



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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EDITORIAL COMMENT

WA Council of State School Organisations (WACSSO) secedes from national peak parent representative organisation (ACSSO)

The President of the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations (WACSSO) has written to the national peak parent representative body (ACSSO) to advise the decision of the WA Executive to resign from the National organisation.

Their decision is accepted with considerable regret, given the extent to which the transformative forces of change that will affect the learning and development context for every young Australian and their families and communities, are being shaped through national processes and discussions at the federal level.

Now more than ever is it important that parents, families and school communities maintain an effective two-way communication with these national processes of change, to ensure that the needs, priorities and expectations of all parents and families are consistently, comprehensively and inclusively given voice in federal-level consultations and federal processes of decision making.

It is of concern that the WACSSO Executive's decision risks the disconnection and exclusion of the public-school parents of WA from having equity of input into national decisions that will directly affect their children's futures.

In the meantime ACSSO will, of course, maintain all current or future subscriptions from WA school communities to our newsletters. Subscriptions are free and available to anyone interested in education – particularly to parents and families in school communities all around Australia.

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COMPARING SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

League Tables Campaign Update

Australian Education Union. 10 December 2009

Our campaign to stop schools being ranked in league tables is gathering momentum.

So far over 7,000 emails have been sent to Julia Gillard, Kevin Rudd and local MPs urging them to take action to protect students and teachers.

The evidence against league tables keeps piling up.

Watch our latest video with an Australian teacher who worked in New York warning about why we shouldn't follow their system of ranking schools on test results.

Read the recent letter that parents, teachers and principals sent to Julia Gillard urging her to take action and a recently published opinion piece.

Find the latest news on this issue from the Australian media.

Download one of our brochures that explains why we must stop league tables.

Read more at: http://www.forourfuture.org.au/15319_58495.8613.html

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Launch of the *My School* website in January 2010

Australian Curriculum Assessment & Reporting Authority, 14 December 2009

The *My School* website will provide profiles and data on students' performance within all Australian schools.

This information can be searched by location, sector or name. Each school will have a dedicated profile page displaying a range of information.

School results in the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) will be available for each school and can be compared with results in statistically similar schools across Australia.

To assist with the release of the website, ACARA has produced a number of resources that are available for download from the *My School* website.

Read more at: http://www.acara.edu.au/acara_update_14122009.html

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Principal autonomy needed for school reform

The Hon Christopher Pyne MP, Shadow Minister for Education, Apprenticeships and Training, 14 December 2009

The argument between the Government and the Education Union over transparency measures for school results misses the point of education reform, Christopher Pyne, Shadow Minister for Education said today.

"While Julia Gillard seems to see transparent reporting as an end in itself, and the Union seems fixated on protecting failing schools from scrutiny, neither seems interested in real reform to help improve our schools for all students," said Mr Pyne.

"In October the Government released the 'Principal Autonomy Research Project', which made 16 recommendations for increasing local autonomy for schools. Despite suggestions from Julia Gillard that this report was a fundamental part of the so-called 'Education Revolution', this has proven to be all talk."

Read more at: <http://www.liberal.org.au/news.php?id=4349>

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SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

Bring back school inspectors, says national teachers union

Justine Ferrari, The Australian, 14 December 2009

The Australian Education Union is advocating a system of regular assessments against a set of standards and then working with schools to improve their performance.

The system echoes the former system of inspectors run in many states, in which officials visited schools and observed classes in progress. In Britain, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills conducts and publishes detailed inspections on schools.

The AEU proposal is contained in a charter of school accountability which the union has drafted as part of its campaign against the publication of league tables ranking schools based on student test results.

The charter outlines 10 principles covering school accountability, improvement, assessment and reporting, enshrining the right of parents and the public to know how schools are performing and the obligations of teachers to collect data to judge their effectiveness.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/bring-back-school-inspectors-says-national-teachers-union/story-e6frg6nf-1225809983607>

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INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

Government encourages parents to participate in schools

Senator the Hon Mark Arbib, 14 December 2009

Minister for Employment Participation Mark Arbib today launched the 'Building Capacity in the Menindee Community' project to increase parental engagement in local schools.

