

AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION DIGEST

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HOT TOPIC: JOEL KLEIN

Children first policy raises bar at New York schools

Joel Klein, Sydney Morning Herald, 24 November 2008

Our "children first" reform strategy is based on three principles: leadership, empowerment and accountability.

If we have strong, prepared leaders who will attract and support great teachers, if we set high standards, and if we give leaders the tools and the support they need, as well as the power to make decisions and the resources to execute those decisions, we will change outcomes for students.

We have implemented strategies to accomplish our goals. We have worked to build leadership capacity by creating a top-tier "leadership academy" to train principals and created more rigorous mentoring and support.

We have also raised principal salaries by almost 25 per cent and made principals eligible for up to \$50,000 in bonuses each year for taking on the hardest jobs and being successful in helping students make progress.

Accountability is not just about measuring results, rewarding success and doling out consequences for failure; it is also about giving schools tools and resources to help them measure how well they are helping students learn and devise strategies to improve.

That is why we have created a system of periodic assessments allowing teachers to measure what students understand and where they need more help.

That is why we have invested in teaching our teachers how to use data effectively to advance student learning.

It is also why we have created a world-class data-management system, which allows teachers and principals to track student performance, analyse results and connect via the internet with educators in other schools across the city to share ideas and strategies.

Read more at <http://www.smh.com.au/news/opinion/children-first-policy-raises-bar-at-new-york-schools/2008/11/23/1227375057001.html?page=2>

Joel Klein is chancellor of New York's Education Department. He is visiting Sydney this week.

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Leading Transformational Change in Schools

Speech by Hon Julia Gillard MP to Education Forum, Melbourne, 24 November 2008

Today we take another big step along the path to better Australian schools.

We have some leading Australian educators here who are going to give us the benefit of their experience. And of course, our special guest is the Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education, Joel Klein.

I first met Joel in New York in June this year and immediately admired his passionate commitment to a better future for the children of New York.

You have to admire the dedication of someone who deliberately located a school in his education department building so that every bureaucrat every day heard the sound of kid's voices. And you have to admire the relentless reform dedication of someone who is prepared to say that putting a bright light on a problem is the best way to get it fixed.

In this country, this isn't the first time in recent years that a Federal government has said it wants to promote change in our schools. We've had a lot of tinkering; a few vague ideas have been run up the flagpole and we've put up a lot of flag poles. But today we're leaving the piecemeal approach of the past behind and going further.

As Education Minister, I want nothing short of transformational change in Australia's schools.

Joel Klein's efforts in New York are instructive. He has demonstrated that change has to be systematic, that it has to focus unrelentingly on quality improvement and that we must demand high standards of achievement from every student no matter how disadvantaged.

This is our challenge. We need to work together and we should share three goals:

1. To improve the quality of teaching;
2. To ensure every child benefits; and
3. To mandate transparency and accountability.

Read more at

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

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Joel Klein, New York City Schools Chancellor

Transcript, Sunday Profile, ABC Radio 702, 28 August 2008

MONICA ATTARD: Six years ago in 2002, most students from New York City's schools didn't graduate, most couldn't read and the system was viewed with despair. And then Joel Klein; a hotshot lawyer and a native New Yorker who'd risen through the public school system himself was appointed to turn things around.

He's still in the job and he's still passionate about what he does and he infected Julia Gillard with his enthusiasm when the two met.

Joel Klein told me about the state of the New York education system when he took up the job.

JOEL KLEIN: Our minority students, our African American students, our Latino students, our high poverty students were failing at abysmal rates. When we took over, African American boys in the city probably had a graduation rate below 30 per cent. So that means seven out of 10 of those students were wholly unprepared for the rigorous 21st Century economy.

So at multiple levels you could see a system that quite frankly succeeded with traditionally high performing middle class students but really was failing significantly with kids who came to school with economic and social challenges.

MONICA ATTARD: But those kids are still going to school with the same social and economic challenges, so what in your system has made it different for them?

JOEL KLEIN: Oh I think the quality education they've received, I think that's been the history certainly in America that obviously kids who come to school with difficult challenges are going to require intensive educational instruction to overcome those challenges but it's happening and it's happening across our city.

We have some school that have the very same children that people say have all the challenges that are getting really outstanding results and it's really quite remarkable to see two different schools with the very same children getting very different results.

