



Australian Council of State School Organisations

The National Voice of Parents of Children in Australia's Public Schools and Their School Communities

AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION DIGEST

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ACSSO NATIONAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE 2009

Building partnerships to support student health, resilience & well-being

12-13 October 2009 – Hobart, Tasmania

Internationally renowned educationalist Dr Neil Hawkes from the UK will lead an outstanding array of speakers, presenters and panellists drawn from across the country, exploring and illustrating the central importance of student health, resilience and well-being – and how to build effective community partnerships to support our young people's positive personal development.

ACSSO's national conferences are for everyone with an interest in education – parents, teachers, principals, researchers, academics, journalists – from all fields and sectors of education. Lively interactive discussion draws on the real-life experience of school communities – and seeks to focus on the practical things we can all do in our own local community to create an effective learning environment in a linked-up learning community.

So make sure you put these dates in your diary now!

In future issues of the Digest we will bring you speaker profiles and background information – and we aim for the Conference Website to be fully operational, with online registration facilities, in March 2009.

Keynote Speaker Profile: Dr Neil Hawkes



Neil has had a successful career as a teacher, principal, chief education adviser and Local Education Authority officer in the UK. From 1992, he spent 7 years as principal of West Kidlington Primary and Nursery School in Oxford, UK. It was here that the school community worked together to devise and implement a unique system of Values Education that has become well-known throughout the world.

In 1996, Neil worked with a group of international educators at UNICEF headquarters in New York, USA, to found the education programme, Living Values. This charity works with organisations such as UNESCO to underpin education systems with Values Education. Neil is a Director of ALIVE (The Association of Living Values International) which is a charity registered in Switzerland that coordinates Living Values Education. Neil is also Director of The Values Education Trust which is currently being constituted in the UK to inspire schools

to adopt Values Education.

Neil works as an international education consultant. He is well-known as an inspirational speaker being invited to conferences and workshops world-wide. He is also known for his books and contributions to the Times Educational Supplement, academic journals and periodicals.

Read more about Dr Hawkes at <http://www.values-education.com/about.php>

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NATIONAL PUBLIC EDUCATION FORUM

Join Geoffrey Robertson in the nation's capital

Old Parliament House, Canberra, 27-28 March 2009

The future of public education in Australia is at a crossroads. Parents, teachers, principals, policy-makers and academics around the country are pondering how state-run education services should develop in the best interests of our children and future citizens.

The National Public Education Forum provides a unique opportunity to look at the issues, the stakes, the opportunities and the obstacles as some of the country's sharpest minds present honest and informed assessments of what is right and wrong with public education in Australia.

Australian human rights lawyer, academic, author and broadcaster Geoffrey Robertson will deliver the opening session, an acknowledgement of the need to bring this discussion into the widest possible public arena, and to call on our finest thinkers.

The Forum will provide a platform for more than a dozen other key observers, thinkers and practitioners of education to have their say, culminating in a synopsis to be presented by Professor Tony Vinson, one of our leading educational and social researchers who chaired the 2001 Vinson Inquiry into public education in NSW.

The major outcome of the Forum will be a Communique reflecting the needs of public education for the 21st Century, as an input to public policy and government decision making processes for the next four years – and beyond.

Parent group representatives – find out more - and express your interest in attending (NB: Registration \$100; travel and all other costs are borne by each attendee; places are strictly limited) at this website address:

<http://www.acsso.org.au/forum09/>

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DIGITAL EDUCATION REVOLUTION

When MySpace ends in tears

Calliste Weitenberg, The Age, February 1, 2009

Australian teachers are failing to effectively intervene in school cyber bullying, with "significant progress" needed to help bring them up to speed with interactive internet tools.

A report published by the federally funded Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies found the internet plays a critical role in the lives of primary school-aged children.

Sixty-five per cent of five- to 14-year-olds use the internet during or outside school, with a large number using email and messaging programs. But teachers largely remained unfamiliar with types of internet communications - such as MySpace and Facebook - used by students as young as five in cases of online harassment and denigration, the report found.

"A significant proportion of teachers do not use or understand interactive online technologies," Macquarie University lecturer Damian Maher said in the report. "Significant progress in this area is required."

