



AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION DIGEST

Volume 4 Number 20, 15 June 2010

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RECOGNISING TEACHING EXCELLENCE

NEiTA Excellence Awards for 2009 presented 11 June 2010

NEiTA, in partnership with the Australian Scholarships Group (ASG), honoured 10 of Australia's leading teachers at the NEiTA 2009 ASG National Teaching Awards held in Melbourne on Friday 11 June 2010.

The award recipients from across the spectrum of education were presented with the NEiTA 2009 ASG National Teaching Awards in three categories; leadership, innovation, and community engagement. They each received a professional development grant and a crystal apple award. One national award recipient was selected to be Australia's representative to participate in the International Space Camp held in Alabama, USA.

NEiTA's Chairman Mr. Terry O'Connell said this year's national award recipients embody the theme Great Teachers Lead the Way and are an exemplary group of education professionals who are leaders in their education and local communities:

- Vicki Fortescue – Jervis Bay Preschool, ACT
- Bree Harvey – Callaghan College/Newcastle School of Performing Arts, NSW
- Vicki Treble – Balgowlah North Public School, NSW
- Jane McQueen – Karama Primary School, NT
- Kristy Thomson – Pittsworth State High School, QLD
- Stephen Measday – Keithcot Farm School, SA
- Merrick Brewer – Chairo Christian School, VIC
- Jane Hayward – Strathewen Primary School, VIC
- Fiona Farren – South Bunbury Primary School, WA
- Paul Fuller – Orange Grove Primary School, WA

Full details of each award recipient: <http://www.neita.com.au/index.asp?menu1=aus2&menu2=3&content1=profiles09-all.htm#nsw>

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Shine the Spotlight on Inspirational Teachers: Nominations invited for 2010 Awards

Nominations are now open for the NEiTA 2010 ASG Inspirational Teaching Awards – Australia's only national community-centred teaching awards program that gives Australian secondary students, parents, early childhood

education, and school communities the opportunity to formally thank their hard-working, inspirational teachers, principals and directors.

Nominating a teacher is a great way to say thank you; to recognise, celebrate and congratulate an inspirational leader, principal or director.

Nominations are now open – and close on 30 July 2010

For full details and nomination form:

<http://www.neita.com.au/index.asp?menu1=aus2&menu2=1&content1=nominate.htm>

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NAPLAN & MY SCHOOL

Privately run school rankings site riles union

ABC News, 8 June 2010

The Australian Education Union wants another website publishing school rankings based on NAPLAN test results to be closed down.

In February the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) ordered the closure of a similar site that charged for written reports.

The union's South Australian president, Correna Haythorpe, says its federal executive will tomorrow discuss the latest Better Education website, which is funded by advertising.

"We don't believe there's any difference between a website that sells a list of league tables as opposed to one that offers it for free and has private advertising on the website," she said.

"We have an opportunity through the Senate inquiry that is now happening at a federal level, but also with ACARA about this particular website and we'll be raising those concerns there."

But a spokesman for the Better Education website, Hong Wang, says he is providing a public service to parents in Australia and abroad. He says advertising on the site covers the cost of domain hosting.

"It also provides additional information such as school results, scholarship information and so on," he said. "We never sell any information and basically it's a hobby."

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/08/2921863.htm>

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Extra info to be added to My School website

Courier Mail, June 10, 2010 (AAP)

THE Federal Government's contentious My School website will include more information about the socio-economic background of students and make their absences more prominent. But it will also have better safeguards to stop newspapers making "league tables" with its information.

Australia's education ministers met in Perth today and agreed to several additions to the site. Some teachers worry the site's information will taint schools and students when they are unfairly compared to others.

The Australian Education Union threatened to boycott this year's NAPLAN tests - the results of which are to be published on the site - but eventually backed off.

At the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs meeting, ministers including federal Education Minister Julia Gillard, endorsed a "click-wrap" for the site. It would require users to agree to terms and conditions, including copyright conditions, aimed to help stop its data being used for league tables.

My School will also be tweaked to include a more accurate "index of community socio-educational advantage".

Read entire article: <http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/breaking-news/extra-info-added-to-my-school-website/story-e6freonf-1225878140130>

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School principals told to boost NAPLAN test results - students with greater needs ignored

Tanya Chilcott, Courier Mail, 10 June 2010

PRINCIPALS were directed to lift this year's national test results "at all costs" as students with greater needs were ignored to boost scores, a report released today warns.

The accusations are among a damning list of "perverse effects" principals said were caused by this year's national tests.

Queensland Association of State School Principals president Norm Hart said the message relayed by some Education Queensland officials this year was: "Our jobs are on the line, so your jobs are on the line. Lift these results or else."

