

AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION DIGEST

Volume 2 Number 38, 21 October 2008

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HOT TOPIC: EDUCATION REVOLUTION

National Partnerships

Hon Julie Gillard MP, 15 October 2008

The Rudd Government is committed to improving the quality of schooling right across Australia. Teachers and school leaders are right at the centre of achieving that improvement in quality.

The Rudd Government is decisively moving away from the division and neglect created by the previous Liberal government's policies. We are building a framework for collaborative reform which will enable truly long term progress.

This means implementing our election commitments effectively and consistently. And it means building a new era of quality and reform.

One example is the National Curriculum, where an interim Board is developing a new curriculum framework in an open and consultative way, with subject experts and teachers directly engaged in the process.

Another is our agreement at COAG on October 2nd to create a new national education authority combining curriculum, assessment and reporting functions at a national level, with the full participation of State Governments and non-government school systems.

Through COAG we have also agreed that all governments will share responsibility for educational outcomes across Australia and we have set challenging national targets and reform directions.

Many of these directions will be made more explicit through the National Education Agreement, which will be completed by the end of this year.

In that agreement will be two specific National Partnerships that I want to emphasise today - governments working together with other stakeholders in two areas of priority reform. The first is a National Partnership on Teacher Quality.

The second is a National Partnership to raise achievement in disadvantaged school communities.

Read more at

<http://mediacentre.dewr.gov.au/mediacentre/Gillard/Releases/AddressstotheTeachingAustraliaandBCASymposium.htm>

From a speech given by Minister Gillard to a National Symposium convened by Teaching Australia and the Business Council of Australia.

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HOT TOPIC: TOWARDS A NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Cloning, global warming, stem cells in high school science

James O'Loan, Courier Mail, 13 October 2008

GLOBAL warming, cloning, stem cell research and the rise of hybrid cars are the hot topics educators are hoping will reignite high school science.

Australia's first national science curriculum, unveiled yesterday by the National Curriculum Board, is an attempt to inspire wonder in science through everyday life.

"Many of our secondary students are losing interest in science," NCB's science curriculum advisory group leader Professor Denis Goodrum said. "It (the national curriculum) needs re-emphasis to make it more engaging and more interesting. Climate change and carbon-fixing are the biggest issues in the world today."

The proposed curriculum would also focus on water conservation and recycling.

The new vision for students from Prep to Year 10 did not differ substantially from the contents of Queensland's current science curriculum, formulated by the Queensland Studies Authority.

Professor Goodrum, who in 2000 led a federal government study into the quality of school science, participated in a public discussion of the proposals in Melbourne yesterday. He said those who attended wanted more detail on what would be taught in schools and raised the issue of making science mandatory in Years 11 and 12.

Read more at <http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,23739,24491169-953,00.html>

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Curriculum to scale back Australian history

Justine Ferrari, The Australian, October 13, 2008

THE emphasis on teaching Australian history in recent years will be scaled down in the national curriculum, as its initial draft, to be released today, outlines a course that places the national story in the context of broader global events.

The draft says restricting the study of history to Australian history is inappropriate, and while it retains an important place in the national curriculum, knowledge of world events is necessary to understand the nation's history.

The national curriculum stems the push to privilege Australian history, which culminated in the call by the Howard government to make the study of Australian history compulsory in Years 9 and 10.

"If only to equip students to operate in the world in which they will live, they need to understand world history," the draft says. "History should have a broad and comprehensive foundation from which its implications for Australia can be grasped."

The lead author of the draft, Melbourne University history professor Stuart Macintyre, said yesterday the push to cement Australian history in schools had left the position of world history unclear in curriculums. "To think one can study Australian history in isolation is a bit short-sighted," Professor Macintyre said.

The draft curriculum proposes history be compulsory for all school students until the end of Year 10, and introduced as a distinct subject in primary school.

Professor Macintyre said having trained history teachers was crucial to implementing the curriculum, and attention should be given to the history education given to student teachers.

Read more at <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,24897,24485924-601,00.html>

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Studying the past informs our lives now

Stuart Macintyre, The Age, October 14, 2008

History is as foundational and challenging as the disciplines of science, mathematics and English.

Awareness of history is an essential characteristic of any civilised society, and historical knowledge is fundamental to the way we think about ourselves and others.

This is the starting point of the advisory group's report to the National Curriculum Board.

The history we should teach must assist understanding of contemporary events as well as the enduring significance of earlier ones. It should introduce students to the variety of human experience, enable them to see the world through the eyes of others, enrich their appreciation of the causes and consequences of change.

Think of the changes that affect us today. A quarter of all Australians were born elsewhere, and they have come from all over the world, bringing with them their own experiences, traditions and aspirations.

Australia has a particular awareness of its first people and an enlarged appreciation of the Aboriginal dimension of Australian history coincides with a commitment to improving educational and other outcomes for Aboriginal Australians.

