



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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NATIONAL REVIEW OF SCHOOL FUNDING

Towards a more equitable resourcing of Australia's public schools

Angelo Gavrielatos, Australian Education Union, 31 May 2010

The AEU welcomes the establishment of this important review of Australia's school funding arrangements.

The 'Message from the Minister' accompanying the recently released discussion paper begins with an acknowledgement that the review 'marks an important milestone in schooling for this country':

How we resource schools goes directly to aspirations Australians have for the future, for their children, for their communities and for their sense of fairness in Australian society.

The AEU agrees.

However this acknowledgement is incomplete without recognition from the outset of the review of the special legal role, moral purpose and place of public education in Australian society, a recognition which must be reflected in the terms of reference which guide it.

It is essential that the principles against which Australia's schools funding arrangements should be measured in the course of the review are made explicit from the outset.

The Minister has publicly acknowledged that Australia's system of school funding "is one of the most complex, opaque and confusing in the developed world." (Julia Gillard, National Public Education Forum, 27 March 2009). In addition to being 'complex, opaque and confusing' the funding arrangements which deliver government funding to schools, particularly the SES-based funding model by which government funding to non-government schools is delivered, have been shown to be inequitable and unsustainable.

Consistent with the Government's commitment that the primary obligation of government is to adequately and appropriately fund public schools, a public acknowledgement of the central and moral responsibility of governments, both Commonwealth and State/Territory, to provide public schooling of such a quality that the principle of universal access to quality education can be realised would be an appropriate starting point.

Read entire submission: <http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Publications/2010/ReviewofFunding2010.pdf>

Angelo Gavrielatos is the National President of the AEU.

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Private school parents demand audit of funds

Justine Ferrari, the Australian, 8 June 2010

PRIVATE-SCHOOL parents have called for an audit of government spending in schools to determine the amount of money that reaches the classroom.

Commenting on the draft terms of reference for the funding review being conducted by the federal government announced in April by Education Minister Julia Gillard, the Australian Parents Council says that although more than \$30bn is invested in schooling each year, an efficiency audit of how federal and state funds are allocated has never been carried out.

"An investigation of how much of the money allocated by governments to schooling actually reaches classrooms, how much is diverted into other areas such as bureaucracy and research, and whether such funds are in fact being usefully and efficiently applied should be incorporated into the funding review," it says.

The Australian Parents Council is the national umbrella organisation representing the parent groups in non-government schools. The submission also rejects the assertion in the discussion paper released for the funding review that the federal government funds schools in partnership with the states, territories and parent communities.

"Statements like this grossly misrepresent unstructured, ad hoc and inconsistent arrangements as 'partnership' since, to be a partnership, a relationship requires structure, inclusion, collaboration and equity," it says.

"It is pure hyperbole to assert that parent communities are ...in a funding partnership with state and territory governments."

The council and the submission from the Independent Schools Council of Australia are also concerned about the possibility of private schools having their funding cut in real terms.

Under the funding system introduced by the Howard government, private schools are allocated money based on their socio-economic status but about half the independent and Catholic schools are funded more than their status indicates and so have their funding set at a higher level.

Source: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/politics/private-school-parents-demand-audit-of-funds/story-e6frqczf-1225876682976>

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End myths on school funds

Ian Dalton, Adelaide Advertiser, 8 June 2010

EDUCATION Minister Julia Gillard is presiding over unprecedented investment in capital and school improvement programs. She also has begun the processes for a review of funding arrangements from all sources for all Australian schools - the first time since 1973 such arrangements have been reviewed.

Work also is proceeding at the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority to identify funding information for every school for inclusion on the My School website.

Such information must be reliable, up to date and directly comparable for government and non-government schools. No easy exercise given the lack of real, reliable figures from the Commonwealth and states, the 18 months time lag in collecting the information and the fact information for schools in one sector is based on the financial year and the other on the calendar year.

Some people persist in claiming the non-government school sector is "wealthy" in comparison with the government school sector and non-government school students receive an unfair share of government funds. In this context, it is crucial any funding information that is made public and invites comparison is true and accurate.

Read entire article: <http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/in-depth/end-myths-on-funds/story-e6frebvu-1225876886734>

Ian Dalton is the executive director of the Australian Parents Council, the national organisation representing parents of students attending non-government schools.

Find out more about the National Review of Funding of Schools at:
<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Programs/Pages/FundingReview.aspx>

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NAPLAN AND MY SCHOOL

Inquiry into the administration & reporting of NAPLAN testing

On 13 May 2010 the Senate referred the following matter to the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee for inquiry and report by 13 August 2010 as to:

- (a) the conflicting claims made by the Government, educational experts and peak bodies in relation to the publication of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing;
- (b) the implementation of possible safeguards and protocols around the public presentation of the testing and reporting data;
- (c) the impact of the NAPLAN assessment and reporting regime on:
 - (i) the educational experience and outcomes for Australian students,
 - (ii) the scope, innovation and quality of teaching practice,
 - (iii) the quality and value of information about student progress provided to parents and principals, and
 - (iv) the quality and value of information about individual schools to parents, principals and the general community;and
- (d) international approaches to the publication of comparative reporting of the results, i.e. 'league tables'; and
- (e) other related matters.

Written Submissions are invited and should be received by 25 June 2010. Details on preparation and forwarding of submissions at: http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/eet_ctte/naplan/index.htm

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NAPLAN Tests too hard, say education experts

Candice Keller, the Advertiser, 1 June 2010

EDUCATION experts have condemned this year's national literacy and numeracy tests, claiming the Year 3 test is "ridiculously" difficult, while some questions are a waste of time.