Senator Arbib said the project was part of the Parental and Community Engagement program (PaCE) which was designed to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students, by increasing their parents' involvement in and contact with schools and education providers.

"We know that if kids are to succeed at school, then it's really important for parents and communities to be actively involved in their education.

As well as encouraging parents to "reach-in" to schools, the other objectives of the PaCE Program are to help Indigenous families and communities, to:

- build strong leadership that supports high expectations of Indigenous students' educational outcomes;
- support the establishment, implementation and/or ongoing progress of community-school partnership agreements; and
- support and reinforce children's learning at home.

Read entire release: http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Arbib/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_091215_092608.aspx

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RESEARCH

How Arts Training Improves Attention and Cognition

Michael I. Posner & Brenda Patoine, Dana Foundation, September 14, 2009

We know that the brain has a system of neural pathways dedicated to attention. We know that training these attention networks improves general measures of intelligence.

And we can be fairly sure that focusing our attention on learning and performing an art—if we practice frequently and are truly engaged—activates these same attention networks.

We therefore would expect focused training in the arts to improve cognition generally.

Some may construe this argument as a bold associative leap, but it's grounded in solid science.

The linchpin in this equation is the attention system. Attention plays a crucial role in learning and memory, and its importance in cognitive performance is undisputed. If you really want to learn something, pay attention! We all know this intuitively, and plenty of strong scientific data back it up.

Read entire paper: <http://www.dana.org/news/cerebrum/detail.aspx?id=23206>

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Three Whiteboards, Three Staff, One Classroom: A journey introducing team teaching in an ICT-rich learning environment

Research eLert, Vic Department of Education & Early Childhood Development, December 2009

Using a refurbished metal craft/graphics room, three interactive whiteboards (IWBs) five desktop PCs, five laptops and a multimedia lab, Dimboola Memorial Secondary College set out to discover if team teaching in an ICT-rich environment could improve student engagement and learning.

The innovation had a strong data basis as the college wanted to track improvement in a measurable way. The leadership team modelled the use of ICT and stressed its importance in bringing about changes and improvements. Support from the school community was gained through an emphasis on teaching and learning that identified student improvement as its central goal.

Focusing on integrating technology into teaching and learning, teachers became proficient in the use of the IWBs before they were installed.

They undertook professional development in small groups in an environment of trust which encouraged them to take risks.

Read more of this and other education research reports at:
http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/publ/research/nws/Research_elert_December_09.pdf

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Towards a 21st century national software infrastructure for education

Strategic ICT Advisory Service, DEEWR, 14 December 2009

From the Foreword to the Report by Greg Black, CEO, Education.au:

Several significant current trends are providing strong imperatives for Australian policy makers to seriously consider Australia's national software infrastructure for education, including the 21st century learning agenda, issues of equity and social inclusion, Australia's innovation, collaboration and productivity agendas, and the constant emergence of new technologies.

This investigation develops the case for acceleration of Australia's progress towards a 21st century education software infrastructure.

The report presents analyses of the policy drivers outlined above and of the current state of Australia's national education software infrastructure. On the basis of those analyses, recommendations are made for actions that will accelerate the development of Australia's education software infrastructure towards a situation in which the policy drivers identified are addressed, and emerging issues and agendas can be more efficiently tackled in future.

Australia's federation is a key consideration for policy makers in education, and recommendations from this investigation are appropriately framed to build on work already carried out in the states and territories.

This investigation is one of the series commissioned by the Australian Government's Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) as part of the Strategic ICT Advisory Service (SICTAS) project.

I commend this report and its recommendations to the reader.

Access the report online: http://www.educationau.edu.au/sites/default/files/SICTAS_sinf.pdf

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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Child care to get compulsory new national standards from July 2010

Jessica Marszalek, the Age, December 7, 2009 (AAP)

A compulsory set of childcare standards including lower staff-to-child ratios and a quality rating system for parents will be brought in nationwide next year.