Australia is deeply engaged with its immediate region and the attainment of greater knowledge of the Asia-Pacific is a national priority. The global economy and the dramatic transformation of newly

industrialised countries have placed severe strains on the environment, and the opening up of Australia to global competition has placed greater emphasis on educational attainment.

For all these reasons the advisory committee believes that the history we need to teach must be broad in scope — to operate in the world they live, young Australians must understand world history.

The proposed curriculum would open up such awareness in the primary years.

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/studying-the-past-informs-our-lives-now-20081013-4zxd.html?page=-1>

Professor Stuart Macintyre leads the advisory group on development of the new History Curriculum.

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Make maths more challenging but not alienating, experts urge

Bridie Smith, The Age, October 15, 2008

MATHS tasks could become more complex in a bid to boost student performance, but the authors of the new mathematics curriculum have warned against setting unrealistic standards that isolate students.

Under the proposed new maths curriculum — to be rolled out in schools by 2011 — lessons would be less repetitious, place a greater emphasis on numeracy and boost the use of digital technology so students became more interested in the subject.

Monash University professor of science, mathematics and technology education Peter Sullivan, who prepared the draft unveiled yesterday, said students should be set "high but realistic expectations".

He was critical of "low-level teaching" that he said reduced the capacity for students to think, engage and be challenged by the subject, and said weaker students should not be channelled into so-called "vegie maths". Instead schools should offer additional support to students wanting to study the higher levels of maths.

Dr Maurice Allen of Engineers Australia told the forum maths needed to rid itself of the cringe factor and change the negativity that sometimes surrounded the subject.

The National Curriculum Board — set up by the Federal Government to devise and implement national programs for English, maths, science and history from 2011 — is holding forums in Melbourne throughout this week.

Source: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/make-maths-more-challenging-but-not-alienating-experts-urge-20081014-50nk.html>

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Grammar to make a classroom comeback in national English curriculum

Justine Ferrari, The Australian, October 17, 2008

GRAMMAR will return to the classroom under the national English curriculum, along with punctuation, spelling, pronunciation and phonics, for all students from the first years of school.

The draft curriculum, to be released today by the National Curriculum Board, is unequivocal in including the explicit teaching of the basic structures of the English language.

But the draft retains the teaching of critical literacy, a sociological model analysing gender, race and class in literature to expose inherent prejudices and agendas.

The draft places literature as one of the three fundamental elements of an English course, along with language and literacy, and defines literary texts so as to include "multimodal texts".

The draft English curriculum was written by Sydney University education professor Peter Freebody, a literacy expert whose appointment was initially criticised for his lack of academic background in literature and championing of controversial views on literacy.

Professor Freebody said the curriculum stiffened the intellectual underpinning of the English curriculum by putting at its centre the three elements of learning about language, literature and literacy, or how to use language.

Read more at <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,,24508917-13881,00.html>

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Curriculum must clarify how to teach reading

Justine Ferrari, The Australian, October 18, 2008

THE national curriculum should spell out the best way to teach children to read and continue teaching the basics of language into high school, the author of the English draft said yesterday.

At a forum on the draft curriculum hosted by the National Curriculum Board in Melbourne yesterday, Peter Freebody said there was a need to clarify the best strategies to use in teaching children how to read.

"That repertoire of strategies has a number of common elements and phonological awareness is number one," the Sydney University education professor said. "What doesn't work are vague ideas about using language and (the idea that) you'll pick it up; if you work with it enough and use it in life settings you will pick it up. That doesn't work."

The forum of teachers and academics was also addressed by Australian literature professor Robert Dixon, who called for a closer working relationship between schools and university English departments.

The draft curriculum released yesterday identified three key elements of an English curriculum: learning about language, literature and literacy, and learning to use language.

The outline commits the curriculum to explicit teaching of grammar, letter-sound relationships and phonological awareness, spelling and punctuation, giving students an appreciation of literature - and Australian literature in particular - and giving them the skills to use language as required in their everyday lives.

Read more at <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,,24513701-13881,00.html>

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HOT TOPIC: SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

A New York state of mind?

Dan Harrison, The Age, 13 October 2008

Education Minister Julia Gillard has sought to allay fears of a wholesale adoption of the controversial "New York model" of schooling as its creator prepares to visit Australia next month.

The chancellor of the New York City department of education, Joel Klein, is due to discuss his radical methods, which include grading schools from A to F, closing schools that consistently fail to meet performance criteria and rating individual teachers based on the performance of their students in standardised tests.

Ms Gillard met Mr. Klein in New York in July and was impressed by his transformation of the city's school system, which is credited with lifting graduation rates and levels of student achievement in maths and reading.

But the effectiveness of his changes is contested. A survey commissioned by Newsweek magazine in May found that no New York high school was in the nation's top 200.

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd angered teachers' unions in August when he flagged the adoption of many of Mr. Klein's ideas in a speech to the National Press Club. He also said the information to be collected and published on schools would go beyond "simplistic league tables".

The federal president of the Australian Education Union, Angelo Gavrielatos, said the Australian Government should not be importing "flawed" approaches from the US, a nation that was consistently outperformed by countries such as Finland which did not publicly rank schools.

