

# **AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION DIGEST**

**Volume 2 Number 3, 19 February 2008**

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*Welcome to the third edition of "Australian Education Digest" for 2008. In this issue we continue our review of key items recently appearing in the media which have resonance for the year ahead, and which you may have missed in the vacation or the busy time preparing for the new school year. We also review some educational resource articles which appeared last year and which are relevant to the new year now getting under way. Items include:*

- Government Funds Family-School and Community Partnership Bureau (2 items)
- The Rudd Government's Education Revolution (6 items)
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- Hot Topic: Fitness & Obesity (3 items)
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## **QUOTE – UNQUOTE...**

*"Education is the foundation upon which every individual builds his or her participation in society, their capacity to work and their ability to lead a healthy and active life"*

*Hon Julia Gillard MP, 14 February 2008*

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Building Better Partnerships between Schools, Parents and their Community**

*Hon Julia Gillard MP, Deputy Prime Minister & Minister for Education, Employment, Workplace Relations & Social Inclusion, 18 February 2008*

The Minister for Education has today announced that funding of \$800,000 for a unique Family-School and Community Partnership Bureau will be delivered to help develop partnerships between parents, schools and the community.

The Minister was speaking at the National Parents Forum in Parliament House at the invitation of the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) and the Australian Parents Council (APC).

As promised, the Rudd Government will provide \$800,000 over four years to two key national bodies, the ACSSO and APC, to conduct research and develop pilot programs to ensure schools are more welcoming to parents and the broader community.

The Rudd Government's Education Revolution recognises that while formal education settings are an important part of a child's education, parents play a key role in bridging the education experience a child receives at school and at home.

Research shows that schools that have high levels of parental and community involvement, achieve improved student learning, attendance and behaviour. Family involvement in schools is therefore central to high quality education and is part of the core business of schools.

This new Bureau will work with organisations across the country in developing and encouraging effective partnerships between schools, parents and the broader community to improve students' learning experiences and outcomes.

The aim will be to reach the disengaged, the disempowered and those families that often are not drawn into their children's learning.

The Rudd Government is working with schools and parents to ensure every Australian child gets access to a world class education.

Read online at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0208/msed180.php>

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## **Parents Excited by Labor's Momentous Family Bureau Decision**

Parent organisations have praised Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard's announcement that Labor will fund a dedicated Bureau to build closer ties between parents and schools across the country.

The Government will provide \$800,000 over four years to the national parents organisations to conduct on the ground research, encourage parents and schools to work together and to spread best practice in family school partnerships.

The Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) which represents parents in public schools, described the Government's decision as momentous.

"This is the most significant development for many years in improving the culture and performance of Australian education," ACSSO President Jenny Branch said.

"A clear indication that the Government sets great value on helping families, schools and communities work together more effectively."

Speaking after a parents forum in Canberra today, Ms Branch said the Deputy Prime Minister's decision would open the doors for improvements in the lives of young people, teachers and families.

The Bureau will conduct research about ways to improve relationships between schools, families and the community and will identify schools where good relationships have been established. It will also promote the value of parents being involved closely with the education of their children.

"We recognize the immense importance of the teacher's role and we want to assist and partner where we can," Ms Branch said. "We are particularly interested in helping in places where parents and students are disengaged and do not connect with their school."

"We are looking forward to meeting with our colleagues in the principals associations and teacher unions to progress the Bureau's offerings as soon as possible," she said.

Read online at [http://www.acsso.org.au/media\\_releases.htm](http://www.acsso.org.au/media_releases.htm)

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## **THE RUDD GOVERNMENT'S EDUCATION REVOLUTION**

### **Rudd has a long way to go to become the education prime minister**

*Brian J. Caldwell, Sydney Morning Herald, 6 December 2007*

It is possible that Kevin Rudd's idea of an education revolution was drawn from a book that inspired New Labour's election in Britain in 1997, when its three top priorities were famously declared to be "education, education, education".