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced the federal government would spend \$61 million between 2010/11 to 2013/14 to support the new standards following a Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting in Brisbane on Monday.

Mr. Rudd said the new standards included lower staff-to-child ratios and a new qualification requirement for early childhood education workers.

From 2012 there will be a mandatory one adult per four babies and from 2016 a requirement for one adult per five 25-to-35-month-olds and one adult for every 11 children aged from 36 months to school age.

Read entire article: <http://news.theage.com.au/breaking-news-national/child-care-to-get-new-national-standards-20091207-kf5f.html>

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The importance of investment in early childhood

Hon Julia Gillard MP, Media Conference, 10 December 2009

The Australian Early Development Index was released today. It is now available online. People can look at the national results and they can look at their community profiles.

This is a measure of children's development.

Amazingly - I think it is, just amazing - around 260,000 children during the months of May and June and July this year had a population health index measure taken by their teachers. More than 15,000 teachers participated in this process.

That information has been brought together.

It's the first time ever that we've had such a complete national data set on the skills and development of children in their first year at school.

Read more at http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Transcripts/Pages/Article_091214_151549.aspx

For further details and to access the Report, visit the AEDI Website:
http://www.rch.org.au/aedi/index.cfm?doc_id=13051

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Five-year-olds vulnerable in ghettos - and in some wealthy suburbs

Natasha Bitá & Natasha Robinson, the Australian, 11 December 2009

POVERTY and unemployment are creating ghettos of under-achieving children on the fringes of Australia's big cities, the first national census of five-year-olds reveals.

Kids growing up in suburbs with high unemployment and low income are generally falling behind in their physical, social and emotional development at twice the rate of children from elite inner-city enclaves.

But even in some silvertail suburbs, an alarming proportion of children who started school this year are "developmentally vulnerable", the Australian Early Development Index reveals.

In Perth's exclusive Peppermint Grove - where the median family income of \$2870 a week is more than double the national average and unemployment sits at 3 per cent - 17.6 per cent of children are classified as vulnerable in at least one area of development.

Twelve per cent of five-year-olds are behind in their physical development, and 6 per cent are behind in terms of their emotional maturity, cognitive or communication skills.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/five-year-olds-vulnerable-in-ghettos-and-wealthy-suburbs/story-e6frg6nf-1225809217274>

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HIGHER EDUCATION

Poor students among top performers at elite universities

Luke Slattery, the Australian, 9 December 2009

STUDENTS from poor backgrounds are less likely to attend the nation's prestige universities - but those who do are likelier to finish their degrees, according to a report by the Group of Eight.

The report, released earlier this week, will inform a Go8 equity strategy that is being hammered out in response to the federal government's call for a boost in the proportion of undergraduates from low socioeconomic backgrounds to 20 per cent by 2020.

The report found 72.4 per cent of applicants to Go8 universities achieved an equivalent national tertiary entrance rank score of more than 80.05 last year, and of these only 10.4 per cent were from low socioeconomic backgrounds. But the imbalance was corrected to some extent by better retention and academic success rates for students from these backgrounds.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/poor-students-top-performers-at-elite-unis/story-e6frqcx-1225808382589>

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Discussion paper on higher education performance funding released

Hon Julia Gillard MP, Media Release, 11 December 2009

The Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, has today released the discussion paper which invites Universities to comment on the Government's plans to link higher education funding to University performance.

The An Indicator Framework for Higher Education Performance Funding paper will outline the framework that will be used to determine the allocation of in \$135 million per annum in performance funding.

Ms Gillard said that the Government believes that Australia needs to enhance the quality and performance of its higher education system if it is to prosper into the future. In particular, the tied funding will be used to encourage universities to raise their efforts on teaching quality and the Government will be looking closely at indicators that drive improvement in this area.

The Government welcomes comment from all interested parties on the questions and issues raised in the paper.

A copy of the discussion paper can be found at: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/tahes>.