South Australian university lecturers have examined the Naplan tests, sat by more than a million Year 3, 5, 7 and 9 students nationwide last month, and stated their opinion. Most test sections attracted some criticism for being too complex or lacking relevance.

Flinders University senior lecturer in mathematics education Dr Julie Clark said the tests were especially difficult for Year 3 students.

"The maths questions are really complex for Year 3 level; many of them would not know maths concepts yet, so it could be quite confusing," Dr Clark said.

"Keeping in mind that these tests are sat at the start of Term 2, they would not yet have the skills required for these types of questions."

Dr Clark said equivalent fractions and spatial awareness were too advanced for Year 3. She also said some of the questions were more literacy based than numeracy, relying on students' understanding of the wording.

Flinders University literacy lecturer Dr Barbara Nielsen said there was too much reading for seven and eight-year-old students to get through in the allocated 45 minutes. Dr Nielsen said the tests could be likened to an exam for children and were superficial in testing literacy skills.

Read entire article: <http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/in-depth/tests-too-hard-say-education-experts/story-e6frebvu-1225873937955>

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Marketing, results shifting education focus away from students

Candice Keller, the Advertiser, 7 June 2010

Professor Raewyn Connell, a social change researcher and author, has blamed the My School website for a shift in resources towards the marketing and branding of taxpayer-funded schools. Other education experts have backed the comments and warn school leaders could soon seek to enrol only high-performing students to ensure their school was considered a successful business.

The Federal Government has created a "powerfully negative" regime, particularly through its controversial National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests, Professor Connell told The Advertiser.

Professor Connell, who works for the University of Sydney, said students from lower socio-economic or socio-educational backgrounds would lose out in the long term under the current regime. "It's just increasing the social division," she said. "Our responsibility as a society is to have an education system that works well for all children and we're not doing that."

Professor Connell, who was in Adelaide last Friday at the University of South Australia's Hawke Research Institute, said My School - which publishes school results from NAPLAN testing - asked people "to think about schools as though they are firms in a market".

"Not only are teachers being asked to teach to the test, there are very powerful incentives to do so and the effects are going to be massive," she said.

Read entire article: <http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/south-australia/education-run-like-stock-market/story-e6frea83-1225876194204>

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CYBER SAFETY

Parliamentary Inquiry on Cyber Safety

The Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety was established under a resolution of appointment passed by the House of Representatives on 25 February 2010. Terms of Reference require a Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety be appointed to inquire into and report on:

1. the online environment in which Australian children currently engage, including key physical points of access (schools, libraries, internet cafes, homes, mobiles) and stakeholders controlling or able to influence that engagement (governments, parents, teachers, traders, internet service providers, content service providers);
2. the nature, prevalence, implications of and level of risk associated with cyber-safety threats, such as:
 - a. abuse of children online (cyber-bullying, cyber-stalking and sexual grooming);
 - b. exposure to illegal and inappropriate content;
 - c. inappropriate social and health behaviours in an online environment (e.g. technology addiction, online promotion of anorexia, drug usage, underage drinking and smoking);
 - d. identity theft; and
 - e. breaches of privacy;
3. Australian and international responses to current cyber-safety threats (education, filtering, regulation, enforcement) their effectiveness and costs to stakeholders, including business; opportunities for cooperation across Australian stakeholders and with international stakeholders in dealing with cyber-safety issues;

4. examining the need to ensure that the opportunities presented by, and economic benefits of, new technologies are maximised;
5. ways to support schools to change their culture to reduce the incidence and harmful effects of cyber-bullying including by:
 - a. increasing awareness of cyber-safety good practice;
 - b. encouraging schools to work with the broader school community, especially parents, to develop consistent, whole school approaches; and
 - c. analysing best practice approaches to training and professional development programs and resources
6. that are available to enable school staff to effectively respond to cyber-bullying;
7. analysing information on achieving and continuing world's best practice safeguards;
8. the merit of establishing an Online Ombudsman to investigate, advocate and act on cyber-safety issues; and
(b) Such other matters relating to cyber-safety referred by the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy or either House.

The Committee has resolved to commence its inquiry by focusing on selected topics from its terms of reference. The Committee welcomes submissions on all its terms of reference, but will initially focus on these issues. The Committee invites interested persons and organisations to lodge submissions by Friday, 25 June 2010.

Find out more including advice on preparation and lodgement of submissions:

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jssc/>

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National Cyber Security Awareness Week

Senator Hon Stephen Conroy & Hon Robert McClelland MP, Media Release, 6 June 2010

The Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Stephen Conroy and Attorney-General, Robert McClelland, today launched National Cyber Security Awareness Week 2010.

National Cyber Security Awareness Week aims to inform Australians about the importance of cyber security and highlights the simple steps people can take to protect their personal and financial information online.

The theme for the week is 'Protect Yourself Online', and focuses on the growing number of devices Australians now use to access the internet.

Australians are advised to take six simple steps to improve their online security at home and at work:

- Install security software and update it regularly.
- Turn on automatic updates so that all your software receives the latest fixes.
- Get a stronger password and change it at least twice a year.
- Stop and think before you click on links or attachments.
- Stop and think before you share any personal or financial information - about yourself, your friends or family.
- Know what your children are doing online. Make sure they know how to stay safe and encourage them to report anything suspicious.

As part of National Cyber Security Awareness Week, the Minister also launched the ISP Code of Practice on cyber security. The Code has been developed by the Internet Industry Association, in partnership with the Australian Government. "The Code of Practice provides a consistent approach to help ISPs inform, educate and protect their customers in relation to cyber security issues," Senator Conroy said.

