



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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COMPARING SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

Julia Gillard letter to AEU 6 May advising ACARA will set up task force of "education experts" to review My School

Dear Mr Gavrielatos

The Rudd Government is committed to:

- The transformative power of high quality education
- The value of transparency and accountability for ongoing school improvement
- Effective assessment and reporting of student achievement including the diagnostic value of the NAPLAN
- The power of accurate data to provide comparable national reporting of school effectiveness
- Ensuring that educational disadvantage is addressed, and
- An opposition to the misuse of student performance data including simplistic league tables.

The Rudd Government has pursued these commitments in the development and delivery of the Education Revolution including the My School website.

The Rudd Government, in conjunction with State and Territory Governments, has consistently stated its intention to add to the My School website by including value added data such as the improvement in student performance across two tiers of educational achievement, the resources available to schools and other measures of school effectiveness.

Further, the Rudd Government is committed to consultation between ACARA and stakeholders in this process.

The Rudd Government will ask ACARA to form a working party of educational experts including literacy and numeracy specialists, principal organisations and representatives of the AEU and the IEUA to provide further professional advice on the use of student performance data and other indicators of school effectiveness as ACARA develops additional improvements to the My School Website which will include the 2010 NAPLAN data, in line with Government commitments above.

Yours sincerely

Julia Gillard

Minister for Education

Source: <http://www.aeuact.asn.au/documents/NAPLANmessage-6May10.pdf>

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AEU Lifts Moratorium on NAPLAN Tests

AEU Media Release 6 May 2010

The Federal Executive of the Australian Education Union today resolved to lift the moratorium on the administration of the NAPLAN tests.

AEU Federal President Angelo Gavrielatos said the decision followed an offer by the Education Minister Julia Gillard to form a working party of educational experts, including representatives of the AEU, to provide advice on the use of student performance data and other indicators of school effectiveness.

That advice and the further development of the My School website by ACARA will be in line with the commitments of the Federal Government which include "an opposition to the misuse of student performance data including simplistic league tables".

"The working party will provide a way to advance and address the profession's educational concerns relating to the misuse of student test data including school league tables," Mr Gavrielatos said.

Read more at: <http://www.aefederal.org.au/Media/MediaReleases/2010/0605.pdf>

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The Public Needs Confidence in the NAPLAN System - That's Why We Need A Senate Inquiry

Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, Media Release, 6 May 2010.

The Australian Greens will move for a Senate Inquiry into the ongoing dispute over NAPLAN testing.

It is welcome that the Government and education unions have agreed to set up a working party, but that this does not change the need for an inquiry.

"Anxiety in school communities has been growing for months, yet it is only now at the eleventh hour that the Minister has conceded the need for consultation," Senator Hanson-Young said. "This has been poorly managed."

"Since the introduction of the MySchool website last year, we have seen many concerns raised about the operation and effect of the site - but nothing has been done to investigate these concerns".

Read entire release: <http://sarah-hanson-young.greensmps.org.au/>

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How Gillard gave truculent teachers a caning

Anny Patty, Rick Feneley and Dan Harrison, Sydney Morning Herald, 8 May 2010

IF THE working-class heroine Julia Gillard ever becomes prime minister, her biographers will not ignore the week that her iron will crushed the teachers' unions, which fell like dominoes; or the blood she left in her wake, especially in NSW, the last state to fall.

The Deputy Prime Minister and the federal Education Minister never got too close to the bloodletting but her triumph over teachers and principals on Thursday - ensuring school numeracy and literacy tests will proceed unhindered next week - followed a bitter and at times undignified battle.

Labor states had threatened to send in strike-breakers to beat a boycott of the NAPLAN tests. There were raids on schools to seize their test papers and threats to withhold funding from battling schools.

Gillard has defied not only the unions but principals and schools at the top of the league tables taken from NAPLAN results.

"Superficial," said the head of SCEGGS, Darlinghurst, Jenny Allum. Too "narrow", said Larissa Treskin, the principal of James Ruse Agricultural High School. A "piece of crock", wrote Jeremy Ludowyke, the head of the selective Melbourne High School.

Gillard stared down the avalanche of criticism ...

Read more at: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/how-gillard-gave-truculent-teachers-a-caning-20100507-ujoo.html>

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NAPLAN denies kids an education revolution

Kevin Donnelly, ABC, 10 May 2010

While previously arguing in favour of tests like NAPLAN, I have changed my mind about the validity and value of standardised testing. After a visit to New York last year, discussions with experts and monitoring events in England (from where Julia Gillard has copied national testing and league tables), I now believe such tests are counter-productive and educationally unsound.

An essay detailing the flaws in the New York model, a model that Julie Gillard is following, written by Sol Stern, is in the current edition of the City Journal.

John Maynard Keynes once said, "When the facts change, I change my mind. What do you do?" What started out as a good idea has been corrupted and proven to be unreliable. Concerns include:

- Testing has failed to raise standards in England or New York and is now seen as counter-productive. Diane Ravitch's most recent book, *The death and life of the great American school system*, details the flaws with NY's model of standardised testing and high-risk accountability.

According to the US national test (NAEP), NY's results have flatlined. In the UK, notwithstanding national tests and league tables, standards have also failed to improve and the Rose Report, evaluating primary school curriculum in the UK, argues against an over-emphasis on one-off basic skills tests.

- The curriculum has been narrowed and the focus is on basic skills instead of higher order thinking. Subjects like music, art, physical education and history fall by the wayside as teachers and schools focus on drilling for literacy and numeracy tests.
- Schools and teachers are adopting suspicious ways to get better results - poor students are excluded from tests, weak students are told to stay at home, teachers cheat by helping students in the classroom.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/stories/s2894663.htm>

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Call to review security of NAPLAN Tests to stop cheating

Trevor Cobbold, Save our Schools, 10 May 2010

Security arrangements for this week's national literacy and numeracy tests are inadequate to stop schools cheating according to the public education advocacy group, Save Our Schools. National Convenor of SOS, Trevor Cobbold, called on the Federal Education Minister to set up a review to improve security of the NAPLAN tests to stop cheating.