Latest research suggests as many as one in three students aged 10 to 14 experience forms of cyber bullying, typified by harassment through email, text messaging and online chats.

Despite this, Dr Maher said teachers remained "very hesitant" in exploring and using interactive cyber technology, which meant they struggled to monitor and control cyber bullying.

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/news/technology/web/when-myspace-ends-in-tears/2009/01/31/1233423024501.html>

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OPINION

The perils of boganism are home grown: Parents' attitudes to education are a key factor in student success or otherwise

Geoff Strong, The Age, January 14, 2009

IN CONDEMNING boganism just before new year, the new Melbourne Lord Mayor stepped into an area other less eloquent Australian politicians have always avoided. Unfortunately, Robert Doyle's distaste appears to go little further than a fear that bad haircuts and nasal vowels will scare shoppers from the CBD.

Since his statement, there has been a wail of complaint, particularly from the Herald Sun and its readers. No surprise there. The suggestion was even raised that to be anything but a bogan commits that other great sin: being un-Australian.

Unfortunately, this might be right. The problem with boganism is not with stubby coolers, torn flannelette or the preferred model Commodore, or that bogans might not like opera: boganism represents a problem with more far-reaching consequences for this country.

While Doyle has been a teacher in a past life, his most notable teaching experience was at that bastion of masculine privilege Scotch College. The real impact of boganism is not felt by the likes of he; it is felt by his maligned colleagues in the tougher schools of the state system.

Much attention is aimed at failings of the state school system. Politicians of both sides find it easy to imply poor teaching is responsible for the weakness of this sector and the drift to private schools.

Sure, there are lousy teachers in the state system - and in private schools. But what no politician is criticising, at least not in public, is that a large part of the education problem for Australia's working class lies in lousy attitudes in the home.

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/the-perils-of-boganism-are-home-grown-20090113-7q2e.html?page=-1>

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Whatever happened to the Education revolution?

Anna Patty, The Age, February 2, 2009

The quip has been doing the rounds since the Big Apple's education chief was invited to Australia. Having New York lecture us on how to run an education system was like Eric the Eel teaching Ian Thorpe to swim.

Senior education bureaucrats in NSW and teacher unions were amazed at the way the Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, was so quick to embrace the New York City schools chancellor, Joel Klein, and his reforms.

Australia blitzes the US and Britain in international literacy and numeracy results, leaving many educationists wondering what they could possibly gain by following New York's example.

Gillard's backing of Klein has sealed the disappointment felt by many who are still waiting for any real sign of the much anticipated education revolution to materialise after more than a year of the Rudd Government.

This disappointment extends to Labor's adoption of the Howard government's policies on school reporting, private school funding and inadequate resourcing for public schools.

Read more at <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2009/02/01/1233423045542.html>

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PUBLIC / PRIVATE

Parents abandoning public schools

Farrah Tomazin, The Age, January 30, 2009

MANY parents are abandoning public education, with the number of students enrolling in private schools continuing to outstrip enrolments in government schools.

Secondary school enrolments grew by 13,569 between August 2007 and August last year, but most of those students - almost 12,000 - opted for independent or Catholic schools instead of the public system, according to data released yesterday by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

The data represents a trend in education over the past decade: the government school system has grown by 1 per cent since 1998 while the non-government sector has grown by 21.9 per cent.

Educators warned yesterday that more parents would flock to private schools - and that public education, which caters for 64 per cent of the nation's students, would become increasingly residual - unless state and federal governments provided more investment and support.

"We should be worried about this because, in the end, it's socially divisive - we're creating a class system," said Melbourne University professor of post-compulsory education and training Richard Teese.

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/national/parents-abandoning-public-schools-20090129-7t2z.html>

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Private schools feel the squeeze

Anna Patty, Sydney Morning Herald, February 6, 2009

PUBLIC high schools are reporting large increases in enrolments as the financial crisis puts pressure on family budgets and parents seek better opportunities for their children.

Some public schools have reported enrolling an extra 40 new students this term who had previously attended independent or Catholic schools.

A survey of schools by the NSW Secondary Principals Council provides the first clear evidence that the economic downturn is influencing family decisions on education.