Read entire release: http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_091211_093627.aspx

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Plan to link uni funds to targets and outcomes

Andrew Trounson, the Australian, 12 December 2009

UNIVERSITY students could be made to sit a generic skills test to assess what value has been added by their tutors as part of Education Minister Julia Gillard's plans to link university funding to performance targets from 2012.

Other performance indicators floated in a discussion paper released yesterday include reducing first-year drop-out rates, improving performance in student-satisfaction surveys, and increasing the number of poor and disadvantaged students at universities.

The paper suggests assessing teaching quality by using the Graduate Skills Assessment test, which is a multiple choice and written test developed in 1999. Students could take the test in the first year of study and again in their final year on attributes such as critical thinking, problem-solving, written communication and interpersonal understanding.

The proposal follows the introduction of national literacy and numeracy tests in primary and secondary schools to measure school performance.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/plan-to-link-uni-funds-to-targets/story-e6frg6nf-1225809544947>

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Draft guideline papers released for comment: low-SES and higher education student places

Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, 15 December 2009

Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, today released draft guidelines to boost participation in higher education and a discussion paper on the best approach to defining and measuring socio-economic status of students.

The paper - Measuring the Socio-economic Status of Higher Education Students - seeks the best approach to an improved definition of SES which can then be used to distribute funds under the HEPPP.

The Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education recommended that the current method of measurement be reviewed to ensure focus on the individual circumstances of each student. Development of a reliable measure of higher education students' socio-economic status will help identify and support these students and improve participation rates.

- Draft guidelines for the HEPPP are now available for comment at: www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Programs/Equity/Pages/HEEquitySupportProgram.aspx and submissions are due by 5 pm (AEST) on 22 January 2010.
- Interested parties are invited to comment on the SES discussion paper, which is available at: www.deewr.gov.au/tahes. Submissions are due by 5 pm (AEST) on 5 February 2010.

Read entire release: http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_091215_102745.aspx

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AROUND THE STATES & TERRITORIES

ACT: Primary school kids give PM a powerful climate change lesson

Sydney Morning Herald, December 14, 2009 (AAP)

Canberra school children have urged Kevin Rudd to do all he can to stop climate change - including walk to work. The prime minister met with youngsters from the O'Connor Cooperative School on Monday, hours before leaving for global climate change talks in Copenhagen.

They presented him with a book of suggestions to help stop rising greenhouse gas emissions harming the environment.

Some children called for massive cuts to carbon emissions, others the rollout of electric cars.

But Nicholas, seven, had a much simpler idea. He encouraged people to walk to work, especially Mr. Rudd, because he lives so close to Parliament House.

Read entire article: <http://news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-national/kids-give-pm-a-climate-change-lesson-20091214-kr8i.html>

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NSW: Now you can go to work, and study at Kempsey High School

Macleay Argus, 11 December 2009

FLEXIBILITY is crucial to the success of a new vocational education program at Kempsey High. The program, which will run out of the school's new Enterprise Centre, aims to give year 11 and 12 students the opportunity to complete their HSC studies and work part-time.

The program will offer vocational courses not previously available in Kempsey such as construction and primary industries, and will work on a flexible timetable that suits the students and their employers.

Previously students have had to travel away to complete such studies, with some employers reluctant to take them on because of the lack of flexibility in their timetables.

Coordinator Kevin Sinclair said the aim of the program was the retention of students who would otherwise leave school to pursue employment or other forms of education before completing their HSC studies. The introduction of the program coincides with the State Government's declaration that it would raise the school leaving age to 17 in 2010.

Kempsey High has spent five years fundraising to build the centre, while the Federal Government has lent some support through its Building the Education Revolution program.

Read entire article: <http://www.macleayargus.com.au/news/local/news/general/now-you-can-go-to-work-and-study-at-school/1702377.aspx>

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NSW: Funding for healthy living and eating program at Delegate school

ABC News, 10 December 2009

Students at a New South Wales Monaro primary school are soon to swap their textbooks for gardening manuals and cooking aprons, thanks to a Federal Government grant.

The Delegate school has received \$60,000 to set up an organic garden and build a new kitchen under the healthy eating program being rolled-out across Australia.

