

AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION DIGEST

Volume 2 Number 11, 22 April 2008

Having trouble reading this email? Read it on the web at <http://www.acsso.org.au/AED080422.pdf>
Do you know of an event or resource that schools should know about? Email us at letters@acsso.org.au

- [Hot Topic: Early Childhood Education \(3 items\)](#)
- [Hot Topic: Funding \(1 item\)](#)
- [Hot Topic: Literacy \(1 item\)](#)
- [Teacher Safety \(1 item\)](#)
- [Reform Consultation \(1 item\)](#)
- [Research \(1 item\)](#)
- [Higher Education \(1 item\)](#)
- [The Skills Challenge \(1 item\)](#)
- [International Year of Planet Earth \(3 items\)](#)
- [Conferences & Events \(3 items\)](#)
- [Reminders](#)

HOT TOPIC: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

SA to lead national early childhood agenda

Hon Jane Lomax-Smith MP, SA Minister for Education & Children's Services 17 April 2008

South Australia will help to lead the national agenda on early childhood development, following support for a proposal put forward by Education Minister Jane Lomax-Smith in Melbourne today.

The nation's Education Ministers agreed that a separate meeting of relevant Ministers be held to further the early childhood development agenda, with South Australia to be the lead jurisdiction.

Dr Lomax-Smith says it's national recognition for the Rann Government's work to put the first five years of a child's life at the forefront of education, health and families policies.

"We conducted an inquiry into early childhood services in South Australia four years ago and, since that time, I have been attempting to get national recognition for this important area.

"I am delighted at today's breakthrough which received unanimous support from the Federal Labor Government and each of the nation's Education Ministers."

Read more at <http://www.ministers.sa.gov.au/news.php?id=3019>

PM's 2020 pledge for every child

Patricia Karvelas, The Australian April 17, 2008

EVERY child under five will have access to a cheap one-stop centre providing childcare, preschool and health services under a 12-year plan that Kevin Rudd will unveil at the 2020 Summit this weekend.

Echoing Bob Hawke's infamous "no child will live in poverty" pledge, the Prime Minister last night proposed the Government fund the low-fee early childhood centres throughout Australia.

The proposal has not yet been costed but the Prime Minister said that, under his idea, the centres would be offered at a low cost to all parents.

Mr Rudd's ambitious plan is aimed at battler families struggling to meet mortgage costs, as well as childcare and education expenses.

It continues his pitch to be Australia's "education" Prime Minister and furthers Labor's "education revolution" agenda.

"I believe such centres could offer real, practical assistance to working families under financial pressures struggling with the practical challenges of raising very young children," Mr Rudd told the Sydney Institute's annual dinner in Sydney last night.

Under the plan, all parents with children aged up to five would be able to access a one-stop early-childhood centre providing maternal and child health services such as baby health checks, baby weighing, feeding advice and vaccinations and long day care, including play-based activity for children whose parents were at work or studying.

Read more <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23552235-601,00.html>

ACOSS welcomes the Prime Minister's new direction for children's services

Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) 17 April 2008

ACOSS today welcomed the Prime Minister's announcement to establish accessible one-stop centres providing childcare, preschool and health services for all families. This approach will be a key plank in helping achieve the Government's Social Inclusion Agenda.

ACOSS has long called for a planned approach to the delivery of services to children and families to ensure all children benefit, and in particular children from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds.

ACOSS has also previously called for a guaranteed number of preschool hours for children in the year before school, greater investment in infrastructure for children's services and a more rigorous system of quality control. ACOSS is pleased that the Government has made commitments in each of these areas and welcomed the previous Government's proposal to develop a plan to ensure all children attend preschool.

Good quality early childhood education and care services can significantly improve the social and economic outcome for children from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds and we welcome Mr Rudd's commitment to make these services accessible for all.