"Some NAPLAN co-ordinators and teachers in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and the ACT have told Save Our Schools that the security arrangements for NAPLAN are totally inadequate to stop cheating. There are many opportunities for cheating.

"Test booklets are delivered to schools a week or 10 days beforehand and there is little to stop an unethical principal or test co-ordinator from opening them and alerting teachers about questions to practice in their class.

"Tests are mostly supervised alone by teachers in the classroom and there is no monitoring to stop teachers helping their students with answers.

"There are also ample opportunities available after the tests are taken to change answers or fill in unanswered questions by students. Last week, the President of the NSW Secondary Principals Council said that the lack of independent supervision of tests made it impossible to stop alteration of answers."

Read entire release: <http://www.saveourschools.com.au/>

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Struggling students 'exempt' from NAPLAN tests

Brigid Andersen, ABC News, 11 May 2010

Some parents of underperforming students have been told to keep their children home from school over the next three days of NAPLAN testing.

Thousands of students around Australia in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 will be sitting the national literacy and numeracy tests over the next three days. But schools are being accused of "going mad" over NAPLAN because of fears the test results could be used to compare schools.

Even as tests get underway, parents and education unions around the country have raised concerns over how the tests are being conducted and how the results will be used.

Queensland Teachers Union (QTU) president Steve Ryan says he is aware of cases of schools encouraging students to stay home on testing days under the NAPLAN "regime".

"Unfortunately the emphasis put on the NAPLAN tests themselves, the nature of the high-stakes testing is dragging schools into what I would call unwanted practices," he said.

There have also been reports of particularly bright students being offered transport to school on testing days and reports of schools "grooming" students to perform better in the tests.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/05/11/2896141.htm>

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Leave those kids alone?

Jewel Topsfield, Sydney Morning Herald, 11 May 2010

On May 1, The Australian published a list of the nation's top 100 schools using NAPLAN data, noting that money still buys the best education in Australia.

The use of national test results to "name and shame" schools is contentious around the world.

Indeed, thousands of schools in England yesterday boycotted this year's national curriculum tests for 11-year-olds, the results of which are used to make up primary school league tables.

The two largest teacher unions in England claim the "high stakes" nature of the tests, known as SATS, damage students' education because they force schools to teach to the tests.

They say this makes lessons dull for pupils. The unions also say the league tables humiliate schools and do not show what they and their pupils really achieve.

Read more at: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/leave-those-kids-alone-20100510-uoss.html>

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RELIGION & ETHICS

Scripture classes lose half of students to ethics, say Anglicans

Jacqueline Maley, Sydney Morning Herald, 8 May 2010

THE controversial trial of secular ethics classes has "decimated" Protestant scripture classes in the 10 NSW schools where it has been introduced as an alternative for non-religious children, with the classes losing about 47 per cent of enrolled students.

The figure was calculated by the Sydney Anglican diocese, which is so concerned about the trial that it has created a fund-raising website to "protect SRE" (special religious education). The website says the values underpinning "Australia's moral framework" are under threat.

The website, created by Youthworks, a department of the diocese, says the objective of the ethics trial is "to not only remove Jesus Christ from the state school system, but from the consciousness and hearts of the next generation".

"If we lose religious education, we risk losing true, fundamental 'ethics' that have underpinned Australia's moral framework for hundreds of years," the website says.

Dr Simon Longstaff, the executive director of the St James Ethics Centre, which is co-ordinating the trial, said any suggestion that the centre is "working towards the removal of SRE classes from NSW state primary schools is false".

Read entire article: <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/scripture-classes-lose-half-of-students-to-ethics-say-anglicans-20100507-ujoy.html>

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Sydney Anglican Church opposes choice for non-believers

John Kaye, Media release: 8 May 2010

The Sydney Anglican Archdiocese's figures suggest that offering an ethics alternative for children during special religious education in public schools is a long overdue move.

"If it is true that Protestant scripture has lost 47 percent of its students to the ethics course, then it is clear that parents are looking to escape from the churches.

"After 130 years of monopoly control over one hour a week in public schools, organised religions must face the reality that many parents want an alternative.

"Instead of trying to restrict options in order to corral students into their classes, the churches should be asked to justify their presence in secular public schools."

Read entire release: <http://www.johnkaye.org.au>

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BUILDING THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION

States stymied by school stimulus rules

Emma Rodgers, ABC News, 5 May 2010

The auditor-general has found federal guidelines hampered state authorities from implementing the Government's \$16.2 billion schools building program.

The program, which was rolled out as part of last year's \$42 billion economic stimulus program, has come under fire from parents and principals who have questioned whether some of the 24,000 projects are value for money.

The report released by auditor-general Ian McPhee today says there are some early signs the program is making progress and most schools will benefit from it. But Mr McPhee also found federal guidelines caused difficulties for state authorities as they tried to roll out projects.

He said guidelines set up by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) restricted the states from making their own decisions about which projects were most suitable for each school.

Federal Education Minister Julia Gillard has defended the program, saying there is no doubt the program was essential to propping up jobs during the global financial crisis and the Government is committed to ensuring value for money in the scheme.

She has noted Mr McPhee's criticism of federal guidelines but says "firm control" from the Commonwealth was needed for such a big program.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/05/05/2890634.htm>

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Fiddling with student numbers to get more

Justine Ferrari, the Australian, 6 May 2010

SOME independent schools have been accused of manipulating their student numbers to receive a higher level of funding from the BER.