Some principals reported that enrolments had increased by an average of 25 students between October and February.

Of the 96 schools that have so far responded to the survey, 84, or 88 per cent, said the majority of their extra enrolments had come from Catholic and independent schools.

And the proportion of new enrolments in year 11 was higher than year 7.

Read more at <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/private-schools-feel-the-squeeze/2009/02/05/1233423405297.html>

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Private schools seize homes over fees

Matt Buchanan and Heath Gilmore, Sydney Morning Herald, February 7, 2009

EVERY week parents of private school students are losing their homes to bankruptcy actions taken by cash-strapped schools that can no longer wait for overdue fees.

There had been a 25 per cent increase in schools pursuing debtors to bankruptcy in the past year, said Roger Mendelson, the chief executive of Prushka, a debt collection agency that represents more than 400 private schools.

He said that as a result, "across the nation a few homes every week" were sold by trustees.

Mr Mendelson said the number would undoubtedly grow. "Schools are tightening their attitudes. Previously schools were prepared to carry debt and to put up with parents who had made promises and paid small amounts on the drip feed ...

"There's been quite a change with private schools finding it hard to balance the budget."

Read more at <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/schools-seize-homes-over-fees/2009/02/06/1233423496687.html>

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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

We want to know the basics, say preps

Caroline Milburn, The Age, February 6, 2009

Prep children believe they should be taught to recognise numbers, letters and the sounds letters make before they start school.

A study examining the opinions of preps reveals that children rate prior knowledge of the alphabet and other basic academic skills as crucial in helping them adapt to school.

The findings are likely to cause educators to rethink how they prepare kindergarten children for school.

The study's author, Dr Kay Margetts, an expert on transition to school, says previous research that surveyed parents and teachers about the challenges children face starting school had not identified basic literacy knowledge as an important issue.

"None of the adults in my research have expressed concern about children knowing the sounds of the alphabet and numbers before they start school. But in children's minds it seems to be a very big deal," says Dr Margetts, an associate professor in early childhood studies at Melbourne University's Graduate School of Education.

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/we-want-to-know-the-basics-say-preps-20090206-7zeo.html?page=-1>

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REMUNERATING TEACHERS

Top teachers rewarded in new pay scheme

Farrah Tomazin, The Age, February 9, 2009

TEACHERS will be required to meet new national standards and may soon have to prove how they have upgraded their skills or boosted students' results as a condition of merit-based pay.

In what is expected to pave the way for a long-awaited overhaul of salary structures in schools, state and federal governments have moved to create a new career framework designed to reward top teachers, raise the status of the profession and improve teaching quality in the classroom.

The changes - which will be discussed at the Council of Australian Governments later this year - are expected to provide national consistency in the stages of a teacher's career: from graduate-level teachers, to competent, accomplished and leading teachers.

If endorsed, those who reach "accomplished" teacher status - by proving to an independent panel how they have improved the quality of their work and lifted students' results - could eventually be eligible for merit-based pay, a move that would enhance career progression for the nation's 415,000 public and private school teachers.

"It's an approach to performance pay based on knowledge and skill," said Dr Lawrence Ingvarson, a teaching expert with the Australian Council for Education Research, which has been commissioned by education ministers to create the new system.

"Our job is to come up with a nationally consistent framework for giving recognition to accomplished and leading teachers, and career progression will depend on whether you meet these standards of professional performance," he said.

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/top-teachers-rewarded-in-new-pay-scheme-20090208-8111.html>

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TERTIARY EDUCATION

Uni boss warns against vouchers

Heath Gilmore, Sydney Morning Herald, February 9, 2009

SCIENCE, teaching and nursing courses were in serious danger of disappearing with the unfettered introduction of a proposed student voucher system, the University of NSW vice-chancellor, Professor Fred Hilmer, has warned.

He said the recommendation, contained in the Bradley review into higher education, posed hidden dangers for higher education.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, and other members of the Group of Eight universities meet in Sydney early next week. Ms Gillard began a series of six discussions last week so universities and other stakeholders can respond before the Government's official response to the review next month.