Read more at <http://www.acoss.org.au/News.aspx?displayID=99&articleID=4201>

=====

HOT TOPIC: FUNDING

Pouring money into schools 'doesn't work'

Farrah Tomazin The Age, April 11, 2008

The man who helped radically overhaul the British education system has warned the Victorian State Government that pouring billions of dollars into schools and reducing class sizes won't be enough to lift underperformance.

Instead, Premier John Brumby should improve teaching quality and make sure resources are properly directed to where they are needed most, according to Sir Michael Barber, a former leading adviser to then British prime minister Tony Blair.

"The first lesson is that just spending money - and more and more of it - doesn't work. It's all about how that money is spent that makes the difference," Sir Michael said.

"And simply reducing student-teacher ratios, or simply increasing the spend per student doesn't work either. It may be a good thing to keep student-teacher ratios down, but on its own, it won't make a difference."

Sir Michael was speaking via video-link to an audience of senior Government figures and leading education experts at a summit in Melbourne yesterday.

Hosted by Education Minister Bronwyn Pike and Children's Minister Maxine Morand, the summit was held to spruik the Government's new "education blueprint" - a five-year strategy designed to lift student achievement, boost child-care services, and make schools more accountable for their results.

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/pouring-money-into-schools-doesnt-work/2008/04/10/1207420591367.html>

=====

HOT TOPIC: LITERACY

Literacy wars cause collateral damage

Ilana Snyder The Age, April 14, 2008

What is it about literacy education that gets people's adrenalin going?

Whether it's a misplaced apostrophe in a student's essay, or an exam question inviting a feminist interpretation of Othello, the teaching of reading and writing is the subject of fierce debates in the media. The debates have reached such intensity in recent years that public confidence in literacy teachers has been undermined and many believe we have a literacy crisis in our schools.

Literacy crises have been declared at other points in Australian history but the pattern is the same. Claims are made that standards are slipping and young people are leaving school without basic literacy skills. Next come the reports in the press, letters to the editor and discussion on talkback radio as parents, teachers, union officials, leaders of professional organisations and academics respond. The effect is always powerful, with the public assuming that there is a literacy problem and that teachers are to blame.

Not surprisingly, concern about literacy education is not exclusive to Australia. In the US, George Bush's No Child Left Behind Act, with its narrow focus on maths and reading test scores, has provoked deep division in the education community. In England, Tony Blair may have proclaimed that his prime interest was education, education, education but he will be remembered for imposing the prescriptive Literacy Hour and failing to reach national targets for literacy achievement, rather than for his reforming zeal.

Part of the explanation for the persistence and passion of the debates is that literacy is of interest to everyone because understanding written words is something that most people do every day. Another part

of the explanation is the mythology surrounding literacy - that once acquired, literacy inevitably changes life prospects for individuals and groups. But the most important part of the explanation is that the debates are rarely just about literacy.

At their core, they are the product of competing views and beliefs about society - what it is, what it has been and what it should become.

Despite the widespread interest in literacy, it remains difficult to define. Traditionally, literacy has been thought of as a psychological ability. Being literate is a matter of cracking the alphabetic code and of acquiring word formation, phonics, grammar and comprehension skills. According to this view of literacy, decoding (for reading) and encoding (for writing) abilities serve as building blocks for doing other things. Once literate, people can get on with the business of learning.

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/news/education-news/literacy-wars-cause-collateral-damage/2008/04/11/1207856830452.html>

=====

TEACHER SAFETY

Teacher assaults up 23% in WA schools

Paul Lampathakis, Perth Now, April 12, 2008

Nearly three teachers and other staff are assaulted by students each day in Western Australian schools, with reported attacks jumping by 23 per cent on last year. The Education Department confirmed this week there were 511 such violent incidents in public schools in 2007, compared with 415 in 2006.

The department said the violence related to all school staff, including teachers, education assistants, administration staff, ground staff and cleaners.

The teachers' union insisted the number of incidents was still highly under-reported, and that teachers were the most common victims.

"On a daily basis, teachers are spat on, bitten and hit," WA State School Teachers' Union president Anne Gisborne said.