That's why the discussion with the Deputy Prime Minister was so important because we have a lot of data now that will show you lets say two schools in the middle class community that get different results, some moving forward very progressively, some moving backward and two schools in a high poverty neighbourhood with similar results, they may not start at the same place, but they get very different results with the same population.

Now each of those groups were challenged and each of those groups had very difficult children, but one of them was moving forward and another was moving backward.

And that's the power of education and that's what's so powerful about what the Prime Minister is doing and the discussion we had with the Deputy Prime Minister.

Read more at <http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2008/08/28/2348955.htm>

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'Creative Confusion' By Mr. Klein

Media Release, Save our Schools, 23 November 2008

Independent education research & advocacy body Save Our Schools today challenged the claims of visiting New York City Schools Chancellor, Joel Klein, about large increases in school performance shown in newly published report cards for the City's schools.

Convenor Trevor Cobbold said that the results strain credibility and there are suspicions that school grades have been manipulated to boost results.

"Mr. Klein has said that his approach to managing the New York City public education system was to cause 'some creative confusion'.

His new school report cards have certainly succeeded in creating confusion about the real state of schools in the City.

The New York Times said that many New Yorkers are 'somewhat befuddled' by inconsistencies with other test results for the City's schools.

"The only independent check on student achievement in New York City shows a completely different picture from that claimed by Klein.

"The results of the National Assessment of Education Progress administered by the US Department of Education show that student achievement in New York City has stagnated since 2003.

"The achievement gaps between Blacks and Whites, between Hispanics and Whites and between low and high income students are as large as they were when Klein began to overhaul the system.

"The reductions in cut-off scores have raised suspicions that the data was manipulated to artificially boost the results."

"Clearly, Mr. Klein has some explaining to do before his claims can be taken seriously."

Read more at <http://soscanberra.com/media-releases/media-release-creative-confusion-by-mrklein>

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School rankings "unmask" failures?

Emma Macdonald, Canberra Times, 21 November 2008

Australia should produce league tables of school performance in order to unmask entrenched educational failure, according to a new report by the Centre for Independent Studies/

The Rudd government is considering providing more information to parents on school performance, with education minister Julie Gillard inviting New York schools chancellor to Australia to discuss his new report card system.

In a paper issued 20 November "Making the Grade: School Report Cards and League Tables", Centre for Independent Studies research fellow Jennifer Buckingham recommended schools be made more accountable for student outcomes.

"The Australian government now has the opportunity to implement a system of school reporting that is fair and meaningful," Ms Buckingham said. "Critics of school performance reporting often raise the spectre of league tables, and the potential for low performing schools and their students to be stigmatized.

"This argument says that students in low performing schools will be OK so long as no one knows they are not getting a good education. It protects schools at the expense of the children and families they are meant to serve," she said.

In New York under Mr. Klein's radical reforms, schools are graded A, B, C, D or F and those which persistently receive failing grades face strong sanctions or possible closure.

Yet criticisms of the New York system have been widespread.

These include the fact that national testing results show little, if any, improvement in New York, that schools with high-achieving students have been given F grades because they show minimal improvement, and that grade cut-offs have been lowered recently so that more schools are given As and Bs.

Read more at at http://www.apo.org.au/linkboard/results.chtml?filename_num=239850

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HOT TOPIC: FUNDING

Keep funds secret, private schools say

Julian Drape, Canberra Times, 20/11/2008 (AAP)

Forcing non-government schools to publicly disclose all sources of funding would inflame "divisive" and "ideological" tensions between the private and public school sectors, a federal Senate committee has been told.

The Federal Labor Government wants to make Commonwealth funding contingent on non-government schools declaring all extra income from private donations, scholarships and fund-raising.

But the Association of Independent Schools of Victoria says the information could be distorted in the public press. Association deputy chairwoman Heather Schnagl said, "I can just see the headlines ... 'So-and-so school has this amount of money to spend on each individual student.'"

Dr Schnagl said private schools were happy to disclose funding to the Government on a confidential basis, but she could not see any public good being served by putting all sources of funding on the front page of a newspaper. There was already "an emotive debate against non-government schools that we get too much government money".

The Australian Council of Christian Schools said there were great risks associated with publishing funding data.

The council's executive officer, Robert Johnston told the committee, "The issue of public-private divide is not going to go away by the publication of data ... If anything, that's going to pander to those who are philosophically opposed to non-government schools."

