by maths specialists.

From BBC News 4 January 2008 at: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/education/7171442.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/7171442.stm)

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## **Teachers told not to be gun shy**

***Robert Booth, The Guardian London December 30, 2007***

BOYS should be encouraged to play with toy guns at infant school because it can help improve academic performance, according to British Government advice.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families said boys aged between three and five had fallen behind female classmates partly because teaching staff tried to curb their desire for boisterous play involving weapons. Boys were more likely to be interested in education and would do better if encouraged to pursue their chosen play.

Teachers' unions say that toy guns "symbolise aggression" and teachers ought to stop them being used. They also criticised the Government for stereotyping boys.

The guidance, Confident, Capable and Creative: Supporting Boys' Achievements, said national data for 2004-06 showed that in pre-school education, boys performed worse than girls across all areas of learning.

It is a pattern the Government says continues up to the age of 15 and 16. Better results can be achieved if teachers curb their "instincts" to stop boys from playing with toy guns and instead make better use of their interests.

"Sometimes practitioners find the chosen play of boys more difficult to understand and value than that of girls," the guidance states.

"They may choose activities in which adults involve themselves least, or play that involves more action and a greater use of the available space, especially outdoors. Images and ideas gleaned from the media are common starting points in boys' play and may involve characters with special powers or weapons. Adults can find this type of play particularly challenging and have a natural instinct to stop it."

It said this was unnecessary as long as staff helped boys understand and respect the rights of other children.

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## **STUDENT ONLINE CONFERENCES: FEB - JUNE 2008**

### ***"Whose World Is It, Anyway"?***

Dear school leaders, teachers, Parents and students,

I'm delighted to invite the students at your school to participate in the 2008 series of iNet student online conferences.

Four internet-only conferences for primary and secondary students (no adults) will be held, at no cost, starting on 25 February.

Our focus this year will be on global issues, with four different week-long conferences addressing the overarching question: 'Whose world is it, anyway?'

25-29 February: New technologies: a threat or a promise? Student contributions by 28 January

10 - 14 March: Climate change: whose problem is it? Student contributions by 11 February

28 April-2-May: Do you live in a 'global village'? Student contributions by 17 March

16-20 June: If you could change the world to create a better future, what would you do? Student contributions:

Email student contributions, by the due dates, to Ms Debra Brydon, at: [brydon@cybertext.net.au](mailto:brydon@cybertext.net.au)

Register online for the 2008 iNet student online conferences series:

<http://www.cybertext.net.au/studentreg3.htm>

Students from all countries may participate, in several ways. Ideally, they will contribute essays and stories, videos, audio files, newspaper articles, poems and PowerPoint presentations that will be published on the online conference website, for other students to consider and discuss online.

The deadlines for our receipt of these student contributions are provided above. If providing resources for the conference is not possible, students are still most welcome to join in the 24/7 online discussions that will take place during each of the conference weeks, and should register online for information updates.

As the conferences are fully supervised, and no personal contact information or student photos will be published on the conference website, students can take part either at home or at school, in groups or individually. Students providing material for the online conferences are invited to submit an avatar, rather than a personal photo.

The two sites that could be used to create these images are:

- <http://www.simpsonsmovie.com/main.html> and
- <http://www.weeworld.com/default.aspx>  
(teachers may need to set up an account for students or students may wish to draw their own picture and send as a jpeg file).

For more detailed information, please refer to the iNet website at: [www.ssat-inet.net/haveyoursay](http://www.ssat-inet.net/haveyoursay)

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## REMINDERS

8 February - Quantitative Analysis of Teaching and Learning Forum - Melbourne -  
[http://tlu.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/contact\\_us/register.html](http://tlu.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/contact_us/register.html)

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14-15 February - International Conference on Educational Leadership - Wollongong -  
<http://www.uow.edu.au/conferences/educonf08/index.html>

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3-6 June - International Conference on Learning - Chicago, USA -  
<http://www.LearningConference.com>

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26-28 June - World Education Forum SA International Conference - Adelaide -  
<http://www.infront.com.au/evt/wef/>

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

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27-29 August - Society for Provision of Education in Rural Australia Conference - Melbourne

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20-21 October - ACSSO National Education Conference - Brisbane - <http://www.acsso.org.au>

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## RESOURCES

Fundraising Directory - [www.fundraisingdirectory.com.au](http://www.fundraisingdirectory.com.au) Also: [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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