"Julia Gillard and Kevin Rudd have said repeatedly that they don't want to reduce school accountability to simplistic league tables," Mr. Gavrielatos said. "The question for the Deputy Prime Minister is: how will she stop it?"

In an interview with The Age, Ms Gillard said her system would compare like-with-like schools.

"What they do in New York goes beyond that," she said. "We've made it clear that we're not talking about importing any one model, whether it be the New York model or any other. We are interested in designing the model that would work best for this country but I think, at its core, it does need to have that comparison of similar schools." She would not provide details of her system, citing negotiations. She said Mr. Klein's visit was intended to enrich the public discussion on the issue.

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/a-new-york-state-of-mind-20081012-4yyk.html>

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League tables of our own?

Daniel Ziffer, The Age, October 13, 2008

US administrator Joel Klein, whose system of publishing A-to-F grades for schools is being considered by Federal Education Minister Julia Gillard, says the Australian public system needs even more competition to succeed.

He says our public education system should embrace semi-private "charter schools" and fiercer contests for staff and students. "(Take) the Olympics: people always run faster when there are more people in the race. Competition works!"

There are nearly 100 independent public schools in New York. Most defy the short US school year with extended academic calendars. Many focus on one area .

"If you're an affluent parent you have all the choices in the world," Mr. Klein says. "Now why should kids who grow up in poverty not be given an opportunity to choose among different kinds of schools in the system? If the school is not making progress ... maybe one of the things you have to do is create choices (for parents)."

Charter schools receive less state funding - typically offset by fundraising - in exchange for less regulation. Education advocates have complained that they steal strong students, further weakening the public system. But Mr. Klein, a former federal lawyer who prosecuted Microsoft for anti-competitive practices, says new schools, and transparent grading, improve the system.

"Think about the implication of (saying) 'The school is not doing well'. We whisper about it so no one knows and everyone goes along happily except the kids who are getting hurt."

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/league-tables-of-our-own-20081012-4yy1.html>

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RESEARCH

Review finds muddle in middle school programs

Caroline Milburn, The Age, October 13, 2008

THE benefits of middle-school programs for students aged 12 to 16 are not backed by hard evidence, according to a review of the popular education strategy.

Since the 1980s, middle-school programs have flourished in Australia and many other English-speaking countries. Education authorities use them as a key strategy to overcome students' losing interest in school during their early teens. The programs vary widely, including the use of single-sex or streamed classes, generalist teachers and curriculum and distinct campuses.

But the study by the Australian Council for Educational Research found there was little empirical data to show that middle schooling improved student results.

"Whereas there is some agreement on enhanced student engagement with learning and greater engagement with broader school activities, it is difficult to find evidence for improved student achievement beyond teachers' hopes, observations and perceptions," the review found.

The researchers from the council analysed studies on middle schooling from Australia, New Zealand, Britain and the US to test whether the strategy makes a difference to student achievement and attitudes to school. They found most of the research studies were qualitative and based on case studies, with few larger quantitative studies using randomised trials.

Their review found that although the first wave of middle schooling in Australian schools from the 1980s to 1990s was characterised by great enthusiasm, advocacy and developmental work, many of the initiatives

were "ad hoc, localised, fragmented 'grab-bags' of strategies; undocumented, unevaluated and with little evidence of impact on student achievement".

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/muddle-in-the-middle-review-finds-20081012-4yyh.html>

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How Young People are Faring

Foundation for Young Australians

The Foundation for Young Australians in alliance with Education Foundation are proud to release the How Young People Are Faring research report.

Now in its 10th year, the report has to date been conducted by the Dusseldorp Skills Forum. This year is the first year that the alliance is producing this influential report.

The report provides important information on how successfully our education and training system is working to meet the needs of young Australians as they make the transition from school to further study and work.

It provides the most up-to-date analysis of the effectiveness of transitions, including information on who is doing well and who is not doing so well in negotiating the various post-school pathways.

Read more at <http://www.fya.org.au/hypf02.html>

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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Speech to the National Early Childhood Stakeholder Roundtable

Hon Maxine McKew MP, Parliamentary Secretary, 16 October 2008

Good morning and welcome to the National Early Childhood Stakeholder Roundtable. The Deputy Prime Minister, the Honourable Julia Gillard, has asked that I speak at this Council of Australian Governments event.

This roundtable is part of ongoing consultations and discussions with stakeholders with an interest in the national early childhood reform agenda. Many of you will have already been involved in the quality consultations in September and the Productivity Agenda Working Group 'Open Day' in July.

I know that you have a keen interest in the early childhood reform initiatives and I'd like to thank you for contributing your experience and expertise to our discussions today.

As you all know, the Rudd Government has placed an unprecedented focus on children and early childhood development. It's encouraging that there's support for this right across the Council of Australian Governments. COAG has made it clear that under the broad umbrella of the Productivity Agenda, early childhood is an area that will receive significant attention.