"Rapid changes in regulation can have unintended consequences," Professor Hilmer said. "Introduced in isolation, a voucher system using the current funding by discipline model could mean an acceleration in business studies, for example, but spell the end of less popular disciplines such as science, teaching and nursing."

He said the voucher system should be introduced in stages and linked to other funding mechanisms such as uncapped course fees. The voucher system alone operating as the main funding system could lead to huge and uncontrollable shifts in student enrolment patterns.

Read more at <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/uni-boss-warns-against-vouchers/2009/02/08/1234027855707.html>

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Too rapid a move in the right direction

Paul Clark, Sydney Morning Herald, February 9, 2009

THE Bradley report for the first time seeks to set real targets for higher education enrolments by 2020.

The core national target, which essentially sets the size of the system, is that 40 per cent of Australians aged 25 to 34 should attain a degree by 2020.

In 2006 about 29 per cent of this population group held a degree, so there has to be significant growth in enrolments to achieve the target.

Some of this growth will be supplied by the increasing numbers of private providers entering the market.

The regulatory environment needed to ensure that their degrees are of the same standard as others is addressed through a recommendation that the Commonwealth assume full responsibility for tertiary education and training.

Most of the growth will, of course, come through the expansion of the present universities.

The Bradley report proposes that this be achieved through a student-driven entitlement or "voucher" system.

What this really means is that each university can decide how many students it wants to enrol in various disciplines, and it can then seek to attract those students.

Read more at <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/too-rapid-a-move-in-the-right-direction/2009/02/08/1234027855725.html>

Professor Paul Clark is vice-chancellor of Southern Cross University.

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Bipartisan approach is necessary to maintain our academic edge

Michael Spence, Sydney Morning Herald, February 7, 2009

The global financial crisis demands both short term and long term responses. The higher education sector, representing 1 million students and staff, has a crucial role to play in Australia's recovery.

In the short term, important infrastructure projects for education and research are a part of the Federal Government's stimulus to the economy. The University of Sydney is using this money for the essential modernisation of research and teaching facilities. And that is a wise investment.

In teaching alone the education sector's \$13 billion international export contribution to the economy will be vital in helping us fight this downturn. The early signs are that education may remain one of our more resilient export industries. Investment that helps maintain the quality of the education on offer here is to be commended.

But what of the long term? The higher education sector has an even more important role to play in building for Australia's future. That must not be forgotten as we focus on our current challenges, or we will be selling our children short.

Read more at <http://www.smh.com.au/news/opinion/bipartisan-approach-is-necessary-to-maintain-our-academic-edge/2009/02/06/1233423497141.html>

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AWARDS & PRIZES

Australian Rural Education Awards 2009

The Australian Rural Education Award has been awarded annually since 1994 to an institution, organisation or industry to recognise excellence in rural education.

Eligibility to apply includes a school, community group or other institution that can demonstrate a commitment to rural education via a project or initiative that expands education opportunities for rural communities.

Nominations close 31 May 2009

Further details – including previous years' winners – at: <http://www.spera.edu.au>

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Australian Museum Eureka Science Prizes 2009

2009 is the 20th year of the Australian Museum Eureka Science Prizes - and we would like you to help us celebrate.

We are inviting primary, secondary school students and their teachers from across Australia to enter to win a share of \$30,000 worth of cash and prizes, and to make this coming year's entries the best ever!

The 2009 Eureka school prizes include:

- Macquarie University Eureka Schools Science Prize for Action Against Climate Change (secondary students years 7 – 10)
- University of Sydney Sleek Geeks Science Eureka Prize (primary and secondary students)
- University of Technology, Sydney Eureka Prize for Science Teaching (secondary teachers)
- Australian Museum Eureka Prizes People's Choice Award

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

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AROUND THE STATES & TERRITORIES

ACT: \$45m super school gives students a taste of the future

Emily Sherlock, Canberra Times, 2/02/2009

Students will get a chance to experience the "future" of ACT schools when Kingsford Smith School in Holt starts lessons for the first time today.

The keys to the \$45million P-10 school were handed over on Friday and today the "super school" will welcome 796 students up to Year 7.

A lack of enrolments for other grades will mean year groups will be progressively added to the school each year until 2012.

Education Minister Andrew Barr said the new school was a "benchmark" for future schools in the ACT.