Mr Johnston said it would draw private schools into time-wasting and aggravation that were much more divisive than just getting on with the job by forcing the sector to defend its right to exist. Disclosing funding could also result in companies being less willing to donate.

But Labor committee chairman Gavin Marshall said to argue against funding disclosure was to argue against any form of transparency.

"You're suggesting that information should be kept from the public in a public debate?" he said.

Australian Education Union president Angelo Gavrielatos said public schools had to disclose all funding and the same rules should apply to non-government schools.

Read more at <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/news/local/news/general/keep-funds-secret-private-schools-say/1365711.aspx>

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TECHNOLOGY & EDUCATION

New tips assist young people and parents access mobile premium SMS/MMS services

Premium SMS/MMS services have caused some young people and their parents concern and confusion about the costs involved and whether young people thought they were signing up for a subscription or a one-off service on such things as ringtones.

The Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association (AMTA), the peak industry body representing the mobile telecommunications industry, has produced some tips to assist young people and their parents to gain affordable access to these services.

AMTA Chief Executive Officer, Chris Althaus, said the tips were designed to give consumers practical advice on the dos and don'ts of signing up and to manage their usage.

"Our Members carry premium services on their networks for third parties and we acknowledge our responsibility to help minimise any problems associated with such services," he said.

"We believe the positive aspects far outweigh the negative, however, we are committed to providing practical advice to help prevent misuse and promote the safe, responsible and affordable use of mobile telecommunications.

"Prevention is the key to protecting consumers and our tips stress not to use premium services unless they understand the full costs involved - the cost per message, the frequency of the messages and the total cost."

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

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SAFE SCHOOLS

"An Assault on Our Future" survey reveals shock violence, sex views

Xanthe Kleinig & Cara Jenkin, Herald Sun, November 17, 2008

ONE in every three boys think it is okay to hit girls, and many think forcing "flirts" to have sex is acceptable, a survey shows.

The survey also shows one in four teenagers lives with violence at home, prompting calls for domestic violence education programs in schools.

The study, which reviewed data from the past seven years, including a survey of 5000 12 to 20-year-olds, found up to 350,000 girls aged between 12 and 20 - one in seven - had experienced sexual assault or rape.

Almost one third of girls in Year 10 had experienced unwanted sex.

The survey, "An Assault on Our Future: The impact of violence on young people and their relationships" is released today by the White Ribbon Foundation, which campaigns to end violence against women.

White Ribbon Foundation chairman Andrew O'Keefe said violence would not end without challenging the views that tolerated it. "If we are going to succeed we must start by challenging these attitudes while kids are still young," he said.

"We know that adults who hold these attitudes are more likely to use violence."

White Ribbon Day, November 25, is the United Nation's Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

Download report at <http://www.whiteribbonday.org.au/media/documents/AssaultonourFutureFinal.pdf>

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Sexual assault 'part of school life'

ABC News, 10 November 2008

A new report has found sexual assault between school students is being ignored because it is seen as part of normal high school life.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies report says school children are often reluctant to report sexual assault from other students because they fear the social consequences and do not think they will be believed.

It says most children find it hard to define when they have been sexually assaulted by another student.

The institute's general manager of research, Dr Daryl Higgins, says teachers are also dismissing sexual assault between high school students too easily.

"I think for teachers it's really difficult to be able to recognise that there's a serious problem on their hands when children at their school are being subjected to, let's say, an assault from a peer at a school," he said.

"It's much easier to turn a blind eye."

The report recommends schools do more to support young people who report assault, like creating safe areas, offering more training for teachers and separating victims and perpetrators.

It says while only about 15 per cent of sexual assaults are reported to police, around two-thirds of victims tell someone in their informal support network.

The report says older teenagers aged between 14 and 17 are more likely to tell someone.

It also says situations involving technology like mobile phones, digital cameras and the Internet are difficult to define as assault under the law.

In 2006, the Australian Bureau of Statistics found 14 per cent of females and 3 per cent of males aged 12 to 20 had been sexually assaulted, most of them by people they knew.

Read more at <http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/media/media081110a.html>

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OPINION

Public schools a disgrace: Murdoch

Nick Ralston, Canberra Times, 24 November 2008 (AAP)

Australia must reform its public education system and set high standards for schools to ensure they become more internationally competitive, media mogul Rupert Murdoch says.