Attorney-General, Robert McClelland, today also launched the Protecting Yourself Online – What Everyone Needs to Know booklet. "The booklet is a comprehensive collection of cyber security and safety information and provides advice on the basic steps Australians need to take to stay secure online," Mr. McClelland said.

Information about National Cyber Security Awareness Week and the Protecting Yourself Online booklet is available on the Australian Government's Stay Smart Online website at www.staysmartonline.gov.au

Read entire release: http://www.minister.dbcde.gov.au/media/media_releases/2010/055

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INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

Turning up and tuning in key to Indigenous education

Australian Council for Educational Research, ACER eNews, May 2010

Indigenous students are performing well below the Australian average in international tests and student attitudes, behaviours and backgrounds could provide some of the keys to understanding this, according to a report launched on 19 May by ACER.

The report is based on findings from all three completed cycles of the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which is managed nationally by ACER.

Indigenous students on average have reported lower levels of access to home educational resources, such as a desk, textbooks and a quiet place to study, and also generally have parents with lower levels of experience of education than non-Indigenous students.

This report focused on the psychological factors that can affect student achievement, and found that while Indigenous students on average have lower levels of confidence, less interest in learning, lower levels of motivation and engagement with reading and higher levels of anxiety about education than non-Indigenous students, they still put in as much effort and reported similar levels of persistence with learning, and felt similar levels of general engagement with school, as their non-Indigenous peers.

However, the report also found that Indigenous students are less likely to attend pre-school, and are more likely to be late to school on a regular basis, to miss consecutive months of schooling and to change school several times.

Some absences may be due to ceremony and Sorry business (Indigenous bereavement rituals); however, as PISA shows a link between consistent school attendance and better student performance, ways must be found to minimise the disadvantages to Indigenous students through missing school.

Read entire article: <http://www.acer.edu.au/enews/2010/05/turning-up-and-tuning-in-key-to-indigenous-education>

Download report: <http://www.acer.edu.au/ozpisa/reports/>

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Scripted lessons start a classroom revival

Miranda Devine, Sydney Morning Herald, 28 May 2010

If you want to see a real Education Revolution then you should go to the remote Cape York town of Aurukun, where Aboriginal leader Noel Pearson has imported a radical teaching program into a school in which more than half of the students were barely reading at kindergarten level, if they could read at all.

In terms of indigenous disadvantage, Aurukun was at rock bottom, with NAPLAN test results 70 per cent below the national benchmark, and every year the achievement gap widening.

The social dysfunction of the Cape's most violent town, driven by gambling, drugs and alcohol, was being played out in the schoolyard.

But Pearson says the children's backgrounds has always been used by principals, teachers and education department bureaucrats as an "alibi for schooling failure". His philosophy is that if a student is at school and ready to learn, "a learning failure is a teaching failure".

Already, after just one-and-a-half terms, the American-designed Direct Instruction program in which teachers deliver scripted lessons, according to a strictly prescribed, methodical program in literacy and mathematics, has surpassed even Pearson's extraordinarily high hopes.

It is a program on which he has staked his reputation, forced into being against the will of much of the educational establishment, and on which his legacy will be judged.

Read entire article: <http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/society-and-culture/scripted-lessons-start-a-classroom-revival-20100528-wlba.html>

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TOWARDS AN AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

English teachers flay study plan

Justine Ferrari, THE Australian, 1 June 2010

ENGLISH teachers argue the national curriculum devalues their role by being too prescriptive, emphasising the transmission of knowledge rather than guiding students in their own learning.

The submission on the English curriculum for years K to 10, released yesterday by the Australian Association for the Teaching of English, criticises the inclusion of literary criticism and informed appreciation, saying it is unsuitable for students before years 11 and 12.

The association is also concerned at the way grammar is presented, saying it could result in "outdated practices" where grammar is taught as an end in itself rather than "in context" when the need to learn a grammatical structure arises in class.

"English teachers in Australia are committed to the explicit teaching of grammar; however, the way that grammar is presented could result in outdated practices . . . rather than (teaching grammar) in context and as the means to effective communication," it says.

"The curriculum as it is currently worded is teacher-centred, prescriptive and fails to acknowledge the diversity of student needs."

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/english-teachers-flay-study-plan/story-e6frg6nf-1225873753669>

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Fewer teachers likely under new curriculum

Martina Simos & Candice Keller, the Advertiser, 1 June 2010

TEACHER shortages will be worsened by the introduction of the new English curriculum, a top educator claims.

Responding to the first draft of the Reception to Year 10 national curriculum, Flinders University senior lecturer Lyn Wilkinson said prospective teachers would be deterred from the workforce by the complexity of the English course. She believed some teachers would leave the profession.

Ms Wilkinson claimed the depth of topics covered by the course was too extensive.

"Either young people will choose not to come into teaching in the first place because they're aware of the breadth and scope of the curriculum and feel that it's too much for them to get a grasp of, or they may well leave the profession in even greater numbers than they already are," Ms Wilkinson said.

"It's a daunting document and there is no way that beginning teachers who have studied English will have all this information at their fingertips or even know where to go to get all this information."

Read entire article: <http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/in-depth/fewer-teachers-likely-under-new-curriculum/story-e6frebvu-1225873942887>

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BUILDING THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION

Stimulus reveals a rotten system

Anthony Klan, the Australian, 29 May 2010

Many of the cost blow-outs in the implementation of BER were built into existing arrangements

AN investigation by The Weekend Australian has found there is a systemic problem with the cost of buildings provided to public schools under the Building the Education Revolution program, with many paying double - in some cases up to 10 times - what they should be for buildings.