The Australian National Audit Office compared student numbers used for allocating Building the Education Revolution funds with school censuses conducted over the past three years and found it probable that some schools fiddled their enrolment numbers to gain more funding.

"While clear patterns were not evident in the case of schools that are part of school systems, a substantially higher number of schools that are not part of school systems (that is, independent schools) reported enrolments for the special census just above the funding thresholds established in the BER guidelines when compared to their routine census results, and fewer just below," the auditor's report says.

The situation is limited to a very small number of schools, about 15 to 30, or less than 0.5 per cent of eligible schools which, the report says, had minimal effect on the total BER budget.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/schools-watch/fiddling-with-student-numbers-to-get-more/story-fn56ulhe-1225862770648>

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Principals doubt value of school building scheme

Anne Connolly, ABC News Online, 6 May 2010

Almost 30 per cent of principals surveyed by the auditor-general believe they are not getting value for money from the controversial \$16.2 billion school building program.

And a third of schools have complained about the scheme, contradicting claims by the Federal Government that less than 1 per cent of schools are dissatisfied.

The statistics come from a survey of more than 620 school principals which is contained at the end of auditor-general Ian McPhee's report released on Wednesday.

The report examined the role of the Commonwealth in establishing the building program for primary schools as part of the Building the Education Revolution (BER) but did not extend its inquiry to examining individual projects.

Federal Education Minister Julia Gillard used one quote from the survey to back up her claims that the BER scheme was a success, saying that "more than 95 per cent of school principals saw the program as providing ongoing value to their school and their school community".

But the same survey indicated a high level of dissatisfaction with the process.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/05/05/2891384.htm>

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School buildings audit 'ignored survey data'

Anne Connolly, ABC News Online, 10 May 2010

The troubled \$16 billion school building program is again under siege with questions being asked about last week's auditor-general's report.

The ABC Investigations Unit has confirmed that instead of publishing a largely negative response from 3,000 primary school principals who were surveyed about the scheme, the auditor-general went seeking more supportive comments from other private school principals.

In effect, the auditor-general's office discarded surveys completed by 3,159 school principals in favour of a sample group of 622.

This meant that public school principals, who have largely been unhappy with the scheme, became the minority while more satisfied private school principals had a stronger voice.

In its report released last Wednesday the auditor-general's office said the method it used was "more statistically robust". But by throwing away such important data, the office has raised new questions about the validity of the report.

Ray Chambers, a professor at the Centre for Statistical and Survey Methodology, examined the data from the report for ABC Online and said the method was "unusual".

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/05/10/2894452.htm>

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Wayne Swan at odds with auditor over BER

Matthew Franklin, the Australian, 10 May 2010

WAYNE Swan has denied that most school building projects under his \$42 billion stimulus package are behind schedule, putting himself at odds with Auditor-General Ian McPhee.

While conceding yesterday that some projects were running slightly behind, the Treasurer also said any delays would not affect the integrity of the stimulus package, which was designed to pump money into the economy to counter the recession then be withdrawn as the economy recovered.

Last week, the Australian National Audit Office reported that 80 per cent of projects under the \$16.2 billion Building the Education Revolution program were behind schedule.

BER was designed to provide new halls, gymnasiums, libraries and other buildings for every primary school in the nation.

In a comment that seemed to be at odds with government assurances that the BER helped save Australia, the ANAO said the "overwhelming majority" of projects had not yet been funded, concluding that "the effect of program spending on an economy-wide basis is unclear at this time".

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/politics/wayne-swan-at-odds-with-auditor-over-ber/story-e6frgczf-1225864252959>

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One in seven schools get prefab buildings under BER

Natasha Bitu, the Australian, 10 May 2010

DEMOUNTABLE or prefabricated buildings are being installed in one in seven public schools through the \$16.2 billion federal school rebuilding program.

The Building the Education Revolution scheme was intended to give work to local building contractors while ridding the schools of temporary sub-standard classrooms.

But an investigation by The Australian has found at least 831 public schools - or one in seven - has been given a demountable or prefabricated classroom, hall or library instead of a "bricks and mortar" building.

In Western Australia, transportable classrooms will be trucked in to 75 schools at a cost of \$12 million -- an average cost of \$160,000 a school. They include 60 libraries and 23 classrooms, but not all the facilities are air-conditioned.

WA Education Department executive director of infrastructure James Thom said most of the schools were in "rural and very remote locations", with fewer than 50 students and less than \$250,000 each in BER funds.

"To provide a functional building that meets the needs of the school, a transportable classroom is the only alternative," Mr Thom said.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/schools-watch/one-in-seven-schools-get-prefab-buildings-under-ber/story-fn56ulhe-1225864254922>

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Why weren't they heard?

Anne Connolly - ABC News Online Investigative Unit, 11 May 2010

Why would the auditor-general largely ignore the opinions of over 3,000 primary school principals in the long-awaited report into the \$16.2 billion school building program? The report which the Government has been touting for the past nine months as the one which would finally end all controversy and answer all criticism?

Well, in the first place the report didn't have the scope to investigate any of the real concerns about claims of overcharging by building companies. It had two major aspects: the first was the federal administration of the program and the second was a survey of primary school principals.

I spent four days in back-and-forth conversations with officials at the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) because of confusion about the complicated methodology it used in analysing that survey. It seemed to me the responses from over 3,000 school principals, 70 per cent of whom were from public schools, had been watered down in favour of a sample of 620.

Furthermore, in this sample public school principals became the minority, making up just 40 per cent of respondents while the opinions of private school principals became the majority.

Why is that significant? Well we know that public schools are the ones complaining about lack of choice, overcharging by builders and shoddy workmanship. So I wanted an explanation as to why their voices were muffled in the final

report in favour of a poll of the more satisfied private school sector which have had more control over design, tendering and construction of their buildings.