The book was *The Learning Game: Arguments for an Education Revolution*. Its author, Michael Barber, former research officer for England's largest teachers' union and later professor of education, became Tony Blair's chief adviser on education the day after the election. He now works for McKinsey & Company and is co-author of McKinsey's report *How the World's Best-Performing School Systems Come Out on Top*, which is currently the most widely read study worldwide of what should lie at the heart of an education revolution.

Rudd is certainly off to a flying start. It is striking that his first act after the election was to visit a school. Blair did the same in the days following his historic win in 1997.

Bill Clinton promised to be a "real education president". Kim Beazley wanted to be remembered as the "education prime minister". The current presidential hopeful Bill Richardson declares that "I want to be the education president".

Rudd's intentions have been welcomed in the school community. There is bipartisan political support for strategies such as a national curriculum, a priority on early childhood education, national testing, an even stronger focus on literacy and numeracy, more school autonomy, and technical education that is better connected to the skill needs of the nation.

However, none of these address the "big picture" issues.

The McKinsey report contained seriously disturbing evidence that Australia has nearly trebled its per student expenditure on school education since the early 1970s but average attainment by students has not increased.

No other country has such a poor investment record. The gap between our high- and low-performing students is among the widest in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development nations. Up to half of all teachers plan to leave the profession within 10 years. The number of students in private schools has jumped by 21.5 per cent in the past 10 years compared with 1.2 per cent in government schools.

Despite some promising commitments in recent state and territory budgets, most of our government schools and many non-government schools are in run-down condition or are educationally obsolete. It is no wonder teachers do not wish to stay in the profession when they are forced to work in substandard facilities.

Read more at <http://www.smh.com.au/news/opinion/rudd-has-a-long-way-to-go-to-become-the-education-prime-minister/2007/12/05/1196812821144.html>

*Brian J. Caldwell is managing director of Educational Transformations and a former dean of education at the University of Melbourne.*

*Note: The McKinsey Report referred to, "How the World's Best Performing School Systems Come Out on Top" of September 2007 can be accessed online at: [http://www.mckinsey.com/client/service/socialsector/resources/pdf/Worlds\\_School\\_Systems\\_Final.pdf](http://www.mckinsey.com/client/service/socialsector/resources/pdf/Worlds_School_Systems_Final.pdf)*

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## **Vital Support for Indigenous Students**

***Hon Julia Gillard MP, Deputy Prime Minister & Minister for Education, Employment, Workplace Relations & Social Inclusion, 14 February 2008***

The Minister for Education, Julia Gillard has today introduced a bill to deliver the Rudd Government's commitment to provide 200 more teachers to schools in the Northern Territory.

This Bill amends the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000, appropriating \$7.162 m in additional funding for the 2008 school year for the recruitment of 50 additional teachers. \$56.8 million will be provided through subsequent acts for the remaining 150 teachers over the years 2009-2011.

The funding will be provided to NT education providers to recruit and employ the additional teachers. NT education providers will be responsible for deploying and housing the teachers employed through this initiative.

Ms Gillard also announced the approval of funding for a number of complementary measures for Indigenous students in the Northern Territory.

The Government will provide over \$34 million in funding to benefit Indigenous children in the Northern Territory's remote communities.

Read more at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0208/msewria140.php>

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## **School Security and National Curriculum**

*Radio Interview 2UE Sydney, 11 January 2008*

TIM WEBSTER: Listen; let's get this story straight first. Are we really talking about ASIO and AFP guarding these schools?

JULIA GILLARD: We're talking about \$20 million of resources to keep kids safe at school.

TIM WEBSTER: Yeah.

JULIA GILLARD: And I'm sure every Australian would say every kid in Australian schools should be able to learn and play safely. They shouldn't be at any risk.

TIM WEBSTER: Yeah.

JULIA GILLARD: What we're talking about is, of course, us working with our security people including the AFP, to get the program design right to work out who is at risk. And then the \$20 million can go to things that help mitigate that risk; those security measures at the school.

TIM WEBSTER: Yeah, the first thing that occurs to me though is that ASIO and the AFP aren't brought into public schools, though, are they?