The tests continue to be dogged by controversy. A report released by the Australian Primary Principals Association today is expected to fuel concerns about the testing regime. Educators said the publication of test results had led to the narrowing of curriculums overseas and nefarious exam practices. APPA warns those practices have already begun in Australian schools.

Read entire article: <http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/school-principals-told-to-boost-naplan-test-results-as-students-with-greater-needs-were-ignored/story-e6freoof-1225878157003>

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Primary principals want NAPLAN reform

Leonie Trimper, President, Australian Primary Principals Association, 10 June 2010

"It is critically important that education Ministers curb any misuse of the NAPLAN tests", said APPA President Leonie Trimper. "There is an urgent need for clear principles to underpin the reporting and use of NAPLAN. We continue to support the collection of standardised diagnostic information. But it is clear from research evidence in the United States and Great Britain that high stakes assessment can have an unintended, negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning. We need to avoid going down this path at all costs."

APPA has put forward 6 principles and recommendations to be considered by all governments because it is important that schools are protected from any negative consequences.

"Whilst the Australian Primary Principals Association supports NAPLAN, it remains concerned that problems can arise from using national tests when the stakes are too high. Some examples of perverse effects from the 2010 NAPLAN tests are a good illustration of what can happen when the tests become high stakes", said Ms Trimper.

Ms Trimper said that while the NAPLAN tests themselves are not new, the circumstance in which the tests were administered this year were quite different. The introduction of the My School website and the \$350m reward money for states and territories if they improve their test scores have lead to a situation where schools and school systems have focused excessively on test results.

Read entire release: <http://www.appa.asn.au/index.php/appa-business/news-items/993-appa-wants-naplan-reform-media-release>

Read the Primary Principals' discussion paper: <http://www.apo.org.au/research/overarching-principles-governing-reporting-and-use-naplan>

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Education ministers get tough on NAPLAN tests

Simon Cullen, ABC News, 11 June 2010

Education ministers are considering tougher security measures for the next round of national literacy and numeracy tests.

Last month's NAPLAN tests were subject to several allegations of cheating, including suggestions some schools opened the tests early and prepared their students accordingly.

The Federal Government says there are strict rules surrounding the tests.

But the Federal and State Education Ministers have asked for independent advice on how to strengthen security measures for the next round of tests.

They have also decided to make further changes to the MySchool website to give more prominence to when students do not take part in the national testing.

The ministers have agreed to alter the website to make it harder for league tables to be created.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/11/2924222.htm>

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Abbott backs NAPLAN tests

ABC News, 11 June 2010

Federal Opposition Leader Tony Abbott has defended the national literacy and numeracy tests as well as publishing the data on the Government's My School website.

Mr. Abbott says he will not consider scrapping the NAPLAN tests if elected to Government. He says more attention should be paid to the improvements made by students, based on NAPLAN statistics.

"I think the idea of publishing this kind of data of schools is good," he said. "Maybe we could look at also publishing the improvements that are being made from year to year rather than simply just the raw figures, because in the end that could be considered a better guide to the quality of the teaching at a school."

Meanwhile, Education Minister Julia Gillard says tougher security measures for the tests could be in place by the next round of testing in the New Year.

This year's testing round was marred by allegations some schools told underperforming students to stay home for the day. Allegations of cheating were also heard, including suggestions some schools opened the tests early and prepared their students accordingly.

Ms Gillard says she has asked for independent advice on how to strengthen security measures and improve scrutiny for the next round of tests.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/11/2924691.htm>

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RELIGION & ETHICS

P&Cs are advocating for a program that is complementary to SRE.

Di Giblin, NSW P&C Federation President, media release, 8 June 2010

In response to today's media (Sydney Morning Herald "Anglicans take ethics course battle to P&Cs") the President of the Federation, Di Giblin replied today " As an organization that is inclusive we are always pleased to see new members – P&C Associations are the voice of the local school's community."

P&C Associations work in cooperation with students, teaching staff and the community to encourage parents to participate in curriculum and other educational issues. They promote the recreation and welfare of all students at public schools.

"It would be disappointing if the only motif for people joining was driven by a single agenda." Ms Giblin added

In reference to the concerns regarding the Ethics pilot and SRE Ms Giblin reiterated "The Ethics Pilot or course is not about the removal of SRE from public education – it's about providing opportunity for children who currently opt out of SRE an opportunity to have meaningful discussions during this time. It's a complementary program for children whose parents belong to minority faiths or no faith at all."

Read entire release: <http://www.pandc.org.au/media-release.seo>

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Catholics try new tack in ethics row

Jacqueline Maley, Brisbane Times, 8 June 2010

THE Catholic Church has joined the chorus of religious voices opposing the trial of ethics classes in schools.

It has organised a petition arguing that the classes should not be held "in competition" with scripture because it means religious children miss out on ethics.