I also took the survey results to two independent statisticians.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/05/10/2895442.htm>

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HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Children respond to call of the wild

Ainslie MacGibbon, Sydney Morning Herald, May 10, 2010

A child's contact with nature will influence health in adulthood as well as having many other long-term gains.

Australians relish their reputation as lovers of the great outdoors - all beach and bush - with an intimate relationship with the natural environment. But as parents' working lives become busier, cities become more crowded and technology takes more of a grip on our lives, many people - particularly children - are spending more and more time indoors.

Now the wisdom of this is being challenged by parents and by schools which are becoming concerned that children may be losing more than bush skills and suntans as they cut back on their time outside. Some Australian schools are implementing outdoor education programs to help redress the balance.

Outdoor education is often mistakenly confused with physical education or development, which is the care and development of the body. Outdoor education takes a more holistic approach to education, encompassing leadership, risk management, problem solving and personal development.

Read entire article: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/children-respond-to-call-of-the-wild-20100509-ulqv.html>

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DIGITAL LITERACY

The Digital Revolution and the Educator's Dilemma

Kate Carruthers, Aide-memoire, 10 May 2010

Traditionally education was a teacher centred process with the teacher in the role of an expert who delivered objective information in a linear fashion. The teacher was the owner of the privileged truth and the role of the learner was to acquire the knowledge and demonstrate via exams their successful acquisition of knowledge. Teachers were in control and learners were not in control.

For 21st century education computers are the norm. But also the notion of education taking place in a particular fixed location is becoming irrelevant with proliferation of mobile computing and wireless broadband.

It also means that collaboration does not need to be confined to a group who are physically co-located. Learners can collaborate with people all over the world using cheap and accessible technology. It also means that teachers are liberated from the tyranny of place too.

Over the past few years the social web has built up a value system that is quite different to the educational and business value systems of previous centuries.

Read more at: <http://katecarruthers.com/blog/2010/05/digital-revolution-educators-dilemma/>

Kate Carruthers is a marketer, technologist, educator and renaissance woman. Aide-memoire is her personal blog.

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SCIENCE EDUCATION

Confronting a third crisis in U.S. science education

S. James Gates Jr., Science News, issue 22 May 2010

Is science education broken in the United States? And if so, how should the country fix it? A working group of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) has been investigating these long-standing questions and is expected to issue a report on its policy recommendations this month.

What is the outlook for U.S. science education?

If you look at U.S. performance on various international metrics, depending on which one you use, we come out something like 24th or 25th in the world. A lot of people might argue: "Well, who cares? It's just science." The only problem with that theory is we're moving into a time in the development of the world economy when innovation and the formation of novel approaches will clearly come from countries best situated to create a population that can innovate in science and technology.

We're not doing this because we want to make more scientists. The reason we are doing this with urgency is because it's connected to our country's future economy.

Read more at:

http://www.sciencenews.org/view/generic/id/58930/title/Confronting_a_third_crisis_in_U.S._science_education

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AROUND THE STATES & TERRITORIES

ACT: Parents complain over mock NAPLAN tests

Scott Hannaford, Canberra Times, 11 May 2010

The ACT Department of Education and Training has denied reports from parents that students at some ACT schools have been spending up to 90 minutes a day for the past fortnight completing dummy national literacy and numeracy tests.

Opponents to the My School website also warned yesterday that teachers were coming under increasing pressure to help students cheat as every school around the country prepares to sit for the 2010 tests from today.

Parents who spoke to The Canberra Times said students at a south Canberra school had had to sit for two practice NAPLAN tests a day in the lead-up to today's tests.

An Education Department spokeswoman said students at Canberra schools might have been doing brief preparations for this week's tests, but not sitting complete dummy tests.

"There is no evidence that teachers in ACT public schools are doing any more or less NAPLAN preparation for students this year than last year, or previous years," the spokeswoman said.

Read more at: <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/news/local/news/general/parents-complain-over-mock-tests/1826176.aspx>

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NSW: Mathoura farm school will find jobs for disadvantaged youth

ABC Rural, 6 May 2010

A farm school to help disadvantaged youths get their lives back on track is up and running in southern NSW.

Participants will be initially trained on a property at Mathoura and then sent to work on other farms.

Brian Egan, from Aussie Helpers, set up the program, and hopes it'll help relieve labour shortages in the region.

"When they leave the place, they'll be going to a real working farm where they'll spend five months on a host farm, where the farmer will actually feed them and house them in return for a little bit of work for them," he says.

"In the meantime, they'll have the five months' training, and then through the employment agency we work with, we'll endeavour to get them a full-time job."

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/news/content/201005/s2891856.htm>

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NSW: Class war as NSW high schools raided

Anna Patty, Sydney Morning Herald, 6 May 2010

NSW Department of Education officers have swarmed on scores of schools without warning to remove boxes of NAPLAN tests, which may delay the exams for students.

Principals were shaken by the exercise, saying that it had destroyed goodwill with the Department of Education.

Staff at one school said the department was holding its students to ransom by threatening to withhold funding earmarked for the most disadvantaged students in the state if its staff failed to deliver the tests as scheduled next week on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

Principals whose tests were taken yesterday morning after classes started said they had been advised the exams would be held off site, possibly at a later date than scheduled. This raises questions about the security of the tests.

Read more at: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/class-war-as-high-schools-raided-20100505-uart.html>

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NSW: School NAPLAN raids contaminate test results

John Kaye MP, Media Release: 6 May 2010

By approving raids on scores of public schools to seize their NAPLAN test papers, NSW Education Minister Verity Firth has sacrificed the integrity of the test results.

"The minister's panic has resulted in an unprecedented breach of faith between schools and the department that is supposed to support them. This will take years to heal.