JULIA GILLARD: Well we want to make sure kids are safe no matter what school they're in. Obviously in terms of the funding streams, we've got State Government's funding State schools. The Federal Government makes some contribution to State schools. And Federal Government makes contributions to non government schools. We want to make sure wherever you are, you are safe. We would be working with our State and Territory colleagues on circumstances in state schools. We have obviously got this program for circumstances in schools generally. So, we're not drawing any distinctions. We're saying if there is an Australian child at school, then they should be safe when they're learning and safe when they're playing.

<...>

JULIA GILLARD: No, we've got to make sure that wherever kids are learning, they are learning a curriculum that is going to equip them for living and working in a modern Australian nation. We of course have our proposal for a National Curriculum Board. That's about driving quality of education, but it's also about the very practical measure that lots of people move interstate. And we don't want children who move from one State to another State to be bewildered in their new school because everything is different ...

TIM WEBSTER: Yeah.

JULIA GILLARD: ... And a national curriculum will help smooth those transitions. It's always going to be pretty tough for a young person to move school; you lose your mates and you lose the familiarity of your old school. But we don't want to make it even tougher by you sitting there going, "I haven't learned any of this stuff" or "I did all this stuff two years ago and now I'm bored".

<...>

JULIA GILLARD: We want to make sure we put downwards pressure on inflation. One way of doing that is to make sure we are very prudent with government funds and we will be very prudent in the budget. Another way of doing that is to expand the productive

capacity of our economy. And our education revolution is all about valuing Australian children. But it's also an economic plan. Tomorrow's prosperity for this nation depends on people getting a world class education. Whether that's in pre-schools, schools, technical or further education, or universities – we've got to get it all right, if this nation is to be able to hold its head up in the world and compete.

TIM WEBSTER: Yes absolutely. And the Prime Minister gets back on Monday. Is that priority number one for the new government - education? Because I believe it should be.

JULIA GILLARD: Kevin made it clear all last year that the education revolution – his education revolution – is the single biggest priority of the government. And in terms of the things that we've got on with very early – we've already been to Cabinet to get approval for the computers in schools; and we're out talking to the State systems and the Catholic and independent school systems about the delivery of that policy.

Cabinet has already approved the trade training centres so we can get up on to the job of talking to everybody to make sure that that gets done. We had one of our COAG working parties just before Christmas. The Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, sat down with his State and Territory counterparts to enter a new age of getting things done together, rather than playing the blame game. And one of the big parts of that agenda is the productivity agenda, the education agenda. Making sure we're not at the back of the class anymore in the world.

Read the interview at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0108/ridpm110.php>

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## **New National Curriculum Must Not Mean a Slip in School Standards**

***The Hon Tony Smith MP, Shadow Minister for Education, Apprenticeships & Training, 30 January 2008***

Labor's new proposed national curriculum must ensure a higher standard of curriculum for all states, not a curriculum that is the lowest common denominator, the Shadow Minister for Education, Apprenticeships and Training, Tony Smith MP, said today.

Mr Smith said while he welcomed the Rudd Labor Government's adoption of the former government's policy to implement a nationally consistent curriculum, it must not mean a deterioration in standards.

"The former Coalition government believed a national, consistent curriculum was long overdue, particularly because of the bureaucratic duplication it caused and the difficulty it posed for families who moved interstate," Mr Smith said.

"It is imperative that the new curriculum takes the poorly performing states up to the highest standards and not the other way around."

Read more at [http://www.liberal.org.au/info/news/detail/20080130\\_Newnationalcurriculummustnotmeanaslipinschoolstandards.php](http://www.liberal.org.au/info/news/detail/20080130_Newnationalcurriculummustnotmeanaslipinschoolstandards.php)

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## **Razor Gang Should Review Over-Funding of Private Schools**

*Save Our Schools, 10 February 2008*

Save Our Schools, a public education advocacy group, has called on the Rudd Government to include private school over-funding in its review of Federal Government expenditure.

SOS spokesman, Trevor Cobbold, said that over-funding for wealthy private schools should not be quarantined from the razor gang.

"It is unfair to ask the rest of Australia to "brace for pain" in spending cuts while massive over-funding of wealthy private schools is excluded from review by the Rudd Government's razor gang.