This latest protest, which the Baptist and Uniting churches have also joined, takes a different tack to previous objections. Whereas the Anglican church has argued children absorb ethics through the school curriculum and do not need the subject to be taught separately, the Catholics say their children should be able to take ethics classes too.

"We would love ... if the government thought that ethics were a worthwhile addition to the curriculum, to enable Catholic kids to have the opportunity to attend it," said Jude Hennessy, the director of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine for the Wollongong diocese and co-ordinator of the campaign. "It is not fair they should miss this opportunity. Nor is it fair their parents should be caught in a dilemma about whether to send them to formation in their faith tradition or to choose ethics."

Read entire article: <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/national/catholics-try-new-tack-in-ethics-row-20100607-xqu8.html>

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Church accused of hijacking ethics classes debate

Shane McLeod, ABC News, 9 June 2010

The argument about ethics classes in New South Wales schools is getting dirty, with allegations that powerful church forces are effectively branch stacking in an effort to thwart the plans.

It is not every day one of Australia's biggest Christian denominations is compared to a political party machine, but it is an accusation being levelled at the Anglican Church by NSW Greens MP John Kaye. Mr. Kaye says an Anglican Church organisation is trying to encourage its supporters to join Parents and Citizens associations in order to protect existing religious education classes.

He says the Church is using the same tactics Labor's right wing "is famous for". "They're trying to stack the P and Cs with parents who will oppose the ethics trial. This is highly unethical behaviour in order to destroy the ethics trial," he said.

The ethics trial is a test run in government schools of what are known as ethics classes. They are meant to provide an alternative for students whose parents would prefer their children not to take part in weekly religious education classes.

With the Government's trial proving popular and signs it may be expanded statewide, the church is mounting a counter campaign.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/09/2922878.htm>

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Light reading for night fevers

Emma Tom, the Australian, 12 June 2010

Pondering life and death in a late-night medical centre is not for the faint-hearted or toddlers... Far more frightening than this bacteria-fest, however, is the little hard-covered book my ailing ankle-biter discovers while we wait for our two minutes of bulk-billed medical attention a few Friday nights back.

Its title, *What Happens When We Die?*, seems screamingly inappropriate given the context.

But Alice...insists we read the death book and she is so miserable I acquiesce.... I think about how outrageous it is that scripture classes that teach such material are still regarded as the norm in schools rather than the opt-in exception.

In NSW, for instance, there's bitter resistance to the trial of secular ethics classes in 10 public primary schools. According to Sydney's Anglican diocese, the experiment's true objective is not to give non-scripture kiddies an educational option but "to remove Jesus Christ from . . . the consciousness and hearts of the next generation". Losing special religious education, it claims, also risks losing the fundamental values underpinning our moral framework.

The Catholic Church, meanwhile, is arguing that ethics classes should not be held in competition with SRE classes because religious kids will miss out, an odd approach that, as one newspaper letter writer put it this week, suggests the church's attitude to ethics is what's mine is mine and what's yours is also mine.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/opinion/light-reading-for-night-fevers/story-e6frg6zo-1225878333344>

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BUILDING THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION

Cost of prefab raises the heat

Anthony Klan, the Australian, 10 June 2010

THE Reed Group is set to charge \$850,000 for a \$316,000 prefab library it is installing under the federal government's schools stimulus program.

The Rosebank Public School, about 30km west of Byron Bay in northern NSW, is one of the 189 schools in the state set to receive a prefabricated building under the \$16.2 billion Building the Education Revolution scheme at up to three times its actual cost.

So enraged by the enormous cost of the simple 230sq m structure is school librarian Lyn Mitchell that she has made a detailed submission to the NSW upper house inquiry into the scheme.

Ms Mitchell said the prefabricated building was delivered to the school in September last year, but very little work had been conducted on site this year and it was now not scheduled to become operable until August, nine months behind schedule.

"We were unable to take possession of the building earlier this year because it was only half-completed and had so many building problems," Ms Mitchell said. "The contract seemed to change whenever someone wanted it changed."

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/cost-of-prefab-raises-the-heat/story-e6frg6nf-1225877654726>

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Library that lets kids know they matter

Justine Ferrari, the Australian, 10 June 2010

WITH a \$2.5 million grant from the Building the Education Revolution scheme, a primary school in Melbourne has built the library of its dreams.

The newly built library, officially opened yesterday, is a two-storey, architect-designed building about five times the size of the library it replaces, with different types of learning spaces as well as an auditorium with tiered seating for 120 students, and state-of-the-art computers and technology.

Principal Peter Moore believes his school has achieved what the federal government intended when it announced the BER: an "iconic" school building that will inspire students and staff. Without the BER money, Mr Moore said, the school would never have been able to build such a library.