Mr Murdoch said yesterday that schools and school systems must stop making excuses for failing the children they were meant to serve, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

And Australian businesses must take an active role in the reform process.

The Manhattan-based News Corp chief used the fourth of his six Boyer Lectures for the ABC to focus on the state of public education, saying the school system in Australia, along with the United States and Britain, is a "disgrace". He said these countries had fallen behind the likes of Finland, Korea and Singapore.

"In my view, things will not really improve until we begin setting much higher expectations, for our students, for our teachers and for our schools," Mr Murdoch said in his lecture, Fortune Favours the Smart.

While more and more money was being spent on public education, children, especially those among the most vulnerable in society, "seem to be learning less and less".

"The children of poor people always have fewer options than the elite," Mr Murdoch said. "For these people, a solid education is the one hope for rising in society and levelling the playing field.

"If we have any real sense of fairness, we owe these children school systems that hold them to high standards."

He called on the Federal Government to set high standards and hold the states accountable for meeting them.

Read more at <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/news/local/news/general/public-schools-a-disgrace-murdoch/1367895.aspx>

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HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Canteens to look at effects of slushies

Kelly Burke, Canberra Times, 17 November 2008

THE state's health and education ministers have instructed their government representatives on the board of NSW's School Canteen Association to look into claims that products endorsed by the association are producing adverse reactions in students.

The Whitty's brand of slushies, sold in an unknown number of school canteens throughout NSW, contain four artificial food colourings which are permitted in Australia but are being banned by the European Union, the US and Scandinavia because of their link to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

The drinks, promoted as "99 per cent fruit" contain synthetic flavourings and preservatives including sodium benzoate, which is associated with ADHD and can affect people with asthma.

The slushies contravene the guidelines of the body for advice and information on canteen food, Healthy Kids SCA, which warns the maker against "images of fruit or use of fruit names when the fruit component in the ingredients is different to the fruit image, name or flavour".

Read more at <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/news/national/national/general/canteens-to-look-at-effects-of-slushies/1361885.aspx>

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INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

Gillard supports NT education decision

November 19, 2008

Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard says she supports the decision by the Northern Territory government to effectively scrap bilingual indigenous education.

The Northern Territory government announced last month that the first four hours of every school day had to be taught in English.

This leaves an hour and a half at the end of the day for indigenous language and culture.

The move prompted an immediate outcry from the Territory's nine remaining bilingual schools, who argue their children perform better at English than those in English-only classrooms.

Ms Gillard said on Wednesday that she backed the NT initiative.

"For indigenous Australia, English is the language of further learning and English is the language of work," she told reporters at the opening of a new 'E' learning centre at the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Education, south of Darwin.

"If we want indigenous kids who are growing up today right across the Northern Territory, right across the nation to have a chance ... to get a good job then people need to read and write English, they need to do that fluently and proficiently."

Ms Gillard said the federal government still supported indigenous language and culture.

"We want to ensure that indigenous Australians have the opportunity to learn their own language, their original language as well," she said.

Read more at <http://news.smh.com.au/national/gillard-supports-nt-education-decision-20081119-6bdf.html>

Aboriginal kids 'need work ethic lessons'

Tara Ravens, The Australian, November 2008 (AAP)

Speaking at the The Desert Knowledge Symposium in Alice Springs, which concludes today, Gregor Ramsey from Teaching Australia proposed a new approach to indigenous education. The driving force of his plan is a desire to get people into jobs and help them lead productive lives.

"If indigenous people are to be part of a western society, they will need to accept that there are some traditions that can no longer remain, as other priorities take their place," he told the conference.

Rather than the traditional disciplines enforced by the national curriculum - such as maths and science - Mr Ramsey advocates a system based on themes. These would include health and wellbeing, as well as culture and human expression.

"For example, we don't get up in the morning and say we are going to do physics or going to look up history," he said. "What you say is that you have a problem or a job to do and search out what the things are that will best help to solve that problem."

Mr Ramsey said that because many Aboriginal children had not been raised by working families they did not understand the concept of jobs and success. "It is not something that is born in us, but if you grew up in a family where work has been part of life for generations, you naturally gravitate to work," he said.