"These are fantastic facilities, there is not another one like it in the territory," he said.

"We will aim to improve on what we have here with the new P-10 school in Tuggeranong, which will open in 2011, and the Gungahlin College."

The school has a campus-like feel and when full will accommodate 1100 students and 110 staff.

There is an early-childhood wing, facilities for children with special needs and dedicated primary and high school areas.

Read more at <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/news/local/news/general/45m-super-school-gives-students-a-taste-of-the-future/1421781.aspx>

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NSW: Public students miss out

Rachel Browne, Sydney Morning Herald, February 8, 2009

THE state's multibillion-dollar education budget is in disarray because funding is based on enrolment figures that are up to six months out of date.

The Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of NSW and the Opposition want more accurate auditing of student numbers as pupils switch from private to public education amid economic decline.

NSW Secondary Principals Council figures reveal some public schools were enrolling up to 40 more students this term who had previously attended non-government schools. But the bulk of school funding is based on a student census done last August.

A spokeswoman for the Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations, Sharon Johnson, said such audits should be conducted every term to ensure schools were adequately funded.

"Otherwise there is no way of knowing whether the enrolments match the funding," she said. "The money needs to follow the students immediately."

Read more at <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/public-students-miss-out/2009/02/07/1233423559148.html>

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NT: Education & Health ministers dumped

Tara Ravens, Sydney Morning Herald, February 4, 2009

Two senior ministers in the Northern Territory have been stripped of their high-profile portfolios in a major cabinet reshuffle, almost six months after Labor won government.

Aboriginal MP and Deputy Chief Minister Marion Scrymgour has lost the education portfolio and Chris Burns has been dumped from health.

NT Chief Minister Paul Henderson denied the pair had been demoted as he announced the changes at a press conference in Darwin.

But controversy has surrounded the handling of both portfolios since the Labor government was returned to power in August last year.

Ms Scrymgour had been widely criticised for her failure to address appalling literacy and numeracy results, particularly in remote communities, and her handling of a wage dispute with teachers.

Read more at <http://news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-national/nt-health-education-ministers-dumped-20090204-7xe9.html>

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QLD: Children sue each other over schoolyard injuries

Paul Weston, Courier Mail, February 08, 2009

CHILDREN are being sued after violent incidents in classrooms because state schools have failed to introduce personal accident insurance, parents claim.

An Education Department spokesman said 26 claims for student personal injuries had been filed in Queensland since July last year. Last financial year, 73 claims were made, compared to 63 in 2006-07 and 90 claims in 2005-06.

The spokesman said: "When a student is injured at a state school as a result of an accident, all costs associated with the injury – including the medical costs – are the responsibility of the parent or caregiver."

Almost two Queenslanders every week threaten to sue the Government following injuries to children sustained at schools according to figures from Education Queensland.

However, when state schools refuse to pay compensation for complaints legal action often begins between the individual students and their families.

Read more at <http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,,25020336-23272,00.html>

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QLD: Schoolkids may wear reflective safety vests to and from school

Rosemary Odgers & Tanya Chilcott, Courier Mail, February 06, 2009

QUEENSLAND students may soon be wearing reflective safety vests to ride or walk to school under a plan being investigated by the State Government.

Amid claims that parents and bus drivers were deliberately flouting road laws outside schools, Education Minister Rod Welford confirmed the Government was considering the vest rollout to make children more visible.

"It's a safety issue. Obviously, the vests would be for kids who ride their bikes to school and maybe younger ones who walk to school and have to cross crossings or roads," Mr Welford said.

Parent Martin Morrow, whose daughter Tajjla is a Year 6 student at Hilder Road State School, said he thought safety vests were a "fantastic idea". "It will make her stand out on the road a little bit more. Tajjla likes to ride to school most days. It would be great peace of mind for me," he said yesterday.

His concerns were backed by authorities, who accused drivers of putting deadlines and laziness above children's safety. Parking in bus zones, speeding and leaving cars in designated drop-off and pick-up zones were commonplace, police and local councillors warned.

Read more at <http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,,25018938-3102,00.html>

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SA: SACE boost for SA students

Media Statement, 4 February 2009

Fifty-five high schools will share in \$1.9m in grants and support this year to introduce innovative programs that better prepare students for life beyond school.