You'll note that early childhood reform is being dealt with in the productivity stream of COAG's ambitious agenda.

Despite these uncertain economic times, it remains that the soundest investment any government can make is to invest in our children, and the biggest difference we can make for today's and future generations, is to invest early.

For generations in this country we've invested too little, too late. I can assure you that the Rudd Government is committed to investing in our children's early years, to ensure that each and every child has the support and the opportunities they need to realise their potential.

Read more at

<http://mediacentre.dewr.gov.au/mediacentre/McKew/Releases/SpeechtotheNationalEarlyChildhoodStakeholderRoundtable.htm>

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National Roundtable on Early Childhood Education

Media Release - Hon Maxine McKew MP 16 October 2008

Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education and Child Care, Maxine McKew, today welcomed participants at a National Roundtable on Early Childhood Education.

The Roundtable discussion provided an opportunity for the Commonwealth Government to update the early childhood sector on the implementation of its universal access commitment, and for participants to share their views on the Government's approach.

Approximately 40 participants representing early childhood education and care peak bodies, children's disability groups, the Catholic, Independent, Christian and State school sectors, Indigenous children's services, rural and remote services, NGOs, TAFE, unions, the COAG Early Childhood Development Sub-Group, and early childhood experts attended the Roundtable.

A key priority of the Rudd Government's ambitious agenda for the early years is to ensure all four year olds have access to a quality, affordable, early childhood education program delivered by a degree qualified early childhood teacher, 15 hours per week, 40 weeks per year, in the year before formal schooling commences.

The mechanisms for implementing this commitment are being developed under the auspices of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), and through the COAG process all states and territories have committed to achieving universal access for their children by 2013.

All Governments have also guaranteed that Indigenous children in remote locations will have access to early learning programs by 2013.

"The success of this reform requires collaboration across all levels of government and the early childhood sector," Ms McKew said. "And we know consultation with the sector is critical if we are to successfully deliver this program in a way that best accommodates the needs of children and their parents, wherever they might live in Australia."

The Commonwealth Government will provide the states and territories with a total of \$533.5 million in funding over the next five years, followed by recurrent funding of \$450 million per year from 2013 to assist them in implementing the universal access commitment.

Source:

<http://mediacentre.dewr.gov.au/mediacentre/McKew/Releases/NationalRoundtableonEarlyChildhoodEducation.htm>

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STUDENT RETENTION

Doubts on Labor school target

Farrah Tomazin, The Age, October 15, 2008

THE Rudd Government will have to intensify its efforts if it expects to achieve its goal for 2020 of having 90% of students completing year 12, research shows.

A snapshot of how young people are faring has painted a bleak picture of student achievement, with more than one in 10 teenagers not at school or working, and many others failing to complete their studies.

According to the findings, only 71% of 19-year-olds had completed year 12 or equivalent, with retention rates much worse among poorer students.

And despite the employment growth in recent years, full-time jobs for young people have not kept pace with full-time job growth for older people.

The report, commissioned by the Foundation for Young Australians, comes after Kevin Rudd promised before last year's election that a Labor government would, by 2020, increase to 90% the proportion of students completing year 12.

Melbourne University researcher Professor Stephen Lamb said this would be a difficult task, requiring federal and state governments not only to provide additional funding to schools but to ensure that funding was better targeted to the neediest students.

"There's a long way to go," he said. "A certain number of young people are doing very well, but there's a larger proportion than we would like who are finding it difficult in making transitions and completing school."

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/national/doubts-on-labor-school-target-20081014-50ni.html>

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SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Leading Australia's Schools

Teaching Australia - Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

Leading Australia's Schools is a challenging national leadership development program for principals from across Australia. Its aim is to build the professional knowledge and leadership skills of school principals, to increase their capacity to lead schools effectively in the 21st century.

The program involves a personal leadership style analysis and feedback, a residential course, a school based challenge project and an on-going alumni network.

Leading Australia's Schools has been run by Hay Group, a global management consulting firm, and the University of Melbourne in partnership with Teaching Australia since 2006. The residential courses are held at the Melbourne Business School.

Applications close 15 December 2008.

Read more at <http://www.teachingaustralia.edu.au/ta/go/home/leadausschools>

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FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

\$12.8 million for Kitchen Garden Program in Primary Schools

The Australian Government has committed \$12.8 million to fund infrastructure for the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden National Program in up to 190 primary schools across Australia. Infrastructure grants of up to \$60,000 per school will be available over a four year period. Australian government schools with primary enrolments will be eligible to apply for these grants.

The grants provide funding for the development of a productive vegetable garden and the construction of a home-style kitchen on the school grounds. Implementation of the Program once the infrastructure is established requires the employment of two part-time specialists to deliver regular garden and kitchen classes - a Garden Specialist and a Kitchen Specialist - and the allocation of several hours per week to a program coordinator selected from existing staff. It is important to note that funding is not available for the payment of these staff salaries and priority will be given to schools who can demonstrate that they can resource this component.