Heavy politicking by both sides of government has clouded debate over value for money, and because of the variable and complex nature of construction the debate has been sidetracked. Stripping back those variables reveals state governments - which have delivered buildings to schools under models developed across decades - are not only paying above the odds for buildings under the BER, but have long been doing so.

State government school-building delivery models have been developed to the point where pointless overdesign, onerous documentation requirements and unnecessarily expensive building materials have compounded costs to the point where public schools must pay up to double industry construction rates.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/features/stimulus-reveals-a-rotten-system/story-e6frg6z6-1225872373390>

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Opposition proposes BER restructure

ABC News, 6 June 2010

The Federal Opposition says it could make savings in the schools building program if it wins the next election.

The Coalition has criticised the Government's \$16 billion stimulus program for not providing value for money.

Opposition Education spokesman Christopher Pyne says the Coalition does not want to cut the program.

But he has told Channel Ten it does want to bypass state governments to give public schools the power over their projects.

"Say the program comes in at sort of \$2.7 million with some money left over," he said.

"We'll come to some arrangement with you about whether you keep half of that or all of that or give some back to the Coalition or the Government so there might well be some savings but no school won't get what they want."

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/06/2919409.htm>

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Schools the pawns in a grand plan

Henry Grossek, *The Age*, 8 June 2010

The Rudd government's building program is about providing economic stimulus, not improving education, and it shows.

Fifteen months ago the Building Education Revolution was the showpiece in Kevin Rudd's economic stimulus package to steer Australia clear of the global recession. As a three-pronged school buildings and facilities improvement program to help keep Australia out of recession, it initially promised so much.

Therein lay the kernel of the problem. As Rudd and Education Minister Julia Gillard remain stoically at pains to point out, it was all about jobs and the economy.

School communities across Australia, and in particular cash-strapped and often facilities-poor government school communities, missed the essential point of the federal government's narrative. That point being that schools were to be a pawn in the government's grand economic plan to revive our economy.

Of the three components of the scheme, it is the most expensive program, the \$16.2 billion "Primary Schools of the 21st Century" that is causing the most angst in the community. By the day, as buildings are constructed, we hear of more and more dissatisfaction among government primary schools over allegations of poor value for money.

Read entire article: <http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/politics/schools-the-pawns-in-a-grand-plan-20100607-xqmz.html>

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HEALTH & WELL-BEING

First wash your hands...

The importance of hand hygiene habits in our schools

An update from the Soapstream Team

During the Swine Flu outbreak, Health and Education Departments throughout Australia from concerned parents regarding the lack of effective hand washing facilities in schools.

While both Departments firmly advised all enquirers to make sure they and their children wash they hands in soap and water, the issue is – soap is often not available to our school children or the public due to vandalism.

So, while the Centre for Disease Control Prevention tells us that “washing with soap and water is the first line of defence against germs...” and Dr Tom Jefferson says “The evidence in children is clear – hand washing offers protection against a lot of things, not just respiratory viruses...” – all too often this is not readily available, particularly in the school environment.

Also, it is worth noting that there are even occupational health and safety issues with liquid soaps. And cross infections do occur between multiple users of cake soap. And alcohol-based gels are recommended to be kept out of the reach of children and kept in classrooms only.

But that's where Soapstream provides a cost-effective and efficient solution...!

- Soapstream is a patented, robust and low cost hand hygiene system that is easily attached to almost any existing tap or new installation.
- It contains a solid soap which is swung into the water flow providing soapy water for washing, and then swung out to enable rinsing.
- Soapstream allows hands and instruments to be washed without any contact with the soap product eliminating cross infection.
- Soapstream is designed to solve the hand hygiene issues for schools, homes, public venues and commercial environments, globally.

Soapstream is endorsed by the Australian Primary Principals' Association, the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, and the Australian Council of State School Organisations.

Find out more: <http://www.soapstream.com.au>

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Teachers taught to use life-saving EpiPens

Carly Hennessy, the Sunday Mail, 16 May 2010

EVERY Queensland state school will receive EpiPen kits to treat life-threatening anaphylaxis. Almost one in every two classrooms has a child with a major allergy to peanuts, insect stings, shellfish or eggs. An adrenaline auto-injector, more commonly known as an EpiPen, will be made available for every school's first aid kit.

The State Government will today launch an online course for teachers and school staff to learn how to administer the EpiPen and how to manage and minimise the risks. The course is now on the department's Learning Place website, for the use of state and non-state school staff and childcare workers.

Education Minister Geoff Wilson said the course required participants to first complete a theoretical certification followed by a practical component. "This is an extremely valuable course, as anaphylaxis is potentially life-threatening," he said.

The training would be done by registered nurses and bodies such as the Red Cross and the Queensland Ambulance Service.

The course will also address how schools can manage activities like camps, excursions and sports carnivals held outside school grounds where they could pose a greater risk for students, Mr Wilson said.

Read entire article: <http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/teachers-taught-to-use-life-saving-epipens/story-e6freoof-1225867172063>

Find out more information from Anaphylaxis Australia: <http://www.allergyfacts.org.au/>

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Why care about walking and cycling to school?

Bicycle Transport Alliance 4 June 2010

Apart from the problems caused by parents driving their kids to school such as pollution, congestion in front of the school and endangering kids, there are positive reasons to walk or cycle to school.

Active living research published a study by Associate Professor Stewart Trost in 2007. The paper analysed fourteen previous studies involving 58,000 students in the US, UK, Hong Kong and Australia and suggested that "kids who are physically active and fit are likely to have stronger academic performance". It also found that physical activity improved on-task classroom behaviour.

And the US Department of Health agrees in a 129-page 2010 report "The association between school-based physical activity ... and academic performance". In part it examined studies focusing on the academic performance of students

who participated in after school physical programs and found one or more positive association in all of the nineteen studies.