The school's Principal, Carol Sellers, says the kitchen is due for completion in May, just in time for the first crop of fresh vegetables from the school garden.

Ms Sellers says it will be a rewarding program for students - and hopes to involve the Delegate community.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/12/10/2767309.htm?site=southeastnsw>

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NSW: In education, one size does not always fit all

Bernadette Moloney, Sydney Morning Herald, 9 December 2009

Federal Education Minister Julia Gillard announced in April that the Education Department would be delivering grants totalling \$277.5 million to be spent on "maintenance and minor building works" in NSW.

The list includes a host of NSW's elite schools receiving money for car parks, music rooms and so on. A spokeswoman for Gillard said "in the education revolution, we are not discriminating against school sectors. Our aim is to ensure that every school is a great school".

Meanwhile, Kingsdene Special School is closing due to lack of funds.

The children currently at Kingsdene have severe to profound intellectual disability and challenging behaviour. They board from Monday to Friday during the school term – home for weekends and school holidays. Part of the mission statement of Kingsdene is to give young families the support they need to stay together.

What will happen to the children of Kingsdene and their families when this school closes? There is no similar government service, nothing that comes even close. There are similar services in other countries, but not in Australia.

Kingsdene is not a crisis-driven patch-up service. It prevents crisis. Kingsdene takes the most difficult students of all and provides a genuinely useful education and respite service.

Read entire article: <http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/contributors/in-education-one-size-does-not-always-fit-all-20091209-kjps.html>

Bernadette Moloney is the mother of Kingsdene student Charley.

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NT: Working Towards Better Early Development Outcomes

Dr Chris Burns, Minister for Education & Training, 10 December 2009

The Henderson Government will continue to target its investment to improve the early development of children across the Territory.

Results from the first Australia Early Development Index (AEDI) were released today by the Australian Government and found that Indigenous children from remote areas are more likely to have developmental issues.

The AEDI surveyed Australian children in their first year of full-time school, providing information on the health and development of children. It measured five areas of early childhood development; physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, and communication skills and general knowledge.

"We want our kids to have the best start in life and the Territory Government provides significant investment in early childhood development and the AEDI results will help us continue this work," Minister for Education and Training Dr Burns said.

Read more at: <http://newsroom.nt.gov.au/index.cfm?fuseaction=viewRelease&id=6376&d=5>

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QLD: AEDI results show Queensland's young children among most vulnerable

Emma Chalmers, Courier Mail, December 10, 2009

QUEENSLAND children are among the least prepared for school and almost a third are considered developmentally vulnerable when they start grade 1, a landmark new study has revealed.

A new suite of statistics shows the state is failing many of its little ones, with 12,000 children missing out on a pre-school education.

The Australian Early Development Index reveals almost 30 per cent of Queensland kids were developmentally vulnerable in at least one area compared with 23 per cent of children nationally.

It shows Queensland has a higher proportion of grade ones with poorer language skills, general knowledge and emotional maturity than all other states, except the Northern Territory.

Read entire article: <http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,,26465096-3102,00.html>

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QLD: Teachers told to stick to letters on grading students

Justine Ferrari, the Australian, 11 December 2009

NUMERICAL marks are effectively banned in Queensland, with the state's curriculum authority saying they "disguise the strengths and weaknesses" of a student's work and foster a false sense of objectivity and precision. Instead, teachers must assign a letter grade from A to E based on "a global retrospective review" of a student's performance.

The grade is judged against standards set out in the syllabus and the "pattern of evidence" of a student's achievement, rather than a tally of grades or marks.

The Queensland Studies Authority says marks encourage "a quantitative notion of grading" that may not reflect quality or have any reference to the syllabus standards, and that it encourages comparisons between students. "Numerical marking systems enjoy a status that is higher than they strictly deserve," it says in a discussion paper.

While the QSA says the syllabus is "silent" on the use of marks and teachers may use them if they wish, a group of maths and science teachers argue numerical marks are effectively banned.