Schools which receive a grant from the Australian Government will need to demonstrate an initial commitment to continue the project for two years, and in the longer term, work towards integrating the project into the school curriculum

Information Sessions on the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden National Program will be held in each State and Territory between 20 October and 28 October. These sessions are highly recommended for schools intending to apply for a grant.

Read more <http://www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au>

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AROUND THE STATES AND TERRITORIES

ACT: Greens Hold Balance of Power

ACT Greens, 20 October 2008

On Saturday the ACT elected at least three, and possibly four Greens MLAs to the new Legislative Assembly. The Greens' vote was 15.7% across the ACT (a swing of 6.4%) and the Greens will now hold the balance of power.

With 86% of votes counted at 2pm on Monday afternoon, it is clear that Amanda Bresnan has been elected in Brindabella, Meredith Hunter has been elected in Ginninderra, and Shane Rattenbury has been elected in Molonglo. There is a chance that either Caroline Le Couteur or Elena Kirschbaum will pick up a fourth seat for the Greens in Molonglo, but this result is not likely to be known for some time.

The Greens would like to thank everyone who supported the campaign, and especially everyone who voted Green on Saturday. We are confident that with three or four Greens in the Assembly we are about to see a new era of politics in the ACT, an era where input from the community is a genuine part of the Government's decision making process, and where we take real action to make Canberra a 21st century city which deals with the challenges of climate change and enjoys world class education and public transport systems.

Source: <http://act.greens.org.au/archives/687>

ACT: Greens Education policy is about better outcomes for everyone

ACT Greens, 24 September 2008

Meredith Hunter, ACT Greens candidate for Ginninderra, today launched the ACT Greens education policy for the 2008 Assembly election.

"Most ACT students do very well out of our school systems but there is a growing achievement gap for some" Meredith Hunter ACT said today.

"Our first priority for the ACT Greens is to make sure education resources get to the schools and the students that need them most.

"That includes students with disabilities, some from low-income families, and others struggling to keep up or reach their potential.

"We are delighted that the ACT Government has finally acknowledged this growing achievement gap and committed resources to address it.

"Programs the Greens will initiate will include parent involvement programs to support literacy learning at home, and home/school liaison officers to encourage family participation in schools and student learning.

"ACT Greens will review and reassess all school and preschool closures using criteria that include community impact, climate change impact and parent attitudes. We also support amending the Education Act to ensure that inclusive and transparent consultation is undertaken before a school can be closed."

Read more at <http://act.greens.org.au/tag/education>

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NSW: Bus shelter ads may pay for school zone lights

The Age, October 16, 2008 (AAP)

The NSW government may sell advertising on bus shelters to hasten the rollout of flashing lights near schools, after criticism it has been tardy.

The government announced in January it would spend \$46.5 million to install the warning lights - designed to slow down motorists - outside 400 additional schools.

Ron Delezio, the father of young car crash survivor Sophie Delezio, has joined motoring group NRMA in demanding more flashing lights be installed outside NSW schools. Sophie was struck by a car at a pedestrian crossing outside her school on Frenchs Forest Road at Seaforth, in Sydney's north, in May 2006.

Premier Nathan Rees on Thursday said he would investigate whether methods used by a council in Sydney's west, which raised its own funds to pay for warning lights outside local public schools, could be applied across the state. "This came at no cost at the community ... it was an absolutely extraordinary exercise," Mr. Rees said, in describing the funding scheme used by Holroyd Council.

"I tried to call John (Brodie, the former Holroyd Council mayor) today to pick his brains on that. If that stacks up, it's something we will look to extend," he said.

Mr. Delezio said the four-year rollout of the flashing lights, funded by speed cameras in school zones, was taking too long. "(The government) is collecting around \$45 million a year from speed cameras. I can't understand why, if they are making all that money, they can't install the lights in one year," Mr. Delezio told AAP.

NRMA director Geoff Toovey said 95 per cent of schools did not have flashing lights and the rollout was so slow most wouldn't see the "life-saving" technology for years.

Read more at <http://news.theage.com.au/national/ads-may-pay-for-school-zone-lights-20081016-51x2.html>

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NSW considers giving students Linux laptops

Fran Foo, The Australian, October 14, 2008

NSW secondary school students could be issued with \$56 million worth of Linux-based laptops as part of Kevin Rudd's digital education revolution. The state wants government secondary school students to tote around computers built specifically for the education market.

Jim McAlpine, NSW Secondary Principals' Council president, said sellers could look at offering non-proprietary software for the laptops, such as Edubuntu, the education version of popular Linux distribution Ubuntu.

"The laptops can run on an open source operating system with a suite of open source applications like those packaged under Edubuntu. This would include Open Office for productivity software, Gimp for picture editing and the Firefox internet browser.

"Students would also have access to thousands of other open source educational programs," Mr. McAlpine said in briefing papers sent to NSW Labor Party politicians and school principals two weeks ago.