"This behaviour goes from the pre-primary teacher who's bitten or hit... up to the high school teacher who has a knife drawn on them.

"It's shocking to think that children as young as four and five are also inclined to use violence.

"Schools are a microcosm of the community that reflect the escalating violence and bullying occurring in the wider community. It's something that is happening in private schools, too."

Ms Gisborne said special education teachers were particularly vulnerable, and while official figures were high, the "real numbers" were much higher.

Under-reporting was rife because some teachers were so accustomed to violence they no longer complained, while some schools discouraged reporting.

She backed Education Minister Mark McGowan's push for more parental responsibility.

Read more at <http://www.news.com.au/perthnow/story/0,21598,23528744-5008620,00.html>

=====

REFORM CONSULTATION

Victorian Government Invites Public Feedback on Education and Early Childhood Service Reform Plan

Media Release - Monday 7 April, 2008

The Brumby Government wants the Victorian public to have their say in shaping the future of school education and early childhood services.

Education Minister Bronwyn Pike and Early Childhood Development Minister Maxine Morand today released the Government's proposed future vision for supporting Victorians from birth to adulthood.

The Ministers said the linking of early childhood services and schools - with the creation of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development last August - presented a unique and unprecedented opportunity to develop a blueprint for reform.

Two Blueprint for Early Childhood Development and School Reform discussion papers - one for school reform and one for early childhood development - have been released for public comment and feedback.

The Government will also hold consultation sessions across the state throughout May. Feedback from the public consultation process, which will run until 16 May 2008, will help shape the final Blueprint, which will be released later this year.

Read more at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/news/newsalerts/blueprint2008.htm>

Or go straight to <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/blueprint2008/default.htm>

=====

RESEARCH

Keep boys and girls together, TAU research suggests

Boys and girls may learn differently, but American parents should think twice before moving their children to sex-segregated schools. A new Tel Aviv University study has found that girls improve boys' grades markedly at school.

"Being with more girls is good for everybody," says Prof. Analis Schlosser, an economist from the Eitan Berglas School of Economics at Tel Aviv University.

"We find that both boys and girls do better when there are more girls in the class." She investigated girls and boys in mixed classrooms in the elementary, middle, and high-school grades of the Israeli school system.

In an unpublished paper, Prof. Schlosser concluded that classes with more than 55 percent of girls resulted in better exam results and less violent outbursts overall.

"It appears that this effect is due to the positive influence the girls are adding to the classroom environment," says Prof. Schlosser. She carried out the study while on a post-doctoral fellowship at Princeton University, and will study the effects of gender in higher education lecture halls next.

This is one of few studies of its kind to use scientific data to address the question of gender effects in school.

Read more at http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2008-04/afot-kba041108.php

=====

HIGHER EDUCATION

Advancing equity and participation in Australian higher education

Universities Australia 16 April 2008

Universities Australia today released its action plan to address participation and equity levels in higher education of people from low socio-economic backgrounds and Indigenous people. The plan draws on the findings of the Universities Australia-commissioned Equity and Participation scoping study also released today.

The Chair of the Steering Group for these initiatives, Professor Alan Robson said the scoping study was framed to determine barriers to entry and factors that may influence success for Australian students from three low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds: students from rural and regional Australia; Indigenous students; and students from metropolitan areas.

"Using evidence-based analysis to assess the factors influencing equity and participation in higher education, the scoping study found that in terms of performance at university, low SES participation is more an issue of access than success once enrolled," Professor Robson said today.

"Parental education levels and parental occupation levels reveal more of the substantial differences in students' financial circumstances and more of the effect of differences in finances on students' capacity to study, than does the current postcode-based analysis," Professor Robson said.

"However, low SES remote students and Indigenous students continue to be the exceptions in terms of positive outcomes from university participation.

"In the light of present knowledge, the most effective way to improve the participation of people from low SES backgrounds and Indigenous people in higher education is to recognise that we need a better policy framework comprised of inter-related policies and a package of policies, rather than any magic bullet," he said.