Co-ordinated by James Cook University physics professor Peter Ridd, the group of about 130 teachers is establishing a website in the new year as part of a campaign against the assessment procedures.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/teachers-told-to-stick-to-letters/story-e6frg6nf-1225809219480>

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SA: Future for Spencer Gulf & Outback Australian Technical College

Hon Julia Gillard MP & Hon Jane Lomax-Smith, SA Minister for Education, 15/12/09

The Australian and South Australian governments today announced that the Australian Technical College (ATC) – Spencer Gulf and Outback will be integrated into a new school based program.

The Minister for Education Julia Gillard and South Australian State Minister for Education Jane Lomax-Smith today announced that a new Resources and Energy Program will be developed and administered by the South Australian Government.

The program will focus on the skill needs of the resource and energy industry, and will build on the relationships and programs developed by the ATC. It will work with industry and partner schools to expand the education and training pathways available to students in the Spencer Gulf and Outback region of South Australia. An Advisory Committee, comprising local industry and employer representation, will be established to guide the directions and outcomes of the program.

Read entire release: http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_091215_113401.aspx

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SA: Adelaide schools fight energy drinks

Elissa Doherty, Sunday Mail, December 13, 2009

PARENTS will be warned of the dangerous effects of energy drinks in a bid to stop rising numbers of students bringing them to school.

The announcement comes amid reports children are drinking high-caffeine energy drinks such as Red Bull, V and Mother before playing sport, believing it will improve their performance.

Education Minister Jane Lomax-Smith said a warning about the dangers of the drinks would be distributed in a fact sheet to schools and parents at the start of the 2010 school year.

High-caffeine drinks and iced coffee are banned from sale in school canteens and vending machines.

But some schools have told the Sunday Mail they are confiscating the drinks from students on school grounds, with some pupils even drinking them instead of eating breakfast.

Read entire article: <http://www.news.com.au/adelaidenow/story/0,,26477301-2682,00.html>

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TAS: Teachers renew campaign against education changes

ABC News, December 10, 2009

The Education Union in Tasmania says its campaign to restore the old college education system will target all three political parties in the lead-up to the state election.

The union says 91 per cent of members at stop-work meetings supported the roll-back of the Tasmania Tomorrow system, while 89 per cent said they wanted TAFE colleges restored.

The recently-returned President, Leanne Wright, says the union has now formed a campaign planning group. She says there is nothing wrong with the colleges and TAFE.

"TAFE was a nationally-recognised successful brand and that's been lost and needs to be regained and the college system serves 16 to 18 year-old students very well in that it provides a very supportive environment for them and a comprehensive education where they're not having to make choices too early," she said. "There's a message there not just for the government but for the other parties to say where they stand on this issue."

The group's also considered a communications plan to inform the public about teachers' opposition to the Polytechnic and Academy.

The campaign is expected to hit its peak in February just weeks out from polling day on March the 20th.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/12/10/2767091.htm>

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TAS: Extra teachers for special schools

ABC News, 15 December 2009

Tasmania's special schools have received a funding boost. The Tasmanian Government is investing an extra \$930,000 a year to provide 10 new teachers.

Tasmania has three main special schools catering for about 150 students with disabilities.

The Premier and Education Minister, David Bartlett, says the extra money has been cut from bureaucracy and re-invested in front-line services - "[Thereby] ensuring that parents who choose special schools over inclusion in regular schools have a fantastic level of service...able to provide more in the way of art, in music, in PE, for special needs students."

Mr Bartlett today toured the new southern campus for children with disabilities. The revamped Hazelwood school on Hobart's eastern shore will open next year but the cost has blown out from \$3 million \$4.6 million. Mr Bartlett is not concerned, saying he made a promise to parents.

"We wouldn't be penny-pinching or cutting corners. It has cost a bit extra," he said.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/12/15/2772079.htm>

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VIC: Mother hits out at school bus decision

Bendigo Advertiser, 12 Dec 2009

AN Epsom mother is devastated by an Education Department decision that will see her disabled daughter travel three hours a day to attend school.