"Not since the days of former Greiner government Minister Terry Metherell has there been such an attack on teacher professionalism and the right of principals to run their schools.

"The Minister's actions mean that the test can no longer be conducted on the same day for all students. It is inevitable that questions will leak.

"In Julia Gillard's absurd and meaningless 'my school' competition, agreeing to run the test has been turned into a substantial disadvantage."

Read entire release: <http://www.johnkaye.org.au>

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NSW: Dalwood alternative offers hope

ABC News, 10 May 2010

A proposal to keep a Sydney-based centre for rural children with learning difficulties open is being hailed as a practical way of saving the service which is under threat.

Coonabarabran mother Michelle Bolte says an alternative model for the Dalwood Assessment Centre, which has been developed by the staff, meets the needs of students.

The New South Wales Government announced last year that the facility will remain open until the end of term two, but parents say they have received no further assurances as to the facility's future.

Ms Bolte says the new proposal includes using education tools to help teachers assess the students.

"It was refreshing to see their model because I know that what they do works," she said.

Ms Bolte says she has been sent a letter from the NSW Education Minister, Verity Firth, which says the alternative model for the Dalwood Assessment Centre will be given to an expert advisory panel for consideration.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/05/10/2894503.htm>

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NSW: Show us the money

Steve Strevens, Bega District News, 11 May 2010

THE Bega High School Parents and Citizens Association has called on the NSW Education Minister Verity Firth to respond to its concerns about funding for an Aboriginal Education Officer.

President Geoffrey Badger said that it is four months since the P&C wrote to the minister but there has been no reply. "The last letter we had from her office was dated November 23 last year and it said the matter was being looked into," he said. "But we have heard nothing else."

Mark Rose is employed by the school and fills the role of AEO, but he is only employed as a tutor and funding for that position is based on education results.

Mr Badger said the P&C is lobbying for a fulltime permanent AEO, but has been told the basis for that was for the school to have 30 per cent aboriginal students.

"I find that unbelievable," he said. "It shouldn't be on percentage but on the number of students.

"We have 51 Aboriginal students here and can't qualify because we have about 1000 students overall. But a small school that has 10 pupils with three Aboriginals can, and good on them.

"But it doesn't make sense."

Read entire article: <http://www.begadistrictnews.com.au/news/local/news/general/show-us-the-money/1826405.aspx>

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NT: Making the Most of our Schools for Territorians

Dr Chris Burns, Minister for Education and Training, 04 May 2010

The Territory Government will be calling for feedback from Territorians on what additional roles schools can play in Territory communities.

Minister for Education and Training Chris Burns said a discussion paper will be released asking Territorians how school facilities can be used after hours.

"The Territory Government's 'Schools – Our Community Heart' project is calling for ideas on how to use school facilities to benefit Territorians," Dr Burns said.

"In the Territory's remote communities, our towns and the suburbs of our cities schools are the glue that bind people together and help shape a strong sense of local identity.

Read more at: <http://newsroom.nt.gov.au/index.cfm?fuseaction=viewRelease&id=6892&d=5>

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NT: Delivering Better Schools Now for Territory Families

Dr Chris Burns, Minister for Education and Training, 04 May 2010

The Henderson Government will continue to build better schools, deliver more teachers and ensure that Territory students have access to the best quality education.

Minister for Education and Training, Chris Burns, said Budget 2010 provides a record \$886 million for education and training.

"Ensuring that every Territory student has access to better facilities that will help them receive the best possible education is a top priority of the Henderson Government," Dr Burns said.

"The Henderson Government is continuing to invest in education and has delivered an extra 330 teachers since 2002.

"The record investment in Budget 2010 includes \$213 million to build better schools and \$12 million for an extra 105 teachers and 42 support staff.

"Budget 2010 is also investing in the Territory's future, delivering more modern school facilities, ensuring that the students of today are well-placed to fill the jobs of the future."

Read more at: <http://newsroom.nt.gov.au/index.cfm?fuseaction=viewRelease&id=6877&d=5>

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QLD: Minister now says stand-by teachers won't be paid

ABC News, 7 May 2010

Queensland Education Minister Geoff Wilson now says relief teachers arranged to supervise national literacy and numeracy tests do not need to be paid.

The Australian Education Union (AEU) yesterday abandoned plans for teachers to boycott next week's National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests after reaching an agreement with the Federal Government.

The AEU was concerned about how the test results would be used on the My School website and the Federal Government has agreed to make some changes.

Mr Wilson said more than 4,500 relief teachers were on stand-by to supervise the tests if the teacher boycott went ahead. He had earlier said the State Government would still have to pay relief teachers who were on stand-by to supervise NAPLAN tests.

But in a statement, Mr Wilson now says the obligation to pay employees engaged on a relief basis commenced only when they started work and there was now no need for the relief teachers.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/05/07/2892925.htm>

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QLD: NAPLAN stand-by teachers still getting paid: Minister

ABC News, 7 May 2010

Queensland Education Minister Geoff Wilson says the State Government will have to pay relief teachers who were on stand-by to supervise national literacy and numeracy tests.

The Australian Education Union (AEU) abandoned plans for teachers to boycott next week's National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests after reaching an agreement with the Federal Government.

The AEU was concerned about how the test results would be used on the My School website and the Federal Government has agreed to make some changes.

Mr Wilson says more than 4,500 relief teachers were on stand-by to supervise the tests if the teacher boycott went ahead.

"The department will examine what the situation is in relation to teachers that have been engaged in anticipation of being involved next week," he said.

"The department will take a little time to assess that - this is early days.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/05/07/2892684.htm>

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SA: International student college fails audit

ABC News, 11 May 2010

An Adelaide college has been served with a notice that its registration as a training provider could be cancelled.

The Adelaide Pacific International College in Currie Street in the city has about 450 mainly Indian students. An audit was done in March.