In clear text that means if you walk or cycle with your children to school, they are more able to pay attention and are likely to improve their school results.

Source: http://btawa.org.au/2010/06/04/active-transportation-to-school-why-care/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+BicycleTransportationAlliance+%28Bicycle+Transportation+Alliance%29

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WEB RESOURCES

Skwirk Interactive Schooling

"We'd like to introduce you to Skwirk.com.au, an interactive website based on the school syllabus.

Skwirk's online content covers the core subject areas of Maths, Science, English, HSIE, Geography, History and Commerce from years 1 to 10. Textual content is supported by thousands of videos, animations, games, interactive activities, TLF learning objects and printable worksheets.

Over 300 schools from NSW alone are currently benefiting from Skwirk's unique features. It's an exceptional resource for teachers facing competing priorities and demands on their time and is an excellent tool to help students revise topics and concepts taught in class. Skwirk is a website, which means it's always available when teachers and students need to use it.

We also offer teachers a free trial of Skwirk. To organise a free trial teachers simply visit <http://www.skwirk.com.au> and enter their details in the teacher trial chalkboard link https://www.skwirk.com/trial_request_form.htm

We will then contact you with some temporary access details – so you can see the benefits Skwirk resources for yourself!"

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World Environment Day

Clean Up Australia is launching the new interactive web-based recycling game 'Clean Up the River', teaching students to recycle and conserve the environment.

This new game is curriculum-based, easy for parents to get involved, fun for children of all ages and free!

Check out the game at: <http://cleanup.noco2.com.au/>

The Schools Climate Kit provides teachers with a comprehensive set of lesson plans around sustainability themes.

There are curriculum-based lesson plans for each State and Territory as well as a great range of creative learning activities and resource links.

Check out the Climate Kit on the Clean Up Australia Website at: <http://www.cleanup.org.au/au/Campaigns/schools-climate-kit.html>

Clean Up Australia publishes a number of updated Fact Sheets covering a variety of important every-day environmental issues.

These can be downloaded and printed direct from the website at: <http://www.cleanup.org.au/au/NewsandMedia/fact-sheets-index.html>

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AROUND THE STATES & TERRITORIES

NSW: Wide gap in net literacy rate amongst teachers in NSW

Fran Foo, the Australian, 3 June 2010

THERE'S a wide chasm between internet literate and illiterate teachers in NSW, the Department of Education and Training's director-general has found.

According to Michael Coutts-Trotter, who is on Twitter, there are teachers who use the social networking platform excessively to exchange ideas and share their experience... but, in the same breath, highlighted a major challenge facing the department: "For everybody that's on Twitter there are others who aren't."

On the bright side, Mr Coutts-Trotter said technology was doing its part in ensuring all NSW children had access to the best teaching and learning environments no matter where they lived.

It was still a challenge as schoolchildren were very geographically dispersed, but hopefully the state was on the right track with millions of dollars already invested in broadband, computers in schools and video-conferencing facilities.

The NSW Connected Classrooms program offers state-of-the art video-conferencing tools that allows students and teachers in different locations to communicate with each other. In some cases students in regional areas can "hook-up" to obtain advice from a seasoned teacher in another city if such expertise were not available in their schools.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/australian-it/nsw-det-gets-taste-of-teaching-reality/story-e6fmgakx-1225875087148>

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NSW: Nationals angry with State Government over school building costs

ABC News, 5 June 2010

The New South Wales Nationals have attacked the State Government over its administration of the federal school buildings program.

The Opposition says the Building the Education Revolution scheme has been plagued by widespread roting.

In question time yesterday, Nationals' leader Andrew Stoner called it the biggest waste of taxpayers' money in Australian history.

Coffs Harbour MP Andrew Fraser is encouraging locals to make a submission to the inquiry examining the scheme before the deadline on Monday.

"I think there are a lot of people out there that have seen [what has] gone on in the schools and whilst they're very happy with the work that's been done, they're extremely concerned about the huge price of that work when they can see the work being done locally at a better price," he said.

Mr Fraser says the State Government has a case to answer over the administration of the program. "Why is it that private schools can build similar infrastructure sometimes at a third of the price of the amount being charged under the public school system?" he said.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/04/2918457.htm>

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NSW: Lenovo gets schooled in laptop case

Tim Lohman, Computer World, 7 June 2010

Parents of NSW school children have been advised that they could be liable for damage to their child's laptop computers issued under the Federal Government's Digital Education Revolution program, despite evidence that the protective cases issued with the laptops do not close properly.

In a letter issued to parents, one Sydney school said the protective case issued to students for their personal laptop could not be closed as the lid placed stress on the laptop's screen.

"Any damage to the laptop attributed to the plastic case being closed will not be covered by warranty," the letter from the school's principal advised parents.

"New cases are at least two months away from being delivered. Your child should ensure that the laptop is securely protected in their bag. It is important to note that students should care well for their laptop as any damage including scratches and dents, will void the warranty."

Read entire article: http://www.computerworld.com.au/article/349139/lenovo_gets_schooled_laptop_case/

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NSW: Schools lose solar cash for making too much power

Ben Cubby, Sydney Morning Herald, 7 June 2010

MORE than half of NSW public schools are being excluded from the government's solar power rebate because they generate too much renewable energy.

Schools that have funded the installation of solar panels through cake stalls and community donations are, in many cases, earning about 10 per cent what private households can earn through the scheme.

Of the 262 schools that produce solar energy in the state, 165 are not eligible for the solar bonus, mostly because their systems are bigger than the 10-kilowatt maximum size allowed under the rebate scheme.