Read more at <http://www.australianit.news.com.au/story/0,24897,24490953-15306,00.html>

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NT: Education Restructure Includes Greater Emphasis on English

Hon Marion Scrymgour MLA, Minister for Education & Training, 14 October 2008

Education Minister Marion Scrymgour announced today that there would be a restructure of the Department of Education and Training, with a greater focus on teaching English.

Ms Scrymgour said a particular focus of the restructure would be delivering better educational outcomes in remote Indigenous communities.

"As part of that I'm also announcing today that the first four hours of education in all Northern Territory schools will be conducted in English," Ms Scrymgour said.

"I am absolutely committed to making the changes needed to improve attendance rates and lift the literacy and numeracy results in our remote Indigenous schools.

"While the results we're achieving in Darwin, Alice Springs and regional centres are comparable to schools in other similar parts of Australia - the results in remote schools are still unacceptable."

Read more at <http://newsroom.nt.gov.au/index.cfm?fuseaction=viewRelease&id=4599&d=5>

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QLD: school bans lunchtime sport

The Age, October 16, 2008 (AAP)

Queensland Sport Minister Judy Spence says a school may have over-reacted by banning lunchtime contact sports because they sparked too many fights.

Year Seven students at the Gold Coast's Coombabah State School have all been banned from playing touch football, soccer, rugby league, AFL and rugby union in the playground during lunch breaks. The ban, backed by the Department of Education, comes after reports of fighting during games.

A number of outraged students took part in a protest against the new rules on Wednesday and may now face disciplinary action, the Gold Coast Bulletin reported.

Despite an Education Queensland spokesman saying the department saw the move as necessary, Ms Spence said teachers instead needed to step up their supervision.

"I would be concerned if any school was stopping the playing of any kind of football because of fighting," Ms Spence said. "We need to look at that and look at the supervision."

Read more at <http://news.theage.com.au/national/qld-school-bans-lunchtime-sport-20081016-5251.html>

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QLD: Liberal National Party unveils \$262 million education plan

Sydney Morning Herald, October 11, 2008 (AAP)

Teacher numbers will be boosted and parents will have a say on school discipline under the Liberal National Party's (LNP) new \$262 million education plan. But critics say the party is out of touch with the state's schools after launching an education policy that already exists.

LNP leader Lawrence Springborg unveiled his education plan at the party's first state council meeting in Townsville, in northern Queensland. Mr. Springborg told more than 150 delegates that the initiative would boost teacher numbers, build rehabilitation centres for problem students and allow parents to develop school disciplinary codes.

However, Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens Association president Margaret Black said parents already had a say in school disciplinary codes.

"In relation to parents being involved in writing of behaviour management policies, it is not something new," Ms Black said. "I think if the LNP is going to write education policies involving parents, they need to contact a parent body, and they have not consulted with us at all."

A spokeswoman for Education Minister Rod Welford said Mr. Springborg had shown he was out of touch with what was already happening in Queensland state schools. "Every state school in Queensland has a responsible behaviour plan which is developed in consultation with the school community," she said. "These plans have given principals the utmost authority to deal with unruly behaviour in their schools because they have the support of parents."

Read more at <http://news.smh.com.au/national/lnp-unveils-262-million-education-plan-20081011-4yp2.html>

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SA: Student sexual behaviour increasing in schools

Michael Owen, The Australian, October 14, 2008

EDUCATION chiefs are "significantly concerned" about the rising "inappropriate sexual behaviour" of primary school students in Adelaide.

Their concerns come as SA Police figures obtained by The Advertiser reveal there were 42 sexual assault offences reported in schools last financial year.

The offences include rape, attempted rape, unlawful sexual intercourse and indecent assault.

During the past four years, there have been 204 such offences. Last financial year, there were 15 sexual assault offences during "core" school hours on Monday to Friday between 8.30am to 4pm and a total of 78 during those hours since 2004-05.

The worst offending school was located in a country area, internal Education Department documents show.

Department chief executive Chris Robinson released six pages of incident reports from the school for 2006, 2007 and 2008, detailing an array of shocking behaviour by its students, ranging from verbal to physical sexual abuse.

Read more at <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24493501-5006787,00.html>

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TAS: Millions needed to fix state schools: union

ABC News, 13 October 2008

A national survey has revealed Tasmania's public schools are falling behind. The survey by the Australian Education Union (AEU) shows a \$1.2 million shortfall in federal funding for each state school.

More than 90 per cent of principals who responded said they were struggling to meet the individual needs of students, due to larger class sizes.

The Opposition's education spokeswoman, Sue Napier, says because of the larger class sizes all students are missing out.

"We quite often become aware of instances where class sizes are above that level of 25, that's not acceptable when you also consider the very percentage of students within Tasmanian schools who have special needs," she said.

"We still haven't properly resourced and provided the specialist training for people to be able to deal with special needs children."

Read more at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/10/13/2389953.htm>

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TAS: School reform's divisive blunder

Maria Rae, Mercury, 13 October 2008

A HANDBOOK explaining Tasmania's planned education reforms has come under fire for excluding information for Aboriginal, disabled and migrant students.