The Department of Further Education alleges the college has failed to comply with 12 of 14 standards under a national framework.

South Australia's Further Education Minister Jack Snelling says the college has until the end of the day to respond to the Federal Government about the audit findings.

"At the moment I'm concentrating on the welfare of the students who are studying at the college and I'm concentrating on protecting South Australia's reputation," he said.

"We will ensure that all 450 students are given an opportunity to continue their studies elsewhere should a decision be made to cancel the college's registration and I stress that that decision is still pending, hasn't be made yet."

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/05/11/2896344.htm>

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TAS: Libs up pressure on Greens over education changes

ABC News, 7 May 2010

The Tasmanian Opposition has accused the Greens of backing away from their commitment to roll back the contentious Tasmania Tomorrow education system.

The Liberals introduced a bill to parliament this week to abolish the Academy and Polytechnic system for years 11 and 12.

The Greens are yet to say if they will support the legislation, despite promising before the election to restore the college system.

The Liberal's education spokesman, Michael Ferguson, says Tasmanians who voted for the Greens on the strength of this commitment would feel cheated.

"I do think it's quite a simple commitment that's required from the Tasmanian Greens, " he said. "I'm surprised that their making it so agonisingly difficult but that's why I'm suspicious because it's beginning to look like the Greens have more concern for the future of the Labor Government than for the future of our colleges."

The legislation is not likely to be debated until later next month.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/05/07/2893511.htm>

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TAS: Teachers worked unpaid overtime for NAPLAN: union

ABC News, 11 May 2010

Tasmania's education union has criticised the State Government's decision not to postpone NAPLAN testing for a week.

All students in years three, five, seven and nine will have their literacy and numeracy skills examined over the next three days.

The Australian Education Union (AEU) had banned members from running the tests over the use of the test results on the MySchool website but agreed last week to go ahead.

AEU state president Leanne Wright says teachers at some southern Tasmanian high schools went to work on the weekend unpaid to prepare for the tests.

"Teachers do a great deal of work in their own time and will make sure students do not suffer and that everything's above board," she said. "So where they weren't able to prepare in time for the NAPLAN testing they did go in on the weekend to get set up for it."

Ms Wright says there is no provision for overtime for teachers who prepare for the testing on their own time.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/05/11/2896296.htm>

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TAS: Police taskforce investigates international student attacks

ABC News, 11 May 2010

Hobart police have set up a taskforce to investigate a series of violent attacks on international students at the University of Tasmania.

Police say four Asian students have been assaulted near the university's Hobart campus in the past six weeks, and while none of the victims was seriously injured, the incidents were terrifying. They say a 21-year-old Malaysian man was assaulted and robbed while he was walking home on Saturday night and in another recent case an Asian student was set upon by a group of people and beaten.

The attacks have prompted the university's student union to organise a rally at the Hobart campus to show support for international students.

The union's vice-president Saleh BinTalib says students have the right to feel safe.

"Every student should be scared they might be attacked when their leaving the university campus in the dark because you know exams are coming.

The rally comes as two Hobart men await sentencing for the brutal murder of a 26-year-old Chinese woman who was studying at the university.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/05/11/2896468.htm>

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VIC: New schools internet link for students, parents

ABC News, 10 May 2010

This morning in Victoria, the state Education Minister launched what she called a "virtual classroom".

Like the Federal Government's My School website, the ultranet is intended to give parents more information about their child's schooling.

The Victorian Government says the \$60 million initiative will allow parents to see their children's attendance, test results, homework and lessons, online.

The ultranet was officially launched this morning, by the Victorian Education Minister Bronwyn Pike.

"This ultranet will provide an online environment for teachers, to share curriculum and resources, to interact with their students; for students to have access to a huge range of additional opportunities and for parents to be able log online and monitor the progress of their student," she said. "So the ultranet will break down the classroom walls."

Each student will have an online workspace.

Parents will have a login too. They can use the site to view information about their children's lessons, homework, results and attendance.

Gail McHardy of Parents Victoria says the ultranet will improve communication between schools and families but steps must be taken to ensure those without internet access at home are not disadvantaged.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/05/10/2894736.htm>

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VIC: Furore as schools asked to chip in for portal

Jewel Topsfield, the Age, 10 May 2010

THE state government has been accused of hiding cost blowouts in its \$77 million virtual classroom program - to be launched today - by asking schools to help pay for its introduction.

Education Minister Bronwyn Pike insists the Ultranet, which was promised before the 2006 election, will be delivered within the original budget. But a letter from the Education Department, seen by The Age, asks some principals to contribute \$5000 to ensure their schools are ready to receive the Ultranet. Opposition education spokesman Martin Dixon said the government was hiding a cost blowout by asking schools to top up the funding. "Asking schools to essentially pay for a blowout by covering the cost of core planning and service delivery is a disgraceful thing," Mr. Dixon said.

The Australian Education Union said schools asked to contribute because they needed IT upgrades would be those that could least afford it.

Read entire article: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/furore-as-schools-asked-to-chip-in-for-portal-20100509-ulrq.html>

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VIC: New avenues to goal

Caroline Milburn, the Age, 10 May 2010

EIGHT football and dance academies for indigenous teenagers are being established at Victorian government schools in a bid to improve poor attendance rates among Koori youth.

The Brumby government announced in last week's state budget it will pour \$1.7 million into a \$4.2 million scheme involving the federal government and philanthropic groups for the academies at secondary schools in Bairnsdale, Ballarat, Warrnambool, Mildura, Robinvale, Swan Hill, Eaglehawk and Mooroopna.

Dismal achievement and retention rates among indigenous school students are widely acknowledged as one of the Australian education system's biggest weaknesses. Successive governments at state and federal levels have tried to fix the problem but progress has been slow.