Pittwater High School, which generates the most solar energy of any public school in the state from 22 kilowatts of photovoltaic panels on its roofs, said the scheme took away the incentive to keep aiming for its goal of becoming carbon neutral.

Read entire article: <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/energy-smart/schools-lose-solar-cash-for-making-too-much-power-20100606-xn8b.html>

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NSW: Private school opponents up-beat about chances

ABC News, 8 June 2010

A group of Morisset residents believes it is close to winning its fight against the construction of a private school near the town.

Lake Macquarie Council officers have recommended refusal of a development application for the school of 100 students on land in Ironbark Road. Councillors have deferred their decision until after a site inspection.

But Christadelphian Heritage College principal, Simon Dodson, says he is hoping to convince councillors to approve the school on its merits.

"We have Federal Government [funding] in terms of \$1.7 million worth of funding and we don't believe the arguments put forward to reject the school have planning merit," he said. "We think the proposal is fantastic for our community and the children, so we're looking forward to the council's support."

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/08/2921149.htm>

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NT: Alice education shake-up a 'great way forward'

ABC News, 3 June 2010

The Northern Territory Department of Education and Training says a controversial restructure of middle schooling in Alice Springs is what parents and students want.

The Northern Territory Government has announced it will move students from the Anzac Hill campus of the Centralian Middle School, to Gillen.

The department's Eva Lawler says it is important to acknowledge when something is not working and make changes.

"There were families that wanted to keep Anzac open, but things change and now, as I said, this is a great way forward for all kids in Alice Springs," she said.

"It's not just a few kids. Hopefully we can engage and provide a quality education for all the youth of Alice Springs."

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/03/2917319.htm>

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NT: Pay childcare workers \$10 per hour more: union

Eleni Roussos, ABC News, 4 June 2010

An exodus of childcare workers will continue in the Northern Territory unless wages are improved, the Miscellaneous Workers Union says.

The union's Matthew Gardiner says the Territory's childcare workers are paid on average between \$14 and \$20 per hour.

He says for the work they do, their pay is appalling. "This is roughly the same amount a person who would be stacking shelves in a supermarket will get paid," he said.

The union met with Education Minister Chris Burns this week as part of a national campaign to get more pay and recognition for childcare workers. Dr Burns says their wages fall under the Commonwealth, but says he supports an increase.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/04/2918748.htm>

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NT: Batchelor bailout - \$8.9m for education institute

Eleni Roussos, ABC News, 8 June 2010

The Federal Government is confident millions of dollars of additional funds provided to the Batchelor Institute will help secure the Indigenous education institute's future.

The Government has committed \$8.9 million to support a partnership between the institute and Charles Darwin University.

The federal Minister for Remote Services, Warren Snowdon, says the university will manage staff and student administration.

Mr Snowdon says the two institutions will also share the delivery of some tertiary courses.

"Batchelor Institute will retain its independence, retain its identity, but they will run courses in partnership and they will work towards developing new courses," he said.

"As to what those courses will be, I'm not in a position to say, but what I can tell you is that there is a high expectation that Batchelor continues to focus on traditionally core business."

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/08/2921165.htm>

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QLD: Mandatory language studies get nod

Mark Bode, Sunshine Coast Daily, 31st May 2010

SUNSHINE Coast parents and educators have welcomed the State Government's decision to make language studies mandatory for Year 6, 7 and 8 students.

Education and Training Minister Geoff Wilson said on Saturday that 90% of state schools would teach languages for those years by the start of the 2011 school year – with the remainder of schools following in 2012.

Mr Wilson said the restoration of language studies would provide students with intellectual, social and cultural benefits.

"A 21st century education needs to equip young people to participate and engage across an increasingly globalised world," he said. "Learning a language provides them with analytical and communication skills that will enhance their learning in other areas."

Maroochydore mum Laine Gregory said the initiative would benefit her children, Jasmine, 5, Chloe, 4, and Thalia, one, greatly – although she would like to see it introduced a little earlier than Year 6.

Ms Gregory said it was vital that children learned about other cultures, and Jasmine was already learning Japanese in prep at Kuluin Primary School.

"I think intellectually it's good for them," she said. "Learning another language helps in all other areas of learning as well. I think it should start earlier."

Read entire article: <http://www.sunshinecoastdaily.com.au/story/2010/05/31/mandatory-language-studies-a-welcome-addition/>

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QLD: Petition to Federal Government calling for TAFE funding

ABC News, 3 June 2010

The Queensland Public Sector Union (QPSU) says it will present a petition to the Federal Government calling on them to provide more funding for TAFE (Tertiary and Further Education) institutions.

The union says around 120 positions across the far north, Townsville and Central Queensland are at risk because of Tafe's "dire" financial situation. The positions include retiring staff who will not be replaced as well as voluntary redundancies.

QPSU organiser Kevin O'Sullivan says they have over 300 signatures on a petition that they will present to Leichhardt MP Jim Turnour soon.

"The issue with TAFE is funding and the lack of Federal funding over many, many years," he said.

"They are now talking about 120 redundancies across regional Queensland and that basically covers most of north Queensland.

"That will mean that 2,500 [to] 3,000 students will miss out on courses every day."

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/03/2917119.htm>

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QLD: Majority of harassed gays suffer in silence

Nicole Butler, ABC News, 4 June 2010

A new study has found persecution of those who do not fit the heterosexual norm is rife in Queensland.

A survey of 1,100 homosexual, bisexual and transgendered people found the overwhelming majority had been harassed or abused and most are suffering in silence.

An exhibition called Prejudice and Pride was launched at the Museum of Brisbane on Thursday night to celebrate the history of the gay movement in Queensland. But some of those attending the festivities say homophobic attitudes are still all too common.