"Nearly 50 per cent of private schools are over-funded according to a secret Federal Education Department report leaked at the weekend. It says that some schools will be overpaid by as much as \$23 million each over the next funding cycle.

"Save Our Schools' own analysis of private school funding data shows that many schools have been over-funded by \$10-15 million each in the last four years. The overwhelming proportion went to more wealthy schools.

Read more at <http://soscanberra.com/media-releases/media-release-10-february-2008-razor-gang-should-review-over-funding-of-private-schools>

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## **Alarm Bells on Rising HECS Fees**

*Senator Natasha Stott Despoja, 23 January 2008*

The Rudd Government must move urgently to stop soaring HECS fees for university students, according to the Australian Democrats.

"Reports that annual HECS fees could reach \$26,000 in thirty years are alarming. Few students will be able to afford to pay more than \$75,000 for a three year degree," Democrats' Higher Education Spokesperson Senator Natasha Stott Despoja said.

When these fees are combined with ancillary costs such as books, stationery, computer use – and other course-related expenses – the annual cost of university education is estimated to reach \$37,664 by 2037.

"Already, we are seeing a drop in the number of school-leavers opting for university; instead they are choosing to enter the paid workforce sooner. While university is not the preferred option for all students, the choice must be there and must not be determined by wealth," Senator Stott Despoja said.

"The Democrats have long supported a review of HECS and strongly support the National Union of Students' recent call for a review."

Read more at <http://www.natashastottdespoja.com/asp/mediarelease.aspx?ID=624>

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## RESEARCH

### Staff in Australia's Schools Survey 2007

The SIAS project, undertaken by the Australian Council for Educational Research in collaboration with the Australian College of Educators, gathered information from over 13,000 secondary and primary school teachers and leaders across the country. It aimed to address key gaps in the data available to characterise the teaching profession to support workforce planning. The project also involved extensive consultations with key stakeholder groups on data needs and processes to support long-term workforce planning.

The study was commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (previously Education, Science and Training). It was supported by an Advisory Committee that included representatives from government and non-government education authorities and professional associations.

The project's findings and recommendations are presented in two components that were published on 15 January 2008:

\* Staff in Australia's Schools 2007 by Phillip McKenzie, Julie Kos, Maurice Walker & Jennifer Hong (PDF: 947 KB)

\* Teacher Workforce Data and Planning Processes in Australia by Susanne Owen, Julie Kos & Phillip McKenzie (PDF: 479 KB)

These can be downloaded from the ACER site at <http://www.acer.edu.au/news/index.html#SIAS>.

The reports are also available from:

[http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school\\_education/publications\\_resources/profiles/sias2007](http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/publications_resources/profiles/sias2007)

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### Senator Stott Despoja Launches Youth Poll 2008

At the launch of her final Youth Poll in January 2008, Australian Democrats' Senator Natasha Stott Despoja has urged the new Federal Government to ensure better youth representation.

"The previous Government neglected young people on numerous counts. It undermined their rights and protections at work, under-funded education, and delayed addressing climate change.

"In addition, the Government failed to provide advocacy for young people by refusing to establish a youth ombudsman.

"This Government must fulfill its campaign promise – to improve young peoples' representation – by establishing a youth ombudsman." Senator Stott Despoja said.

For more than 14 years, Senator Stott Despoja has produced Youth Poll, giving young people a say on a variety of issues including education, health and employment.

This year, marks the Senator's final Youth Poll in her capacity as a Senator for South Australia (her Parliamentary term ends in July), and she is urging the new Minister to

adopt the initiative.

Each poll has given young people a rare forum to voice their opinions on a range of topics, often uncovering quite startling information about their lives along the way.

In addition to ongoing questions on topics such as the republic; mandatory detention centres; same-sex marriage and Voluntary Student Unionism, this year's Poll asks:

- Do you binge drink?
- Do you support the federal government signing the Kyoto protocol?
- Do you have a social networking site such as facebook or MySpace?

Questionnaires have been sent to individuals, secondary schools, youth organisations, TAFEs and universities.