Education Minister Jane Lomax-Smith says it's the second year of the Rann Government's School to Work initiative, which totals \$5.7m over three years.

The 55 Government, Catholic and Independent schools will introduce 64 programs (some schools are involved in more than one program) under the following School to Work banners

Read more at <http://www.premier.sa.gov.au/news.php?id=4291>

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VIC: Victoria bottom of class in education funding

Farrah Tomazin, The Age, January 31, 2009

VICTORIAN public schools have among the worst student-to-staff ratios in the country, retention rates have fallen, and children are getting less government funding for their education than any other state or territory.

As more than 800,000 students prepare to return to the classroom next week, new figures show Victoria was the only state to invest less than \$10,000 per student in 2006-07 - and cut its spending over the 12 months prior.

According to the figures, contained in the Productivity Commission's latest report into government services, Victorian schools received \$9,731 per student, down from \$9,851 the year before.

Year 10-12 retention rates also fell to 74.2 per cent in the past 12 months, according to the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics figures, while primary school student-to-staff ratios - 15.7 students for every teacher - are the second highest in the country after NSW.

The figures are an embarrassing blow for Premier John Brumby and Education Minister Bronwyn Pike, who repeatedly insist that education is their "number one priority".

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria-bottom-of-class-in-education-funding-20090130-7u14.html>

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VIC: Classrooms go green in local education revolution

Miki Perkins, The Age, January 29, 2009

WHEN principal Martin Culkin started at Dandenong High School a decade ago it was run to the old-fashioned "cells and bells" model. Students and their teachers sweltered in metal portables and were forced to move classrooms every hour when the bell rang.

Bullying - not to mention furtive smoking - was rife in the centralised toilet and locker area. But this term Dandenong will embark on a ground-breaking approach to education.

Classes of 50 students will be taken by teams of three teachers inside architecturally designed "green" buildings that use wind vents to circulate fresh air and stop the post-lunch slump.

At a cost of \$45 million, each of the seven new buildings will have water tanks, solar panels, wireless internet and will house 300 students - 50 from each level.

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/national/classrooms-go-green-in-local-education-revolution-20090128-7s0r.html>

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VIC: Draft papers urge school closures, mergers

Farrah Tomazin, The Age, February 3, 2009

VICTORIA'S education department is considering closing schools if they are found to be struggling because of falling enrolments, lack of programs or poor performance.

Despite the department insisting it does not shut down schools, documents obtained by The Age have flagged the option of closing or merging schools as part of a push to improve public education.

The documents outline a new system in which public schools will be assessed against a range of measures, such as demographic and enrolment trends, the state of a school's buildings, curriculum standards, and how well the school can survive for at least 12 to 14 years.

Each school will be ranked against three categories: having "no issues"; in need of "monitoring"; or in "critical" condition.

But the department's draft network planning provision guidelines also suggest shutting down or restructuring struggling schools as an "alternative provision option" for the education system.

Removing the principal, upgrading buildings, or sharing resources with other schools are also canvassed.

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/national/draft-urges-school-closures-mergers-20090202-7vrm.html>

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VIC: Funding splurge fails to improve student results

Farrah Tomazin, The Age, February 5, 2009

VICTORIAN students' literacy and numeracy skills have barely improved - and in some cases, performance has slipped - despite taxpayers spending more than a billion dollars on school programs designed to lift results.

In a damning assessment of the education system, Victoria's Auditor-General has found that while some students have improved in reading, writing and maths - mostly in the early primary years - the gains are not sustained throughout their education or across age groups.

With the report finding that achievement was particularly bad among VCE students, Education Minister Bronwyn Pike yesterday conceded it was time to rethink the way literacy and numeracy programs were targeted. While the Government would not withdraw its efforts for students in prep to grade 2, more resources and attention would be placed on the later years to stop standards falling as students approached their VCE.

The figures come despite the Government ploughing more than \$1.1 billion into literacy and numeracy initiatives over the past six years.