While the handbook for the trades-based polytechnic gives example programs and support information for these groups, the pre-university academy handbook does not.

Tasmanian Academy chief executive officer Mike Brakey said his organisation was fully inclusive for all students who aspired to university.

But the Australian Education Union state president Leanne Wright said it was a terrible oversight.

"They're either assuming students with those needs will not choose to attend the academy, or if they do, that they won't need additional support," she said.

National Disability Services manager Margaret Reynolds has had complaints from parents about the handbooks.

"The information that is given assumes that all students with a disability are the same," she said. "It stereotypes disability as having one career path."

Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre legal director Michael Mansell said it was symptomatic of the problems with indigenous education.

"Our educational standard is the worst by far and gets the least amount of attention," he said. "This seems to be compounding the problem."

Read more at <http://www.news.com.au/mercury/story/0,22884,24486837-5007221,00.html>

VIC: Zero Tolerance to School Lunch Rubbish Pays Off

Bronwyn Pike MP, 16 October 2008

An environmental superhero called Captain Sustainability has helped Rolling Hills Primary School win the top honour Hero Award at the Rubbish Free Lunch Challenge awards today.

The school tied for first place with Mildura West Primary School which took out the Hero Award for the second consecutive year for their quest to have no waste.

Education Minister Bronwyn Pike presented awards to eight schools for winning the battle to reduce lunch-time rubbish and food scraps from their grounds. A further four encouragement awards were given for commitment to environmental programs.

"The Challenge is a fun way for schools to educate students about the impact their daily activities have on the environment and it's fantastic to see students producing some creative and inspirational programs to help protect our environment and be waste-wise," Ms Pike said.

Read more at <http://www.premier.vic.gov.au/minister-for-education/zero-tolerance-to-school-lunch-rubbish-pays-off.html>

WA: Work to start on new school in Lynwood

Elizabeth Constable, Minister for Education, 17 October 2008

Construction is set to begin on a new \$13million primary school in Perth's southern suburbs.

Education Minister Liz Constable turned the first sod at the new Bannister Creek Primary School site in Lynwood today.

"The construction of this new school will provide students in the area with a first-class learning environment," Dr Constable said.

"Bannister Creek Primary School is part of a Barnett Government election commitment to spend \$490.25million to build new schools for the future."

Read more at <http://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Lists/Statements/DispForm.aspx?ID=130757>

HEALTH & WELL-BEING

'Breakfast clubs' feed homeless at school, says Victorian Minister Pike

Farrah Tomazin, the Age, October 15, 2008

THOUSANDS of school students are homeless, and many are so impoverished the State Government has started advising principals on how to provide "breakfast clubs" to feed them.

Education Minister Bronwyn Pike yesterday described student homelessness as an "unacceptable reality" for schools, acknowledging that many students were without a home, or hot-bedding between friends or relatives' houses.

The latest census figures show there are about 9340 homeless school students in Australia. In Victoria, the Government yesterday began handing out booklets with tips for schools on how to set up breakfast programs to feed hungry students.

Speaking to The Age at a welfare conference in Melbourne, Ms Pike said tackling student poverty and homelessness would require a joint effort among governments, schools, welfare services and the wider community.

But it was important that schools were able to identify the students at risk and intervene early, she said. "Despite recent events we're an incredibly rich society, and an incredibly rich community, and yet we have kids among us who are incredibly poor," she said. "This is an unacceptable reality."

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/national/breakfast-clubs-feed-homeless-at-school-says-pike-20081014-50nb.html>

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Dads give kids a minute a weekday

Stephen Lunn, The Australian, October 20, 2008

Australian fathers spend just six minutes alone with their children from Monday through Friday, averaging slightly over a minute a day.

Overall, they spend an average of just shy of one hour each working week caring for their kids, but 90 per cent of that care is done alongside the mother.

Social researcher Lyn Craig has found in a new paper, *Father Care, Father Share in International Perspective*, to be presented in Sydney tomorrow night, that fathers spend longer with their kids on weekends but, again, mostly as a family unit.

Dr Craig says that when caring solo, fathers rarely do the drudge work such as feeding, bathing or ferrying children to and from school or childcare. Their time is more likely to be spent at "events" such as going to the park or taking the kids to sport.

The disparity between Australian fathers and mothers - who spend almost three hours a week purely looking after children (without counting child-related housework such as making their beds, cleaning away toys or doing their washing) - is greater than in countries such as the US, Italy, France and Denmark.

But fathers in those countries also spend little time alone with their children - with US, French and Italian fathers at similar levels to Australia. Danish dads do about 17 per cent of care alone because far more mothers work full-time in Denmark.