Read more at <http://www.natashastottdespoja.com/asp/youthpoll.aspx>

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## **HOT TOPIC: FITNESS & OBESITY**

### **Hoops, Hurdles & High Jumps: Physical Activity & Bodyweight among 17 year-olds**

This briefing paper from the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) draws on data from ongoing research project Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth. The paper concludes:

"Overall, while 85% of young people reported playing regular sport or exercise, only 25% reported playing sport or exercise on a daily basis. As such, of the 60% who do play regular sport or exercise at least once a week, it cannot be assumed they are participating at the recommended level of intensity to realise the benefits to their health in both the short and long term.

"On the positive side, 72% of 17 year-olds rated their general health as either excellent or very good. However, of concern is that just over 20% of 17 year-olds had a body mass index placing them in the overweight to obese weight range. In addition, further concern is reflected by the 30% of females who were in the under-weight category.

"The findings of this Briefing highlight the importance of the need for government, schools and parents to address a wide range of factors that are linked to childhood obesity and sporting inactivity. Young people who do not develop and maintain participation in sport and exercise from an early age may miss out on a range of benefits from such activity, apart from being at risk of developing weight problems.

"UNICEF among many, cite participation in sport as aiding the development of self-esteem, social skills, the ability to cope with pressure, resilience and improved alertness. In addition, regular sport and exercise aid concentration and enhance decision-making and problem-solving, which have a flow-on effect to academic performance.

"The importance of sport and exercise to the physical, mental and emotional well-being of our young people across their lifespans, needs to be addressed at both an individual and societal level"

Read the paper at [http://www.acer.edu.au/documents/LSAY\\_BriefingReport13.pdf](http://www.acer.edu.au/documents/LSAY_BriefingReport13.pdf)

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## **Physical Education and Active Play Help Teens Maintain Normal Weight as Adults**

*Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, USA, 11 January 2008*

Adolescents who participate in physical education at school are more likely to maintain a normal weight as young adults, according to a study by researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. For each weekday of physical education at school the odds of being an overweight adult decreased by 5 percent. Participation in all five days of physical education decreased the odds of being an overweight adult by 28 percent. The study is published in the January 2008 edition of the journal, Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine.

"These findings underscore the important role that school-based and extracurricular physical activities play in reducing the likelihood of becoming an overweight adult," said Robert Wm. Blum, MD, MPH, PhD, the study's senior author. "While physical education was not a good weight-loss mechanism over time, it appears to have a positive impact in helping teenagers maintain a healthy weight into young adulthood," added Blum, who is the Bloomberg School's William H. Gates Sr. Professor and Chair in Population and Reproductive Health.

The Hopkins team studied 3,345 teens in grades eight through 12 who took part in the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health at which time the teens were surveyed on their participation in physical education and physical activities outside of school. The researchers then followed up with the participants five years after leaving school to check their height and weight.

The researchers found that increased participation in physical education and certain extracurricular physical activities decreased the likelihood of being overweight as an adult. The likelihood of being an overweight adult was most reduced among teens who participated in wheel-related extracurricular activities, such as rollerblading, biking or skate-boarding more than 4 times per week. These teens were more than twice as likely to maintain a normal weight as adults compared to their less active peers. However, no impact was detected when physical activities were performed fewer than three times per week.

Read more at

[http://www.jhsph.edu/publichealthnews/press\\_releases/2008/blum\\_exercise.html](http://www.jhsph.edu/publichealthnews/press_releases/2008/blum_exercise.html)

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## **Sleep Duration May Play Important Role in Childhood Obesity**

Less sleep can increase a child's risk of being overweight or obese, according to a study by researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Their analysis of epidemiological studies found that with each additional hour of sleep, the risk of a child being overweight or obese dropped by 9 percent. The results are published in the February 2008 edition Obesity, the journal of The Obesity Society.

"Our analysis of the data shows a clear association between sleep duration and the risk for overweight or obesity in children. The risk declined with more sleep," said Youfa Wang, MD, PhD, senior author of the study and associate professor with the Bloomberg School's Center for Human Nutrition. "Desirable sleep behavior may be an important low

cost means for preventing childhood obesity and should be considered in future intervention studies. Our findings may also have important implications in societies where children do not have adequate sleep due to the pressure for academic excellence and where the prevalence of obesity is rising, such as in many East Asian countries."