Alan Berman, a researcher at Griffith University, says the multi-university study in Queensland on homophobia delivers shocking but sadly unsurprising results.

"We found that an overwhelming majority of respondents had experienced some form of abuse, harassment, threats of actual physical violence," he said.

Dr Berman says persisting homophobic attitudes mean some gay people are leading harrowing lives.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/04/2918401.htm>

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QLD: Rural support considered in schools shake-up

Chrissy Arthur, ABC News, 7 June 2010

Queensland Education Minister Geoff Wilson says he will consider whether rural families should get some sort of support to minimise any impact of moving year seven students to secondary school.

The State Government is considering the change from 2014 and has been seeking feedback on the idea.

Remote families argue it would mean an extra year of sending children who are geographically isolated away to boarding school and could also impact on student and teacher numbers at small primary schools.

Mr Wilson says those matters are being considered.

"There are particularly special and unusual circumstances for students in rural and especially remote areas of the state," he said. "We will certainly be giving that very careful consideration to see whether or not that warrants special attention to ensure that we minimise any adverse implications.

"There are other associated aspects - like what impact does it have on the continued ongoing viability of the existing smaller schools in the area - what impact does it have on the sustainability of local bus routes?

"We want to make sure that we address these aspects as effectively as possible."

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/07/2919827.htm>

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QLD: Push for State Government to honour 95pc kindergarten target

Kim Lyell, ABC News, 7 June 2010

The State Government says it is on track to meet its commitment to have a kindergarten place for 95 per cent of eligible Queensland four-year-olds in 2013.

Only 30 per cent of Queensland four-year-olds have a kindergarten year before school, compared to more than 90 per cent in some other states.

Creche and Kindergarten Association (C&K) spokesman Barrie Elvish says it is important the participation rate is increased.

"So that the children in this state are not disadvantaged to the other states in Australia and they start their schooling with an equivalent developmental background," he said.

The Queensland Government says it is committed to building 240 new kindergartens by 2014.

Two have already been launched and four more are due to open soon.

The Government says 3,500 children have started a kindergarten program at long day care this year as part of a trial in 140 centres.

Mr Elvish says the State Government appears to be on track to meet its target of a place for 95 per cent of four-year-olds by June 2013.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/07/2920286.htm>

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TAS: Back to the future for Tasmanian education system

ABC News, 7 June 2010

Tasmania's colleges for years 11 and 12 students are on their way back.

Each will revert to its original name and have its own principal from next year under major changes to the State Government's troubled Tasmania Tomorrow Academy and Polytechnic system.

The Education Minister, Lin Thorp, has told a media conference a short time ago that the Polytechnic and the Academy would come under the control of the Department of Education, but the Skills Institute will be a separate entity.

She says the changes are a refinement of Tasmania Tomorrow, not an overhaul.

"I see it more as an evolution I don't think there's anyone in Tasmania who didn't see the need for the reforms in the first place because they're about lifting our retention, and attainment rates for post-year 10," she said.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/07/2920496.htm>

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TAS: Education revamp disappoints academy boss

ABC News, 8 June 2010

The head of the Tasmanian Academy says the abolition of its board is a politically expedient move that disrupts academic progress.

Post year-10 students are facing their third revamp in as many years, after the Greens convinced Labor to abandon the Premier's Tasmanian Tomorrow brainchild.

The Academy and Polytechnic boards will both be abolished. The Academy and Polytechnic brands will remain but each of state's eight campuses will regain their college identities and the sector will be back under the control of the Education Department.

Tasmania Tomorrow replaced the old colleges with Academy and Polytechnic campuses in 2009 but only five have made the switch. From next year the colleges that have already become campuses of the Academy and Polytechnic will be able to revert to their old names.

The chair of the Academy's Board, Kim Boyer, says the Labor-Green decision to restructure the system is disappointing. She says the TCE achievements on the Academy's four campuses were significant last year.

"We're concerned that the new structure might simply return to colleges competing with each other rather than working together," she said.

The Education Union's Greg Brown says the changes will ease problems with Tasmania Tomorrow's administration and leadership but there's still work to be done.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/08/2921098.htm>

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VIC: Victorian State Budget 2010-2011

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 5 May 2010

The Victorian Government has tabled the 2010-11 State Budget which provides an additional \$469.5 million for Victoria's education and early childhood system.

The funding includes \$271.3 million to complete the \$1.9 billion Victorian Schools Plan to rebuild, renovate or extend more than 550 schools by 2011.

This Budget provides \$82.6 million over five years to meet the growing demand for childhood services due largely to Victoria's baby boom. This includes \$63.1 million to create an additional 3590 kindergarten places and \$14 million to extend the successful \$38 million Children's Capital Program for the construction and renovation of children's centres.

In a further budget highlight \$108.6 million will help support children and young people with disabilities to receive the best possible start in life. Initiatives will include \$4.4 million to establish "satellite" classrooms for students with intellectual disabilities and inclusion support programs for students with autism and \$9.2 million over four years to establish a Victorian Deaf Education Institute to support and train teachers working with deaf students.

Read entire article: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/publications/budget/budget2010.htm>

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VIC: Funding gap forces private kinders to increase fees

Jewel Topsfield, The Age, 8 June 2010

PRIVATE schools are being forced to increase fees for kindergarten children because they receive less state government funding than for-profit childcare centres.

Although the Victorian government funds 10 hours of kindergarten a week for every four-year-old, independent schools receive up to \$1393 less per child than childcare centres or government preschools.

Independent Schools Victoria says the funding disparity means early learning centres attached to private schools are being forced to increase fees.