In Victoria 40 per cent of year 9 indigenous students failed last year's national reading tests. A quarter of the state's year 9 indigenous students did not sit the test, compared with 12 per cent of non-indigenous pupils.

Four of the five football academies started earlier this year at regional secondary schools in Mildura, Swan Hill, Warrnambool and Bairnsdale. The fifth will be established at Robinvale. All of the academies will be run by the Clontarf Foundation, a not-for-profit agency aimed at improving the education, health and life skills of indigenous boys. The organisation runs 34 academies, mainly in Western Australia and the Northern Territory. To stay in the program students must continue with their school studies while also attending Clontarf's specialist programs.

The state Aboriginal Affairs minister, Richard Wynne, says the government's decision to form a partnership with Clontarf was based on the agency's success in getting students to complete their schooling.

Read entire article: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/new-avenues-to-goal-20100507-uisl.html>

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VIC: 'Ugly' parents marring games

Robert Fedele, Macedon Ranges Telegraph, 11 May 2010

SPORT can give children some of the happiest and enduring memories of their lives. But instead, many sporting experiences are spoiled each week by overbearing parents hurling abuse from the sidelines.

The episodes have become part and parcel of sport.

It has been dubbed "ugly-parent syndrome" and has become such a problem the state government is now tackling it at a grassroots level.

Parents who step out of line can now face penalties or sanctions from the relevant state sporting association, league, association or club.

Sunshine Heights Football Club president Vince Sposato says you would be hard-pressed to attend a local sporting match on a weekend and not witness abuse.

Sposato coaches the club's under-16s and has tried to foster proper parent behaviour.

Even so, he says the onus is ultimately on parents to toe the line.

Read entire article: <http://www.macedonrangestelegraph.com.au/news/local/news/general/ugly-parents-marring-games/1825769.aspx>

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VIC: Funding shortfall creates library doubts

ABC News, 11 May 2010

It is feared the completion of a new joint-use library in Colac will be delayed because of a lack of funding.

The library is being built at the new Colac Secondary College and will replace the council-operated facility with one shared by students and the public.

But the college did not receive money in last week's state budget to complete its final stage of building.

Lyn Foster of the Friends of the Colac Library group says she is concerned the library will not be fitted out.

"Well I feel that there won't be money available to finish off the library and provide all the new equipment which is supposed to be state-of-the-art, because the school doesn't have any funding and the council and the school are to pay half each on the fitting out of the new library," she said.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/05/11/2896002.htm>

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WA: Institute gets 127 safety infringement notices

ABC News, 7 May 2010

The Great Southern Institute of Technology in Albany has denied accusations the campus is unsafe, after it received more than 100 infringement notices from WorkSafe.

The institute was issued with 127 notices which included warnings about unsecured gas cylinders, chemical fume risks and unprotected machinery.

The managing director of the Great Southern Institute of Technology, Lydia Roslapa, says the college has a good safety record and the infringement notices did not mean staff or students were at risk.

"Every person that works here has an opportunity to put in submissions to the OHS [occupational health and safety] committee and talk to me personally, they can talk to their directors. We have representatives in every section who have five days training," she said.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/05/07/2893361.htm>

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WA: Group launched to lift school attendance

ABC News, 10 May 2010

A new group has been launched in Carnarvon to improve school attendance and tackle antisocial behaviour.

The Compass Alliance Group will examine truancy in the town with the help of the shire, the Department for Child Protection, police and the chamber of commerce.

The alliance will meet every few weeks to set goals and developer measures to reduce truancy.

Alliance leader Saeed Amin says he believes the initiative to be effective.

"It's all about getting kids to school. It's all about engaging with school and for those kids who are severely disengaged, it's about working out good ways to engage them," he said.

"If a student ... has missed school for three years, then they're not necessarily going to be willing to be engaged in a traditional type of school-setting, so the inter-agency bit is about looking at alternatives that we may be able to provide."

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/05/10/2894943.htm?site=northwestwa§ion=news>

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WA: Miners look to lure mid-west students

ABC News, 11 May 2010

Resources companies are offering a financial incentive to encourage students in Western Australia's mid-west to pursue a career in the mining industry.

Oakajee Port and Rail, Sinosteel and Crosslands Resources have joined forces with the Education Department to invest in initiatives aimed at attracting more students to the sector.

Year 10 students in the Murchison will be offered \$300 to complete a Certificate One in Leadership Development.

Rob Jefferies from the Geraldton Iron Ore Alliance says the resource companies are keen to utilise a local workforce.

"There's also the need to try and encourage our youth to stay in this region, rather than going off to the metropolitan area to pursue a career and even training and development," he said.

"We hope to see more and more of that delivered in the regions and people staying here because they've got a variety of very good career opportunities."

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/05/11/2896238.htm>

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CONFERENCES & EVENTS

School Law Professional Development Seminar 2010

May-June 2010, Melbourne, Brisbane, Sydney & Perth

In this 21st century world, Principals, Teachers and members of School Boards and School Councils increasingly need to be aware of a widening range of legal issues, as schools are being bombarded with an ever-growing number of legal responsibilities.

Take this opportunity to keep you and your staff abreast of the latest issues at our School Law 2010 seminar being held in Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney and Perth.

Follow the links to find complete details and registration for the event in your city:

Brisbane, 27 May 2010 http://www.legalwiseseminars.com.au/product_details.asp?prodID=13507
Melbourne, 26 May 2010 http://www.legalwiseseminars.com.au/product_details.asp?prodID=13500
Sydney, 4 June 2010 http://www.legalwiseseminars.com.au/product_details.asp?prodID=13521
Perth, 3 June 2010 http://www.legalwiseseminars.com.au/product_details.asp?prodID=13530

International Conference on New Horizons in Education

23-25 June, Salamis Bay Conti Hotel, Famagusta, Cyprus

The main goal of this conference is to present and discuss new trends in education. INTE-2010 conference is supported by many universities and organizations, and it is venued by Sakarya University where the academic culture have long been a tradition.