"The influence of sleep quality on obesity risk is another important area where future research is needed," added Xiaoli Chen, MD, PhD, the study's lead author and a former postdoctoral fellow at the Bloomberg School.

For the study, Wang, Chen and colleague May A. Beydoun, also a postdoctoral fellow at the Bloomberg School, reviewed 17 published studies on sleep duration and childhood obesity and they analyzed 11 of them in their meta-analysis.

The recommended amount of daily sleep varied between studies analyzed and with children's age. Some research suggests that children under age 5 should sleep for 11 hours or more per day, children age 5 to 10 should sleep for 10 hours or more per day, and children over age 10 should sleep at least 9 hours per day. The Hopkins researchers used these suggestions for their analysis.

The results of the analysis showed that children with the shortest sleep duration had a 92 percent higher risk of being overweight or obese compared to children with longer sleep duration. For children under age 5, shortest sleep duration meant less than 9 hours of sleep per day. For children ages 5 to 10 it meant less than 8 hours of sleep per day and less than 7 hours of sleep per day for children over 10. The association between increased sleep and reduced obesity risk was strongly associated with boys, but not in girls.

Read more at

[http://www.jhsph.edu/publichealthnews/press\\_releases/2008/wang\\_sleep\\_obesity.html](http://www.jhsph.edu/publichealthnews/press_releases/2008/wang_sleep_obesity.html)

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## **RESOURCES: LITERACY DEVELOPMENT**

### **Up Downs: a fun and practical way to introduce reading and writing to children aged 2-5**

**Review by Rupert Macgregor, ACSSO's National Projects Manager**

Author Michelle Neumann was in contact with ACSSO during the development of this book, whose simple, practical, engaging and interactive activity based approach is totally consistent with that of the ongoing ACSSO-APC initiative "Literacy - Parents Make the World of Difference" –

So it is particularly satisfying to be able to report that this extremely valuable "resource and ideas kit" for parents of young children has now been published and readily available from Finch Publishing, a firm based in Sydney specialising in health and learning support resources.

New parents of young children exist in a state of nervous uncertainty and well-meaning anxiety about the best things to do to promote and support their children's literacy skills development in positive and useful ways.

The good news for parents is that if they follow through the sorts of activities outlined in "Up Downs" they cannot go very far wrong - and should get things very right!

They will not only discover what works - but, even more reassuringly, why this simple fun activity-based approach works so effectively, in terms of the range of available research.

The work of Dr Fraser Mustard demonstrates the ways in which the young brain is wired with the languages learning potential from very young age; and that "experience-based brain development in the early years – right from conception to age six - sets pathways in brain development that affect learning, health and behaviour through the life cycle."

Positive interactive experiences that build a reinforcing framework of interest and confidence in reading, writing and reasoning – literacy skills development - are shaping up long term positive life experiences and outcomes.

"We can safely predict that those individuals who can read and write (and numerically calculate) are most likely to be long-lived healthy individuals who will enjoy a good life on this planet and contribute positively to society."

Howard Gardner's exploration of the concepts of multiple intelligences highlights the extent to which we each approach learning through a range of "learning styles" and the value of shaping learning experiences in a multi-sensory way that are complementary and mutually reinforcing.

The celebrated Haringey study in London (1982) demonstrated the ways in which and extent to which parental (and grand-parental) involvement achieves positive outcomes - children who read with and to their parents made significantly greater progress in reading than those who did not engage in this type of literacy sharing.

More significantly, the results showed that the positive development of young children who worked with their parents in these ways, was considerably greater than results achieved by children working in small groups with a qualified professional tutor.

As recognised in the Adelaide Declaration on the Goals of Schooling for the 21st Century, parents and families have an essentially important role as the first and continuing educators of their children - a role that they are uniquely well placed to carry out.

"Up Downs" is an accessible and valuable resource kit that will assist all parents of young children to carry out that vital role effectively and successfully.