Julie Whittle's 14-year-old daughter, Natalie, will need to catch the bus at 7.30am to travel the 15km to Bendigo Special Developmental School.

Natalie currently attends the school five days a week, is picked up at 8.10am and spends an hour and 40 minutes on the bus each day.

Ms Whittle said a new bus route next year would mean the students would stop at Kalliana to pick up students from other buses and Natalie would spend three hours on the bus each day, to travel from her home in Strickland Street, Epsom, to the school in Lockwood Road, Kangaroo Flat.

Read more at: <http://www.bendigoadvertiser.com.au/news/local/news/general/mother-hits-out-at-school-bus-decision/1703005.aspx?src=rss>

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WA: WA child care centres among worst in the country, audit shows

Jessica Strutt & Neale Prior, West Australian December 7, 2009

WA child-care centres are among the worst in the country, with a new audit revealing they breach health and safety rules regularly.

One in three fails to keep potentially dangerous products, plants and objects out of reach of children and one in four does not ensure that buildings and equipment are safe.

The damning results, obtained from the Federal Government's child-care watchdog, show WA ranked alongside South Australia as the worst performing State and only better than the Northern Territory.

Of the 115 WA long day-care centres inspected by the National Childcare Accreditation Council between January and June, 24 per cent breached the rules by failing to control the spread of infectious diseases and not keeping records of children's immunisations.

Read entire article: <http://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/a/-/wa/6554887/wa-child-care-among-worst/>

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WA: Non-government school fees soaring

Bethany Hiatt, the West Australian, December 11, 2009

Fees at Perth's most prestigious private schools are soaring at more than five times the inflation rate despite the recent economic downturn.

The cost of sending a child to some of the city's elite colleges will break the \$18,000 barrier for the first time next year, with Year 12 tuition fees rising about 7 per cent.

It is understood the percentage increase is likely to be even higher at some schools which have not yet revealed their 2010 fees.

Fees at elite private schools are more than 20 times the top amount that parents pay at Shenton College, WA's top ranked public school.

Read entire article: <http://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/a/-/breaking/6573645/private-school-fees-soar/>

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WA: Esperance Anglican school condition lifted

Julia Kogan, Esperance Express, 11 December 2009

TEARS of joy enveloped Esperance Anglican Community School (EACS) parents and students when the Education Minister, Dr Elizabeth Constable, lifted a previous condition - thus to allow Years 11 and 12 to be taught at the school.

The minister's decision was made after receiving recommendations from an independent panel. The timing could not have been better as the school was holding its annual awards night.

School principal Ian McKay was overjoyed that the school would now be able to function as a full high school. "This is such terrific news for us and for Esperance," he said.

Education Minister Dr Elizabeth Constable said when she became a minister, she received a request from the ASC to remove the condition of registration restricting the school's educational program to years 8 – 10 imposed by a previous minister.

"If the numbers were restricted to the revised level, I am satisfied that any detrimental effect of the proposed extension on Esperance Senior High School will be minimal.

Read entire article: <http://www.esperanceexpress.com.au/news/local/news/general/anglican-school-condition-lifted/1702736.aspx?storypage=0>

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WA: First 34 designated public schools on track for new independent role

ABC News, 15 December 2009

The Education Department says the 34 WA schools, chosen to become independent from next year, will be ready for term one.

The Education Director General Sharyn O'Neill says the schools chosen for the demonstration phase are highly competent and will still have the support of the Department.

She says principals, administration staff and school boards have spent the past month attending training sessions to ready themselves for the changes next year.

"They'll have greater responsibility for management and selection of staff and so additional training in that area, they'll also have for the first time a one-line budget for control over their finances," she said.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/12/15/2772466.htm>

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WA: Community bike scheme putting brakes on truancy

ABC News, 15 December 2009

Staff at a rural Western Australian school have reported positive results from a local initiative designed to tackle truancy.

Teachers at Mullewa District High School have teamed up with local police to reward students who achieve at least an 85 per cent attendance rate for the term.

Nineteen students will today be presented with mountain bikes, donated by the WA police lost and found section.