Download the study at
http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/documents/publications/policy/equity/0308_Particip_Equity_CSHE_Final_Report.pdf

Download the action plan at
http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/documents/publications/policy/equity/0408_Equity_Particip_Action_Plan.pdf

=====

THE SKILLS CHALLENGE

Facing up to Australia's skills challenge: industry sets key priorities to address the skills crisis

Dusseldorp Skills Forum 16 April 2008

The National Skills Policy Collaboration has today released a ten-point plan to meet Australia's skills challenges head on.

The statement by leading employer and union groups calls for significant action, innovative thinking and creative solutions to address Australia's skills crisis.

Chief Executive of the Australian Industry Group, Ms Heather Ridout, said "the competitive future of the Australian economy rests in large part with the development of a highly skilled & innovative workforce. This will only happen if there is a quantum leap forward in the resourcing and commitment by a range of parties to lifting the skills of Australians."

"Australia's economic potential will remain constrained unless productivity-boosting reforms such as those proposed in this statement are embraced and implemented," she said.

President of the ACTU, Ms Sharan Burrow, said there was a need to look at fundamental reform. "Australia has a generational opportunity to turn around the skills crisis. Reforms undertaken today will set us up for a new wave of productivity improvement and prosperity."

"Australia's skills shortage needs to be addressed urgently through improvements in the provision of vocational education and training. Greater industry involvement in this is essential if real improvements in delivery and outcomes are to be achieved," she said.

Read more at <http://www.dsf.org.au/papers/200.htm>

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF PLANET EARTH 2008

Standby Saturday

7 June 2008

Everyone can make a difference

Standby Saturday is the first Australian national initiative to encourage every household to switch off all non-essential electrical appliances such as TVs, computers, microwaves, stereos, playstations and mobile phone chargers.

How does this make a difference? Research indicates that 10% of your electricity bill could be wasted by appliances left on standby power. Figures from the International Energy Agency show that, based on 10% energy wastage for domestic residences, electrical devices left on standby waste an estimated 4.8 Terawatt hours of energy per year and account for nearly 7.7 Megatonnes of carbon emissions each year. This doesn't include commercial equipment and is equivalent to the total output of Australia's biggest power station for over 10 days.

By switching off any not-in-use appliances, you save money, save energy - and help save the environment.

Of course, the campaign is not just about switching off on one day of the year. It's about changing your habits and switching off all the time and every time. The aim is to save everyone money by encouraging a shift in their attitudes to wasting energy - and helping the planet by reducing greenhouse emissions.

Schools can also enter Competitions for Schools from the Website. One competition is to design a Logo - with prizes for different age groups. A second competition is a challenge to your school team to design, create and run a really clever campaign in your area to make your community aware of Standby Saturday, and to encourage them to participate.

Schools can also download a range of learning materials from the site. There are videos, lesson plans, flyers, class projects and more The theme is that we can all help save the planet by saving energy - and by saving energy we can all stop wasting money.

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

Global Warming: A Real Solution

Robert F Kennedy Jr Rolling Stone, 18 June 2007

In early May, 100 of the nation's top business leaders gathered for a summit at a private resort nestled on 250 acres in California's Napa Valley.

The attendees, gathered at the invitation of Silicon Valley venture capitalists, included CEOs and other top executives from such Fortune 500 corporations as Wal-Mart, Proctor & Gamble and BP.

They had been invited to discuss ways to end America's fossil-fuel addiction and save the world from global warming.

But in reality they had come to make money for their companies - and that may turn out to be the thing that saves us.

For three days, the executives listened as their colleagues and business rivals described how they are using new technologies to wean themselves from oil and boost their profits in the process.

Read more at <http://www.robertfkennedyjr.com/articles.html>

Aussies ready to tackle climate change

Denis Peters, Courier Mail, 14 April 2008

Australia attitudes towards climate change have crystallised into solid support for action, new research shows. But, equally, there is widespread scepticism about the ability of major political parties to deliver the necessary action.