It is available for purchase online at [http://www.finch.com.au/html/s02\\_article/article\\_view.asp?art\\_id=260&nav\\_cat\\_id=220&nav\\_top\\_id=70](http://www.finch.com.au/html/s02_article/article_view.asp?art_id=260&nav_cat_id=220&nav_top_id=70)

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## **ORGANISATIONS**

*Many of us don't hear much about the role, functions and activities of the various professional educators' associations. So we plan to feature some of these in the newsletter. Why not write us a short piece about your association? Appropriately, in this International Year of Planet Earth and the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, we begin with -*

## **Australian Association for Environmental Education (AAEE)**

The Australian Association for Environmental Education (AAEE) is the premier, national, professional association for those who identify themselves as working in the fields of environment or sustainability education. Through its representative roles on state and national committees and its state-based Chapters, AAEE represents and advocates for the interests of Environmental Education and Educators. AAEE provides an important network of Educators, and it supports its members with up-to-date research and policy information, access to resources, and regular workshops and conferences.

AAEE exists to provide a forum for professionals interested in Environmental Education to come together, network and share their knowledge and expertise. It also serves to represent the environmental education fraternity in national discussions and debates.

State and Territory Chapters run local meetings and events. The association also has a number of Special Interest Groups for members, including Teacher and Teacher Education; Early Childhood; Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, Young People & Environmental Citizenship, Transformative Learning, Vocational Education & Training, and Early Career Researchers.

AAEE has professional links with similar associations in North America, New Zealand and India; it is currently developing closer ties with Europe and Africa. The biennial, national conferences have an international perspective.

Read more at <http://www.aeee.org.au>

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## **AWARDS & PRIZES**

### **2008 Australian Museum Eureka Science Prizes:**

#### **Entries Close 2 May 2008**

Australia's premier annual science awards and recognition program, the Australian Museum Eureka Prizes, is once again up and running!

School Science again forms an important element of the program, with these prizes on offer:

- Science Teaching – sponsored by Peter & Divonne Holmes a Court and the University of Technology, Sydney
- Action Against Climate Change – sponsored by Macquarie University
- Sleek Geeks Science Prize – sponsored by the Faculty of Science, University of Sydney.

This year the categories include both Primary and Secondary Schools.

Read more at <http://www.australianmuseum.net.au/eureka>

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## **The Australian Women's Weekly Environmental Heroes Competition**

### **Running Monthly Through 2008**

The Women's Weekly Environmental Heroes Awards provides \$10,000 each month for the next ten months.

The competition rewards projects run by groups of children from schools, community, social and sporting groups based in Australia who help the environment. Preference will be given to (but is not limited to) recycling/land fill avoidance/diversion and tree planting (i.e. projects that mitigate against landfill gases and deforestation); and will also include energy efficiency projects.

The competition is only open to groups with at least one person aged 18 years or over and at least two people under the age of 18 years.

Entry forms are available from the Australian Women's Weekly (February to November 2008 issues).

Entries open now and close on November 25, 2008.

For more details, see each monthly issue of the Australian Women's Weekly magazine.

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## **National Youth Week - National Talent Competitions**

### **Australia's Largest Talent Competition – Closing 14 April 2007**

If you've ever dreamt of showcasing your creative talents to the nation (with the chance to win some fantastic goodies), then make sure you don't miss out on taking part in Australia's largest talent competitions.

The National Talent Competitions (NTC) are part of the National Youth Week 2008 (NYW) celebrations and are an opportunity for all young musicians, writers, movie-makers, photographers, artists and designers aged 12 – 25 to make their mark and RockIT, WriteIT, ShootIT, SnapIT or DesignIT.

There is over \$70,000 worth of prizes up for grabs including computer and software packages; music vouchers and professional camera equipment.

Entrants have the opportunity to strut their stuff and gain invaluable industry recognition as entries are judged by leading industry professionals. A past finalist of the RockIT competition is Aussie band Operator Please.

Read more at <http://www.youthweek.com>

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## **VIEW FROM ABROAD: UK**

### **Parents will see child's school progress online**

The end of the traditional school report is to be heralded as ministers announce plans to give parents daily electronic access to their children's school records.