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/funding-splurge-fails-to-improve-student-results-20090204-7xxf.html?page=-1>

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VIC: Schools to face strike teams

Farrah Tomazin, The Age, February 2, 2009

"STRIKE teams" will be sent into Victorian schools to identify weaknesses and demand change, under a State Government bid to boost the performance of the public education system.

Principals and teachers who fail to lift their game could be removed from their school under Education Minister Bronwyn Pike's push for schools to be more accountable.

As children return to school today, the Government will embark on a wave of changes designed to create stronger leadership in schools, a greater culture of expectations for students and more transparency for parents.

Under the changes, the Government has appointed an army of education officers - mostly ex-principals and teachers - whose job will be to enter schools, analyse their student performance data, identify strengths and weaknesses, and develop improvement plans.

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/national/schools-to-face-strike-teams-20090201-7usr.html>

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WA: Early intervention to improve literacy and numeracy levels

Media Statement, 2 February 2009

A new State Government strategy would see all Year One students assessed on literacy and numeracy when they start school.

The 'on-entry assessment' is the centrepiece of the \$3million second-stage of Education Minister Liz Constable's strategy to improve literacy and numeracy standards in Western Australian public schools.

It follows the December release of the first stage of the strategy - a comprehensive \$4.67million package of initiatives to provide resources and assistance to schools and teachers in the teaching of literacy and numeracy.

"This next phase of the strategy will focus on early intervention to ensure children entering Year One have the pre-requisites for literacy and numeracy, including such things as a good vocabulary and an ability to follow instructions," Dr Constable said.

"We know it is vital that students grasp these basics, and teachers will be provided with the resources to achieve this."

Read more at <http://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Lists/Statements/DispForm.aspx?ID=131238>

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REMINDERS

21 February - International Mother Language Day - <http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/language/index.html>

26-27 February - Victorian Indonesian Language Teachers Annual Conference - Melbourne, VIC - <http://www.mltav.asn.au/indonesian/content/view/146/163/>

2-5 March - BIG Skills Conference - Sydney Australia - http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/programmes_funding/programme_categories/Conferences/

16-18 March - IASTED International Conference on Web-based Education - Phuket, Thailand - <http://www.iasted.org/conferences/home-644.html>

21 March - Harmony Day - <http://www.harmony.gov.au>

23-26 March - International Conference on Computer Supported Education - Lisbon, Portugal - <http://www.csedu.org/CFP.htm>

3-5 April - WA Childcare and Early Childhood Education Conference - Perth, WA - <http://www.waecec.com.au/>

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

17-21 April - National Art Education Association National Convention - Minneapolis, USA - <http://www.naea-reston.org/convention.html>

21 May - Education 09 - London, UK - <http://www.govnet.co.uk/education/>

4-7 July - Contasta Science Education Conference - Launceston, TAS - <http://www.cdesign.com.au/conasta58>

5-8 July - World Conference on Higher Education - Paris, France - http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=56642&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

8-10 July - SPERA National Conference - Flinders University, SA - <http://www.spera.edu.au//conferences/callforpapers.pdf>

13-16 July - Conference of the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers - Fremantle, WA - <http://www.aamt.edu.au/2009-conference>

26-28 September - ACEL International Conference - Darwin, NT - <http://www.ancel.org.au/index.php?id=858>

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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.....

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

Linguascope

The most valuable resource for schools for French, German, Italian, Spanish or ESOL - Year 1 - 12

Registration to Linguascope gives teachers access to thousands of resources - and enables every student to access to games and activities at all levels when they login at school - or at home.

When teachers discover Linguascope, they never want to give it up! With a re-subscription rate of 99%, it shows the value to teachers across Australia – and worldwide.

Linguascope's clear instructions and attractive colourful graphics will ensure that the site is a hit with your students. Linguascope encourages them to log on at school and home giving them the opportunity to revise and do extra study at night or during their lunch break. Students using Linguascope are able to work at their own pace - and teachers love it:

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

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](http://www.lote-at-home.com.au) is an innovative way for parents to participate with their kids as they all learn a second language.

[LOTE@HOME](http://www.lote-at-home.com.au) 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 ten community languages.

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

Educational Experience

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.

Read more at <http://www.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)

Do you know of an event or resource that schools should know about? Email us at letters@acsso.org.au

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