The Climate Institute's Climate of the Nation report details the attitudes of Australians since the November federal election.

"In the aftermath of the world's first climate change election, public concern and hunger for action remains high," the institute's chief executive John Connor said.

"The majority of Australians (52 per cent) are unable to discern between the two major parties on climate change, meaning political brand ownership of climate leadership remains up for grabs."

Read more at <http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,23739,23532577-953,00.html>

CONFERENCES & EVENTS

Walk Safely to School Day

2 May 2008

Walk Safely to School Day (WSTSD) is an annual, national event when all Primary School children will be encouraged to walk and commute safely to school. It is a Community Event seeking to promote Road Safety, Health, Public Transport and the Environment.

The objectives of WSTSD are:

- To encourage parents and carers to walk to school with primary school age children and reinforce safe pedestrian behaviour.
- To promote the health benefits of walking and help create regular walking habits at an early age.
- To ensure that children up to 10 years old hold an adult's hand when crossing the road.
- To help children develop the vital road-crossing skills they will need as they become mature pedestrians.
- To reduce the car dependency habits that are being created at an early age and which will be difficult to change as children become adults.
- To promote the use of Public Transport.
- To reduce the level of air pollution created by motor vehicles.
- To reduce the level of traffic congestion.

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

Download the Information Kit for Schools and Teachers at http://www.walk.com.au/WSTSD01/images/elements/contentpics/2008/PDF/WSTSD-2008_InformationKitforTeachers_v4.pdf

Together We Grow: Early Childhood Education Conference 2008

30-31 May 2008, Caulfield Racecourse, Melbourne, Victoria.

A conference for early childhood teachers, early years professionals and staff, volunteer committees, employers and parents.

The 2008 Early Childhood Education Conference will provide a quality practice-based event for the many early childhood teachers, early years professionals, volunteer committees, employers (both cluster managers and stand-alone) and parents who work in partnership to provide quality early childhood education for children every year. The conference is presented by Kindergarten Parents Victoria in partnership with the Lady Gowrie Child Centre in Melbourne.

Kindergarten Parents Victoria (KPV) is the leading peak, not-for-profit, non-government organisation that promotes, develops and sustains quality early childhood education in Victoria with an extensive membership from the broader children's services industry including childcare centres, local government and other organisations.

The Lady Gowrie Child Centre (Melb.) Inc., a not-for-profit organisation, is a leading provider of accredited and professional development training, resources and employment programs tailored to the needs of the early childhood sector throughout Victoria. The centre has operated a community based children's program since it was founded in 1939 and annually offers more than 1000 students, practitioners and overseas visitors the opportunity to attend program observation sessions.

Read more at <http://www.togetherwegrow.com.au/index.shtml>

Back to School 2008

Now in its 6th successful year of operation, the Education Foundation's "Back to School" initiative is the nation's biggest celebration of public schools and the inclusive values-driven learning and development experiences they provide for today's young people and tomorrow's citizens.

Everyone who has gone on to a fulfilling career knows that our public schools are well worth celebrating and supporting. A fantastic way to show your appreciation is to go back to your school, spend the time to tell your story and share your insights with staff, students and parents.

Back to School also encourages schools and teachers to keep in touch with their alumni, and let them know that their achievements are valued and celebrated by their school and its community.

Students and teachers love to hear from people who went to their school. Graduates of the public school system, can add real value by sharing their reminiscences, career choices and experiences. This gives young students a living perspective on life beyond the school, helping to fuel their ambitions and give them the confidence to find their own way forward at a crucial time of their lives.