Read more at <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24521433-601,00.html>

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REMINDERS

22-25 October - Frontiers in Education (FIE) Conference - Saratoga Springs, USA - <http://fie.engrng.pitt.edu/fie2008/>

23 October - Music - Count Us In - <http://www.musiccountusin.org.au>

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

10-11 November - Curriculum Corporation Conference 2008 - Melbourne - <http://www.curriculum.edu.au/conference/2008/>

17-19 November - International Conference of Education, Research and Innovation - Madrid, Spain - <http://www.iated.org/iceri2008/>

24-26 November - International Conference on Distance Education - Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic - <http://www.icde.org/oslo/icde.nsf/id/05C3211E27B0737DC12573E100405E7F?OpenDocument>

25-28 November - Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future - Geneva, Switzerland - <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/ice.html>

30 November-4 December - Australian Association for Research in Education International Education Conference - Brisbane - <http://www.aare.edu.au/conf2008/index.htm>

7-11 December - World Indigenous Peoples Conference: Education - Melbourne - <http://www.wipce2008.com/>

8-12 December - International Consortium for Experiential Learning - Sydney - <http://www.education.uts.edu.au/icel/index.html>

4-7 January - Hawaii International Conference on Education - Honolulu, USA - <http://www.hiceducation.org/>

18-21 January - Summer School For Australian Teachers - Canberra - <http://www.anu.edu.au/hrc/freilich/>

15-18 April - International Outdoor Education Research Conference - Beechworth, Vic - http://www.latrobe.edu.au/oent/research_conf_2009.htm

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RESOURCE LISTINGS

Passport to Australia: The Australian Travel Game

Find out more about our amazing country the fun way:

Strap yourself in for a learning adventure like no other with Passport to Australia, the new board game from Brisbane based company Barker Boys (Australia) Pty Ltd

This is a fresh and exciting way for players of all ages to learn about Australia – the ultimate board game that takes players on a funtastic journey to every state and territory

The game is a brilliant way to improve your general knowledge on places that are in our own backyard. Though you hardly notice you're learning because it's so easy to get carried away with the thrill of the chase.

New questions will be added to later editions of the game and supplementary question packs will be available online and through recommended retail outlets.

"Best of all, with every purchase of a Passport to Australia buyers will be contributing to the establishment of a school camp to provide learning and recreational experiences for young people," said Managing Director Bruce Barker.

"Our intention is to continue to create opportunities to share knowledge and learn in fun and interesting ways."

Passport to Australia is available through ABC shops, selected retail stores and online at www.passporttoaustralia.com.

For more information: <http://www.passporttoaustralia.com>

LOTE@HOME – Learning languages at home from the early years

"Children who have grown up learning two or more different languages are better problem solvers"

LOTE@HOME is an innovative way for parents to participate with their kids as they all learn a second language.

LOTE@HOME packs are not intended to replace formal LOTE lessons, however they are intended to build an "in country environment" in the home that will support the formal learning of a second language.

Devised by a parent who was unable to identify an approach to learning a language other than English that focused on a home, family-based setting, these family-friendly kits are now available in five community languages (including Japanese and Mandarin) with others to follow shortly.

By using the cards, and reinforcing words around the house, kids will learn a new language in exactly the same way they learned English - by immersion and absorption.

Find out more: <http://www.lote-at-home.com.au>

Educational Experience

Educational Experience began its operations in Newcastle NSW in 1977 and today is Australia's leading supplier of educational resources and equipment to child care centres, preschools, OOSHs and primary schools. We remain dedicated to the supply of creative and practical ideas to help children learn and develop and are the Teacher's choice for variety, quality and customer service.

At present **Educational Experience's** product range consists of over 8,500 product lines showcased in our annual Teachers Catalogue. Our speedy delivery is recognised as being the most efficient and reliable service offered in the industry. The products sold by **Educational Experience** are sourced from Australian suppliers where possible or imported from reputable international suppliers. To ensure all our products are of the highest quality and meet safety standards, our suppliers must show product compliance testing to Australian standards.

To view our product range please visit www.edex.com.au

Educational Experience initiated our generous Toys and More fundraiser to help Australian children's education. Early childhood centres and schools who participate in this fundraiser, are rewarded with a credit voucher valued at 20% of the total value ordered by parents and friends and may qualify for additional resources. For more information please visit www.toysandmore.com.au

Educational Experience remains committed to the educational needs of all Australian children.

Educational Experience, PO Box 860, Newcastle NSW 2300

Telephone 02 4923 8222 Fax 02 4942 1991 Toll free 1300 134 211 Email hotline@edex.com.au

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

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

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ACSSO EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

- **Australian Education Digest** : <http://www.acsso.org.au/aed.htm> (weekly)
- **International News Roundup** : <http://www.acsso.org.au/roundup.htm> (monthly)
- **Values Education** : <http://www.valuesineducation.org.au/news.htm> (monthly)
- **Languages Education** : <http://www.languageseducation.com/news.htm> (monthly)
- **Ensemble - Music Education** : <http://www.ensemble.org.au/news.htm> (monthly)
- **Public Education Voice** : <http://www.acsso.org.au/pev.htm> (quarterly)
- **Family School Partners** : http://www.familyschool.org.au/?page_id=6 (quarterly)

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