Principal Nicki Patterson says boosting attendance is a high priority for the school and it is hoped the program can be expanded next year.

"That's the whole idea that other students can see ... these kids have worked hard and they're really excited about it, so we hope that does rub off onto other kids and they can see that at the end of the term there is something to look forward to," she said.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/12/15/2772020.htm>

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CONFERENCES & EVENTS

iNet online conference for students: "Students as agents of change"

8-15 March 2010

The March iNet online conference for students only encourages young people to consider what changes need to take place in their schools so that they are well prepared for the future world in which they will live and work. The topic is 'Students as agents of change. What should teachers and adults involved in your learning be doing to prepare you to learn, live and work in the 21st century world? What can you do?'

Register your students (or yourself) online, at no cost: http://www.cybertext.net.au/inet2010_student.php

Students are asked to set out their expectations of the adults around them in school in helping them prepare for their future. Students can also discuss whether getting involved in making changes in school is important for them. Students are asked to share experiences of being involved in changing something that matters to them in their school, community or internationally. Students are invited to submit resources around the conference theme which could include films, poems or essays. Some questions to get you started:

- How can you work with teachers and other adults in school to help them prepare you to live, learn and work in a world that is changing so rapidly we can only imagine what it will be like in 5 , 10 or 15 years time?
- What key things need to happen to enable you to contribute to discussion and take action on issues that matter to you in school, your local community and internationally?

To participate – and to make sure you are kept updated - please register online at:

http://www.cybertext.net.au/inet2009_student.php

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REMINDERS

17-18 December - Behaviour Schools Conference - Brighton-le-Sands, NSW - <http://www.gemsevents.com.au/behaviourschoolsconference/>

19-21 February - SEAA / SASOSE Conference - Hindmarsh, SA - <http://www.seaa.org.au/2010conference/>

22-23 February - Green Universities - Melbourne, VIC - <http://www.informa.com.au/conferences/education/green-universities>

7 March 2010 - Clean Up Australia Day - <http://www.cleanup.org.au/au/>

24-26 March - Going Global 4 - London, UK - <http://www.britishcouncil.org/goingglobal.htm>

6-9 April - Digital Diversity Conference - Melbourne, VIC - <http://acec2010.info/>

7-9 April - Career Development Association of Australia Annual Conference - Adelaide, SA - <http://www.onqconferences.com.au/pages/CDAA2010.php>

8-11 April - Global Language Convention - Melbourne, VIC - <http://www.wesleycollege.net/convention.cfm>

9-10 April - National Coalition against Bullying Conference - Melbourne, VIC - <http://www.amf.org.au/NCABConference/>

19-20 April - Kidsafe Playground Conference - Perth, WA - <http://www.kidsafewa.com.au/>

19-21 April - Language Education: An Essential for a Global Economy - Singapore - <http://www.relc.org.sg/seminar.html>

29-30 April - 8th Annual Higher Education Summit - Adelaide, SA - <http://www.highereducationsummit.com.au/>

25-28 May - Inclusive Learning Technologies Conference 2010 - Gold Coast, QLD - <http://www.spectronicsinoz.com/conference/>

4-5 June - Early childhood education conference 2010 Melbourne, VIC - <http://www.togetherwegrow.com.au/2010registration.html>

4-7 July - National Conference for Teachers of English & Literacy - Perth, WA - <http://www.englishliteracyconference.com.au/index.php?id=46&year=10>

6-9 July - 17th International Conference on Learning - Hong Kong - <http://thelearner.com/Conference-2010/>

21-24 July - Second Paris International Conference on Education, Economy & Society - Paris, France - <http://education-conferences.org/default.aspx>

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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)
- Family School Partners : <http://www.familyschool.org.au/news/> (monthly)
- Public Education Voice : <http://www.acsso.org.au/pev.htm> (quarterly)

Do you know of an event or resource that schools should know about? Email us at letters@acsso.org.au. Details of products, services, events, resources or points of view are provided for information only; publication does not imply endorsement or recommendation. No warranty is provided nor liability accepted by ACSSO, its members or employees.

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