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

Download the Back to School Guide at http://www.backtoschool.org.au/media/BTS_Guide_2008.doc

=====

REMINDERS

21 April-16 May - Boys, Engagement, Bullying, Cyber-Bullying & Learning - Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Brisbane, Sydney - <http://www.radii.org/aben>

2, 9, 16 May - Marketing Seminars for Schools - Melbourne, Brisbane, Sydney - <http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/schoolsseminar>

2 May - National Walk to School Day - <http://www.walk.com.au>

2 May - entries close for Australian Museum Eureka Science Prizes - <http://www.australianmuseum.net.au/eureka>

2 May - entries close for AEU Rosemary Richards Award - <http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Women/RRichards.html>

14-15 May - National Conference on Children & Young People with Disability and their Families - Melbourne - <http://www.nds.org.au/conferences/CYF2008/home.htm>

28-30 May - Council of Education Facility Planners International Conference - Melbourne - <http://australasia.cefpi.org/>

1-30 June - MS Readathon - <http://www.msreadathon.org.au>

2 June - entries close for Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards - <http://www.dorothea.com.au/>

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

11-12 June - National Conference on Climate Change - Canberra - <http://www.manningclark.org.au/events/conference2008/index.html>

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

 28 June - Early Childhood Teachers Association National Conference - Brisbane - http://www.ecta.org.au/01_cms/details.asp?ID=17

 6-9 July - National Conference for Teachers of English Literacy - Adelaide - <http://www.englishliteracyconference.com.au>

 6-9 July - Annual Conference of the Australian Science Teachers Association - <http://www.asta.edu.au>

 9-12 July - Environmental Education Up The Track - Darwin - <http://www.cdu.edu.au/ehs/AAEE/>

 17-19 July - International Conference on Education, Economy & Society - Paris, France - <http://education-conferences.org/default.aspx>

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

 31 July-1 August - Isolated Children's Parents Association Annual Conference - Hobart - <http://www.icpa.com.au/Conference.asp>

 16-24 August - National Science Week - <http://www.asta.edu.au>

 18-31 August - ANTSEL Video Online Conference - <http://www.cybertext.net.au/antssel2008.htm>

 27-29 August - Society for Provision of Education in Rural Australia Conference - Melbourne - <http://www.spera.edu.au>

 28-29 August - Professional Development Network 12th Annual School Leaders' Conference - Gold Coast - <http://www.griffith.edu.au/education/centre-leadership-management-education/events/leadership-conference-2008>

 9 September-2 October - Australian Computers in Education Conference - Canberra - <http://www.acec2008.info/default2.asp?orgid=1&suborgid=12>

 10-12 September - World Conference on Mental Health Promotion - Melbourne - <http://www.margins2mainstream.com/>

 19-20 September - AASE/AJCPTA National Conference - Fremantle - <http://www.gemspl.com.au/aase/>

 30 September-3 October - National History Teachers' Conference - Brisbane - <http://www.qhta.com.au/conferences.htm>

 1-3 October - VETnetwork Australia National Conference - Sydney - http://www.vetnetwork.org.au/01_cms/details.asp?ID=47

 7-10 October - Australian International Education Conference - Brisbane - <http://www.idp.com/aiec/>

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

 25-28 October - International Research Conference on Service-learning and Community Engagement - New Orleans, USA - <http://www.researchslce.org/2008conference.html>

 =====

RESOURCES

Announcing a New Range of Free Student Diaries for 2009

A new range of free Student Diaries is being launched to assist secondary schools in their forward planning for 2009. The diaries are customised to your school, and will carry a personalised cover - designed by one of your students, who is then automatically entered into a nationwide cover artwork competition

These diary ranges are produced by Academy Publishing, who have been actively involved in the education sector in Australia for the past seven years, and have produced secondary and tertiary sector diaries in New Zealand for many more years.

For more information and contact details: <http://academypublishing.com.au/>

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

=====
Details of products, services, events, resources or points of view are provided for information only; publication does not imply endorsement or recommendation. No warranty is provided nor liability accepted by ACSSO, its members or employees.

To unsubscribe from ACSSO mailings click here: <mailto:webmaster@acssso.org.au?subject=unsubscribe>