All schools will be expected to set up "real-time reporting" systems that will allow parents to see attendance records, grades and discipline reports. The information could be made available online or via emails, text messages or even teleconferencing. All secondary schools will be expected to offer online reporting of students' progress by 2010

Ministers believe that the new reporting systems will make it easier for parents to be regularly involved in their children's education and will improve school standards.

But security experts warned that any weakness in the IT systems opened up the risk of sensitive data going astray. Meanwhile, teachers fear being deluged with demands for information from parents. Jim Knight, the schools minister, will say today that all secondary schools should offer real-time reporting systems by 2010, with primary schools expected to follow two years later.

All parents will be encouraged to buy a PC, as Mr Knight says that "a home computer should be as important as going to school with a calculator or pencil case".

The Department of Children, Schools and Families will set aside £30 million over the next three years to help low-income families buy computers and connect to the internet. Mr Knight will make his announcement at a computer industry conference, where he hopes to persuade manufacturers to support the government scheme by offering discounted equipment.

Read more at

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2008/01/09/nonline109.xml>

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## **CONFERENCES AND EVENTS**

### **Environmental Education Up The Track – Hot Topics for Our Community**

*Darwin, Northern Territory - 9-12 July 2008*

Biennial conference of the Australian Association for Environmental Education (AAEE)

The Australian Association for Environmental Education (AAEE) is the premier professional association for those who work in the fields of environmental or sustainability education.

Darwin is uniquely positioned as a cross-road for diverse experiences in tropical Australia. Come 'up the track' to Larrakia country and Charles Darwin University or join our virtual conference from your home-base. Share your thoughts and ideas on how we can move forward to educate for a more sustainable future through our themes:

- Communities make the system
- Trans-cultural Communication
- Improving our capacity- beyond the rhetoric

Read more at <http://www.cdu.edu.au/ehs/AAEE/>

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## **Switch to Green Conference & Expo**

***Canberra 4-5 April 2008***

How do you take practical action against climate change and global warming? Be involved in the debate with the Switch to Green Expo & Conference in Canberra - Australia's premier climate change event taking place at the National Convention Centre from April 4-5, 2008.

This major event is hosted by the United Nations Association of Australia, the ACT Government, the Australian Conservation Foundation, Canberra Business Council and the Conservation Council.

Read more at <http://www.switchtogreen.unaa.org.au>

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## **2008 Australasian Boys Education Network Conference series:**

***Boys, Engagement, Bullying, Cyber-Bullying & Learning***

Information has been posted on the Research Australia Development and Innovation Institute website at <http://www.radii.org/aben>

Details of Parent Evening Events associated with the Conference Series will be posted in the next 2 weeks.

Please bring this to the attention of teachers who may be interested in attending one of the Conference Events:

Melbourne April 21  
Adelaide May 9  
Perth May 12  
Brisbane May 15  
Sydney May 16

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## **World Conference on Mental Health Promotion**

***Melbourne, 10-12 September 2008***

The 5th World Conference on Promotion of Mental Health and the Prevention of Mental and Behavioral Disorders is an international biennial conference that will be held at the Melbourne Convention Centre, Australia, from 10 to 12 September 2008.

The Conference will highlight activities that contribute to promoting individual and community mental health and wellbeing and also aims to show the mental health and wider community that the promotion of mental health and the prevention of mental illness is no longer on the margins of a health debate. It is rather, integrated into mainstream areas of research, policy and practice, across many diverse sectors, such as the arts, sports, housing, justice, education, employment, health and others.

The Conference is organized by VicHealth, The World Federation for Mental Health, The Clifford Beers Foundation and the Carter Center Mental Health Program. It is supported by the World Health Organization, AUSEINET and the Global Consortium for Prevention and Promotion in Mental Health.

Accepting responsibility for mental health should be everybody's business.

Read more at <http://www.margins2mainstream.com/>

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## REMINDERS

15-17 March - ASCD Conference - New Orleans, USA -  
<http://www.ascd.org/annualconference>

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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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