"We feel it's very unfair," said Independent Schools Victoria's early years ambassador Evelyn Sayers. "It seems strange that a childcare centre set up to make money gets more funding from the state government than a not-for-profit independent school."

About 100 independent schools provide more than 5800 kindergarten places across Victoria. But Ms Sayers said that, under the "anachronistic" state government funding model, independent schools were only entitled to between \$350 and \$1136 per four-year-old child, while childcare centres and government preschools received \$1743.

Read entire article: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/funding-gap-forces-private-kinders-to-increase-fees-20100607-xqsg.html>

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WA: State schools building their own revolution

Paige Taylor, the Australian, 21 May 2010

THE real education revolution is happening in Western Australia, and it's a lot cheaper than Julia Gillard's \$16.2 billion building program.

So far, 34 government schools across the state have been converted to "independent public schools". They are run by boards and each principal has autonomy to hire staff directly without direction from central office.

They also have the ability to make decisions about their own curriculum, staffing configuration, school resources and expenditure.

A boost of almost \$19 million over four years announced in yesterday's state budget will result in at least 34 more schools becoming independent next year.

More than 130 primary, secondary, district high schools and education support centres have put up their hands to take on independent public school status from next year. The successful schools will be announced in July.

Education Minister Liz Constable said early feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

"The initiative moves decision-making, responsibility and accountability closer to where it matters - the classroom - and schools in the initial intake have been very positive about the changes," she said.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/state-schools-building-their-own-revolution/story-e6frg6nf-1225869362618>

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WA: Undervalued and underpaid claim support staff

Minsi Chung, ABC News, 5 June 2010

Vicky Bennie has been working as an education assistant for ten years. She owns the home she lives in and shares it with her 21 year old son. As part of her job, she looks after children when they are at school and helps the teachers so they can provide a better education.

She says the amount education assistants are paid makes them feel undervalued. "I could be a check-out chick and earn more money than what I can for the job I do with the children at school. We love our job but the pay we get in return for it is really so poor that we are not actually valued in any way by anyone from outside the industry itself."

The union which covers education assistants, cleaners and gardeners in public schools is pushing for a 20 per cent pay rise for its members over three years, in line with recent pay rises received by teachers and police.

The State Government has offered the workers an eight percent increase over three years.

The secretary of the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union, Dave Kelly says the Government's offer equates to an increase of around 44 cents an hour.

"It is really a slap in the face to people who do really work hard in schools."

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/04/2918626.htm>

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CONFERENCES & EVENTS

Progressive Partnerships for C21: Reclaiming the Agenda

2010 Conference of Association of Women Educators

7-9 July, Women's College, University of Sydney

This national conference hosted jointly by the Association of Women Educators and WAVE (Women in Adult and Vocational Education) at The Women's College, The University of Sydney, is expected to attract 150 delegates from across Australia. It is open to everybody interested or involved in the education of women and girls and women in educational leadership. Female secondary and tertiary students are also encouraged to attend.

Early Bird Registration now extended to 16 June 2010!

Further details & registration:

http://www.awe.asn.au/documents/AWE_WAVE_2010_conference_brochure_&_registration_updated-2010-05-26.pdf

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Education: Accessible, Affordable – Appropriate

2010 Conference of the Isolated Children's Parents Association

4-5 August, Esplanade Hotel, Fremantle, Western Australia

Further information, registration etc: <http://www.icpa.com.au/Conference.asp>

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REMINDERS

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/>

23-25 June - International Conference on New Horizons in Education - Famagusta, Cyprus - <http://www.int-e.net/index.php>

2 July - Victorian Mathematics and Statistics Students' Conference - Melbourne, VIC - <http://www.2010vmssc.ms.unimelb.edu.au/>

2-3 July - State Conference of Modern Language Teachers Association of Queensland - Brisbane, QLD - <http://mltaq.asn.au/mod/resource/view.php?id=27>

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

4-7 July - Australian Science Teachers Association Annual Conference - Sydney, NSW - <http://guest.cvent.com/EVENTS/Info/Summary.aspx?e=1a4004e5-1cf4-4df0-931f-94d23111a400>

5-7 July - HTAA National History Conference - North Sydney, NSW - <http://www.historyteacher.org.au/conference.htm>

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/>

12-14 August - National Interactive Teaching and Learning Conference - Gold Coast, QLD - <http://www.iwb.net.au/conferences/australian10/>

14-22 August - National Science Week - <http://www.scienceweek.gov.au/Pages/index.aspx>

15-17 August - ACER Research Conference - Melbourne, VIC - http://www.acer.edu.au/research_conferences/

19-27 August - International Conference of Mathematicians - Hyderabad, India - <http://www.icm2010.org.in/>

25-27 August - European Conference on Educational Research - Helsinki, Finland - <http://www.helsinki.fi/ecer2010/index.html>

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 September - International Middle Years of Schooling Conference - Adelaide, SA - <http://sapmea.asn.au/conventions/middleschool2010/>

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

22 September - Language and Culture and Social Connectedness in Our Diverse Landscape Symposium - Toowoomba, QLD - <http://www.usq.edu.au/lcdl>

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

27-30 September - Australian Mathematical Society 54th Meeting - Brisbane, QLD - <http://www.smp.uq.edu.au/austms2010/>

27 September-1 October - International Association of School Librarianship Conference - Brisbane QLD - <http://www.iasl-online.org/events/conf/2010/>

October - International School Library Month - <http://www.iasl-online.org/events/ism/>

12-15 October - EDGE 2010: e-Learning: The horizon and beyond - Toronto, Canada - <http://www.mun.ca/edge2010/>

13 November - Hands on Literacy Conference - Singapore - <http://www.handsonlit.com/>

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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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