Read more at <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24611559-26103,00.html>

A partnership of perseverance bears fruit

Sydney Morning Herald, 17/11/2008

JEFF McMULLEN is concerned. "All over the world, schools are seen as a white thing - part of the dominant culture," says McMullen, who works with the Ian Thorpe Foundation providing resources to schools in the Northern Territory's Top End.

"Aboriginal families have no control of the system, but with TAFE colleges there's at least some access."

To get this right "we have to admit that there are now thousands of young Aboriginal people around Australia who are not in school, training or work".

In NSW for the past 30 years, the Aboriginal education and training unit of TAFE has been developing models for indigenous education. Its aim is to help students get through school and go on to TAFE or university.

When the unit began, there were no career paths for indigenous students in NSW and many were disengaged from schooling. Media coverage of young Aborigines causing trouble in the north-west of the state was common. But when TAFE colleges began employing Aboriginal education officers in towns such as Bourke, Walgett and Moree, young Aborigines had someone with whom they could connect.

Read more at <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/news/national/national/general/a-partnership-of-perseverance-bears-fruit/1361898.aspx>

AROUND THE STATES AND TERRITORIES

NSW: NSW schools safe for children: Firth

The Age, November 10, 2008 (AAP)

NSW public schools remain one of the safest places for children despite accusations of inappropriate behaviour by some teachers, Education Minister Verity Firth says.

There have been 86 allegations of sexual assault or inappropriate relationships between teachers and students over the past two-and-a-half years, The Daily Telegraph has reported.

Ms Firth said the Department of Education took such reports seriously, with complaints of criminal behaviour reported to police.

She said three teachers had been convicted of criminal offences in the past two-and-a-half years, while eight other teachers were subjected to internal disciplinary action for inappropriate behaviour, Ms Firth said.

This was from a workforce of 55,000, Ms Firth said.

"I believe schools are still one of the safest places for your child to be in the community," the minister told reporters at a primary school in Penrith. "Of course, we don't take these allegations lightly, and we treat them absolutely seriously if any of these sorts of situations arise."

Ms Firth said teachers received annual training in child protection.

Read more at <http://news.theage.com.au/national/nsw-schools-safe-for-children-firth-20081110-51k9.html>

NSW: Teaching crisis looms

Rachel Browne, Sydney Morning Herald, November 9, 2008

PUBLIC education in NSW is headed for a crisis as skyrocketing birth rates look set to clash with teacher retirement figures.

The "baby bonus generation", representing the biggest birth spike in more than 30 years, will enter the education system from 2011. At the same time, more than half of NSW's teachers will hit retirement age.

Educators and parent groups fear the system will not cope.

NSW Teachers Federation acting president Bob Lipscomb said a 2008 NSW Auditor-General's report into the ageing of the teaching service revealed that more than half would reach retirement age by 2016.

"We have 16,000 teachers reaching retirement age in 2012," he said. "We have a further 25,000 teachers reaching retirement age in 2016. That represents more than half the teaching service of NSW."

At the same time, NSW is listing a record number of births, which experts say is due to the baby bonus and improvements in IVF technology. Last year 285,000 births were registered Australia-wide, the highest number since 1971. More than a third of those were in NSW.

Read more at <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/teaching-crisis-looms/2008/11/08/1225561201526.html>

NSW: School transport fee collector undecided

THE Age, November 19, 2008 (AAP)

NSW's transport chief admits he doesn't know who will be collecting fees from parents following the abolition of free school travel passes.

As part of last week's mini-budget process, the state government announced it was scrapping free travel to school and introducing a co-payment arrangement where parents would contribute up to \$180 a year.

The move, to take effect in the new school year, will save the state \$33 million a year.

But the Ministry of Transport's director-general, Jim Glasson, has told a budget estimates committee hearing that no arrangements have been made in terms of who will be responsible for collecting the payments.

Mr Glasson said the task would not be given to bus operators but may fall to each school, with discussions ongoing with the Department of Education.

It would be up to the Department of Education to determine if additional administrative support was needed to help collect the fees, he said.

School travel will now cost \$45 per primary school student and \$90 for high school students, capped at \$180 per family.

Read more at <http://news.theage.com.au/national/school-transport-fee-collector-undecided-20081119-6bfr.html>

NSW: Why can't schools teach driving?