INTE-2010 has already formed a large, multi-national and friendly community of colleagues who love to share ideas. INTE-2010 invites you to submit proposals for papers, panels, best practices, roundtables, tutorials, posters/demonstrations, and workshops.

Read more at: <http://www.int-e.net/index.php>

Think National, Act Local: Envisioning A Vibrant Languages Future

2010 Biennial State Conference of Modern Language Teachers Association of Queensland (MLTAQ)

2-3 July 2010, University of Queensland - St Lucia Campus, Brisbane, QLD

Registration is now open.

You can now purchase registration for the upcoming conference over the net using the secure facilities of PayPal. You do not need an account with them. Payment can also be made by a cheque payable to 'MLTAQ INC' and forwarded to the MLTAQ at PO Box 3727, South Brisbane BC QLD 4101

Call for Papers/Workshops/Presentations: For information required see this form.

Further information: <http://mltaq.asn.au/mod/resource/view.php?id=27>

5th International Middle Years of Schooling Conference

Our Worlds - Connecting in the Middle

6 September, Adelaide Convention Centre

What does it mean to be an effective middle years teacher or an engaged adolescent learner in the 21st century?

The focus of the conference will be on examining the world in which adolescents now live and the factors that influence and engage them. The conference will use the interface between current global thinking, the voices of our adolescents and the wisdom of teachers working in the middle years to explore the complexities adolescents face in today's world.

- * What is it that highly effective middle schooling does to improve student engagement and achievement?
- * How does quality pedagogy personalise and connect curriculum to students' life experiences and learning?
- * What opportunities does digital technology afford us in engaging, supporting and challenging students to achieve high standards?

Read more at: <http://sapmea.asn.au/conventions/middleschool2010/>

Language and Culture and Social Connectedness in Our Diverse Landscape Symposium

22 September 2010, University Southern Queensland, Toowoomba QLD

The Faculty of Education and Open Access College are hosting a one-day symposium, with the theme of Language, culture and social connectedness in our diverse landscape at the University of Southern Queensland.

This one-day symposium invites teachers, students, researchers and change agents in the community to present their studies of the linguistic, cultural and social variables that impact social connectedness in multi-cultural Australia.

Proposals are being called for presentations – due June 9th – guidelines on the website.

Further information: <http://www.usq.edu.au/lcdl>

REMINDERS

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

7 May - Public consultation closes - draft National Professional Standards for Teachers - http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya/npst2010-consultation-call_for_submissions.30532.html

7-8 May - Public Policy Forum - Melbourne, VIC - <http://www.deakin.edu.au/arts-ed/efi/conferences/public-policy-forum/index.php>

14 May - Modern Language Teachers' Association of Victoria Annual Conference - Melbourne, VIC - <http://www.mltav.asn.au>

16-22 May - Parents Victoria Annual Online Conference - <http://www.cybertext.net.au/pv/>

17 May - Tackling Underachievement: Engaging Boys and Girls - Sydney, NSW - <http://conferences2010.schoolevent.org>

17 May - The Tender Bridge, ACER - Adelaide, SA - <http://www.acer.edu.au/1/index.php/seminar/the-tender-bridge/>

18 May - Tackling Underachievement: Engaging Boys and Girls - Melbourne, VIC - <http://conferences2010.schoolevent.org>

23 May - Public consultation closes - draft K-10 Australian Curriculum English, mathematics, science and history - <http://www.acara.edu.au/consultation.html>

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

26-28 May - Council of Educational Facility Planners International Conference - Perth, WA - <http://australiasia.cefpi.org/>

31 May - Costa's Garden Odyssey Competition closes - <http://www.sbs.com.au/shows/costa/about/page/i/2/h/Competition/>

3 June - Dare to Lead National Indigenous Education Conference - Brisbane, QLD - <http://www.daretolead.edu.au/servlet/Web?s=169694&action=downloadResource&resourceID=71060324>

4-5 June - Early Childhood Education Conference - Melbourne, VIC - <http://www.togetherwegrow.com.au/2010registration.html>

9-11 June - International Conference on Learning and Teaching - Singapore - <http://www.tp.edu.sg/events/intlconference/>

17-18 June - National Conference of Australian Special Education Principals' Association & Australian Association of Special Education - Darwin, NT - <http://www.gemsevents.com.au/aase2010/>

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/>

7-9 July - Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference - Melbourne, VIC - <http://www.aifs.gov.au/conference>

7-10 July - Redefining TESOL for the 21st Century - Gold Coast, QLD - <http://www.astmanagement.com.au/ACTA10/Default.htm>

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

29-31 July - International Conference on Teacher Education - Quezon City, Philippines - <http://www.ictedphilippines.org/>

26-27 August - Annual School Leaders' Conference - Gold Coast, QLD - <http://www.griffith.edu.au/pdn-leadership-conference-2010>

3-4 September - Future Directions in Literacy Conference - Sydney, NSW - http://sydney.edu.au/education_social_work/professional_learning/teachers/2010/future_directions_literacy.shtml

6-8 September - London International Conference on Education - London, UK - <http://www.liceducation.org/>

15-17 September - SPERA Conference, University of Sunshine Coast, Queensland - http://www.spera.asn.au/articles.php?req=list&root_id=13&sub_id=65

27-30 September - National Australian Association for Environmental Education Conference - Canberra, ACT - <https://www.conferenceco.com.au/aaee>

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ACSSO EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

- Australian Education Digest : <http://www.acsso.org.au/australian-education-digest/> (weekly)
- International News Roundup : <http://www.acsso.org.au/roundup/> (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/public-education-voice> (quarterly)

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