Maria Tsialis & Edith Bevin, Daily Telegraph, November 20, 2008

RED tape is costing young lives, with public schools finding it almost impossible to fight their way through bureaucracy to get students driving lessons in school time.

Driving instructors said they had seen positive results in teaching advanced driving skills to private school students. But Eastern Creek Driving Training Centre, one of Sydney's largest driver training centres, said that while public schools wanted to take part, none had been able to get departmental approval to do so.

"For government schools it's too hard - they want to come and they ask us about bringing classes along but they can't get it through the system," said head driving trainer James Stewart.

Crash Prevention Australia chief executive officer John Cadogan said he could not understand why money and time was spent on sex education and drug information but not driver training.

Read more at <http://www.news.com.au/dailytelegraph/story/0,27574,24676920-5006009,00.html>

NT: New centre aims to boost Indigenous education levels

ABC News, 10 November 2008

A remedial learning centre will open in Darwin next year for Indigenous students who are falling behind in mainstream schools.

The centre will be run by the Exodus Foundation and plans to offer intensive numeracy and literacy lessons for primary school students.

Casey Kirk is the program's coordinator and says the centre will take a back to basics approach.

"We break reading down to its lowest common denominator, we look at the word, the phoning and we improve kids' literacy by taking them right back to basics and re-building those foundational skills that they may have missed out on for whatever reason."

Read more at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/11/10/2415536.htm>

QLD: State school parents face demands for cash

James O'Loan, Courier Mail, November 05, 2008

PARENTS at a state primary school have been hit with unexpected "mandatory" fees to fund basic classroom equipment and resources.

Robina State School on the Gold Coast last week wrote to parents demanding up to \$120 per student for ink, work sheets and computer software. According to the Education Act 2006, state education is to be free. Section 56 allows principals to ask parents for "voluntary" financial contributions. And it demands there be no negative consequences for those who do not pay.

This case has outraged parents, who say it is a mockery of so-called free education.

Education Queensland is unaware how many Queensland schools have made similar demands, citing a lack of data.

Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens Associations president Margaret Black believed it was the first time a school had omitted the word "voluntary" and issued the request as a contract. She urged parents to "make sure the word voluntary is included".

Ms Black will seek an explanation from the Assistant Director General for Education.

Read more at <http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,27574,24603154-3102,00.html>

SA: Teachers reject boosted SA pay offer

ABC News, 10 November 2008

A pay offer to public school teachers in South Australia has been boosted, to try to avert looming strikes.

The SA Government has lifted its offer to 13.6 per cent more by October next year, but the Australian Education Union (AEU) wants 18 per cent more over a three-year period.

The previous pay offer had been 12.5 per cent over three years.

The Government says the timing of pay rises under its proposal would mean the new offer is effectively 14.2 cent over the life of any agreement.

Industrial Relations Minister Paul Caica says a first increment of 5.6 per cent would be paid on acceptance of the offer and back-dated to last month.

He says a further rise would be paid next year and a compounding effect of another 3.5 per cent in October 2010 would make the total rise 14.21 per cent.

Teachers are also pushing for withdrawal of a schools funding model.

The AEU executive has rejected the latest pay offer as an insult.

Read more at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/11/10/2415464.htm?section=australia>

TAS: Young boffins prove worth

Sally Glaetzer, Mercury, November 22, 2008

TASMANIAN students performed well in the latest national science literacy results and teachers are aiming to lift standards further.

Of the Grade 6 Tasmanian students surveyed, 57.4 per cent were at or above the proficient standard of science literacy. That compared with 54.3 per cent nationally. The ACT led the ranking, followed by Victoria, with Tasmania and New South Wales equal third.

More than 1300 students from 64 Tasmanian state, Catholic and independent schools took part in the 2006 National Science Literacy Sample Assessment.

"Students from Tasmania achieved a significantly higher score than those from Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory," said Premier David Bartlett, who chairs the national council of education ministers, which oversaw the development of the science assessment program.

Read more at http://www.themercury.com.au/article/2008/11/22/39925_tasmania-news.html

VIC: Schools ban lollies, chocolate

The Age, November 17, 2008 (AAP)

CHOCOLATES and lollies will be banned from Victorian Government school canteens and vending machines from next year. The sweets will be replaced with fruit, salads and fresh wraps under the State Government's plan to improve student health and stamina.

Education Minister Bronwyn Pike said yesterday: "With alarming statistics showing almost one-quarter of children aged two to 16 years are overweight or obese, it is vital that we work together to reinforce the healthy living message."

About 100 schools will be audited in 2009 to ensure they comply with the confectionery ban. The audit will cover confectionery and high-sugar drinks and involve government schools in metropolitan and regional Victoria.

It follows a similar audit in 2007 after the ban on high-sugar drinks, which found more than 98% of schools were compliant with the ban. "Research shows that around 37% of a child's total energy intake is consumed at school," Ms Pike said, "so it's vital that we have a range of healthy options available to help students make valuable food choices."

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/national/schools-ban-lollies-chocolate-20081116-684a.html>

VIC: Faster broadband to boost learning

The Age, November 6, 2008

THE speed of the broadband piped into Victoria's 1600 government schools will be more than doubled under a major information upgrade.

Broadband capacity will increase from four to 10 megabits per second, with the works to be funded through the \$89 million VicSmart program.

Premier John Brumby said the new technology would make a fundamental difference to the way children learn. "For our children right across the government school system it means that they are at the absolute forefront of the digital revolution," he said.

Telstra chief executive Sol Trujillo said the upgrade, which will be completed by June, would enhance opportunities for students. "In my time ... it was all about the text, it was all about hard copy, and now we live in a real-time multimedia world," he said.

Education Minister Bronwyn Pike expressed confidence that the trouble-plagued \$60 million Ultraset software system, designed to allow parents to check their child's progress online, would be delivered by 2010 as promised.

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/national/faster-broadband-to-boost-learning-20081105-5ijt.html>

WA: Education Department claims hard line on unruly students

Paul Lampathakis, Perth Now, November 04, 2008

THE Education Department has reported a sharp rise in the number of suspensions at WA schools, defending it as a crackdown on badly behaved students. Education Director-General Sharyn O'Neill said today that 10,536 students at public schools were suspended in 2007, compared with 9,649 in 2006.

The Sunday Times revealed similar figures in April, and also exposed the fact that almost three teachers or other school staff were physically assaulted by students each school day in WA.

That story also showed that assaults by students on staff jumped 23 per cent last year - with 511 such violent incidents in public schools in 2007, compared with 415 in 2006.

Figures provided by the department to The Sunday Times at the time said 10,468 students were suspended in 2007 - up 37.6 per cent on 2004.

Ms O'Neill said today of the latest 2007 suspension statistics: "I make no apology for taking a hard line on bad behaviour, the community expects schools to have in place the best possible environment for teachers to teach and for students to learn."

Read more at <http://www.news.com.au/perthnow/story/0,27574,24602283-2761,00.html>

CONFERENCES & EVENTS

World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development

31 March-2 April, Bonn, Germany

Moving into the Second Half of the UN Decade

Some 700 stakeholders from all over the world will attend the conference, which is being organized by UNESCO and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, in cooperation with the German Commission for UNESCO.

Registration will begin in November 2008

Read more at http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=55176&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

Spirit of Learning Conference

2-3 May 2009, Hilton Hotel, Brisbane

The Beginning and Establishing Teachers' Association's annual conference provides delegates with relevant and timely professional development to complement school induction programs.

Keynote speaker is Dr Christine Richmond, who has become well known in Australian education circles through her work in schools and as a speaker at regional, state, national and international conferences.

The conference program will be available in Term 1, 2009.

Read more at <http://www.beta.asn.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=1043>

REMINDERS

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/>

11-16 January - Positive Education Conference - Corio, Victoria -

<http://www.ggs.vic.edu.au/index.asp?menuid=200.060>

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

18-23 January - Positive Education Conference - Corio, Victoria -

<http://www.ggs.vic.edu.au/index.asp?menuid=200.060>

20-23 January - Australasian Computing Education Conference - Wellington, New Zealand -

http://www.cs.rmit.edu.au/conf/ace_2009/

2-5 March - BIG Skills Conference - Sydney Australia -

http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/programmes_funding/programme_categories/Conferences/

15-18 April - International Outdoor Education Research Conference - Beechworth, Vic -

http://www.latrobe.edu.au/oent/research_conf_2009.htm

8-10 July - Education in a Digital Present: Enriching Rural Communities - Flinders University, SA -

<http://www.spera.edu.au//conferences/callforpapers.pdf>

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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/

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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