"It made our dreams into a reality," he said. "Our children are so excited; one of the children when he came into the library for the first time burst into tears, he was so overwhelmed with the enormity of what was before him."

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/library-that-lets-kids-know-they-matter/story-e6frg6nf-1225877656109>

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Costs surveyor calls for NSW BER breakdown

Anthony Klan, the Australian, 12 June 2010

THE nation's most respected construction costs surveyor has called on the NSW government to justify the huge cost of buildings delivered under the schools stimulus program by releasing more detailed breakdowns of charges.

Rawlinsons Australia principal Paul McEvoy made the call after the NSW Education Department claimed construction-cost publications were "not always an accurate guide".

In a submission to the NSW upper house inquiry into the \$16.2 billion schools stimulus program, NSW Education Department director-general Michael Coutts-Trotter said it was not "fair or accurate" to use Rawlinsons figures to make comparisons with Building the Education Revolution projects.

Mr Coutts-Trotter said figures such as those published by Rawlinsons should "really only be used by those in the construction industry who have the expertise and are experienced in the vagaries of this industry".

But Mr McEvoy called on the NSW government to provide breakdowns of its costs, as Rawlinsons does, so "everyone can clearly see where the money has been spent".

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/costs-surveyor-calls-for-ber-breakdown/story-e6frg6nf-1225878649499>

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Schools turn on BER over blowouts

Natasha Bitu, the Australian, 14 June 2010

MORE schools are blowing the whistle on the wastage, shoddy construction and rorting of the Rudd government's \$16.2 billion Building the Education Revolution program. The schools have complained about overcharging - including \$23,044 in "landscaping fees" for 17 pot plants and four square metres of turf - and substandard construction, in submissions to the NSW parliamentary inquiry into the BER.

Mary Brooksbank School, which caters for disabled students in Sydney, was given a \$592,000 special purpose room with a door "not constructed to disability standards". Two covered learning areas were built at a cost of \$235,000 without safety reinforcements, so their roofs had to be removed for repairs.

"We will not accept that faults, repairs, failure to comply with standards, incompetence should be paid for out of our BER funds," the school's P&C Association says in its submission.

Building costs at 10 schools have blown out by identical amounts totalling \$4.5 million after the price of modular libraries soared from \$850,000 to \$1.3m. Each of the northern NSW schools, granted \$850,000 last year for new libraries, has blown its budget by \$453,505 - bringing the total cost to \$1.3m each.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/schools-watch/schools-turn-on-ber-over-blowouts/story-fn56ulhe-1225879194625>

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INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

Few children and even fewer resources in remote NT schools

Lex Hall, the Australian, 12 June 2010

IN the remote central Australian town of Yuendumu, a generation of teenagers is at risk of missing out on an education. Barely half the community's school-age children are attending classes -- a situation mirrored across the Northern Territory, where literacy and numeracy rates are among the nation's worst.

While there is a united front to stamp out absenteeism, there are divisions over the path to take. As education officials negotiate cultural factors to convince parents to send their children to school, other education experts say the facilities are not in place to provide for them.

Listed as a Territory "growth town" or future economic hub, Yuendumu, 300km northwest of Alice Springs, is home to about 1000 people. Just over 10 per cent are high-school aged children.

But it is a transient population and, according to the MySchool website, there are 118 full-time students enrolled at the school, 52 in years 7 to 12, with an attendance rate of 56 per cent. With English as a second language for almost all students, the school's literacy and numeracy results across years 3, 5 and 7 are "substantially below" the national average.

Andrew White, executive director of not-for-profit consultancy Education Transformations, estimates up to 7000 of the Northern Territory's 20,000 school-aged children do not attend school. "We know that 80 per cent attendance is the minimum to get any outcome," Mr White said.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/few-children-and-even-fewer-resources-in-remote-nt-schools/story-e6frg6nf-1225878650497>

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TOWARDS AN AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

Schools express curriculum concerns

ABC News, 8 June 2010

Canberra schools taking part in a trial of the draft national curriculum have put forward their views about its implementation. The trial started in March and involves the curriculums for English, maths, science and history.

More than 150 schools from across the country are taking part in the trial.

"This feedback is intrinsic to our understanding of how the new Australian Curriculum works, of its strengths and what needs to be changed," said Dr Peter Hill, chief executive officer of ACARA. "We know that every student, every classroom and every school is unique and we need to make sure the curriculum is able to be successfully used in all classrooms."

Ainslie Primary School principal Jo Padgham says the trial has been going well but the changes will put more demands on teachers. She says the new English curriculum is similar to the existing ACT model.

But she's concerned about the timetable for its implementation.

"With all the will in the world and all the experts in the world I'm not sure that there is enough time for it to be reviewed and perhaps given back to the trialling schools to look at it again or a different group of trialling schools, it's a very, very tight timeframe", she said.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/08/2921558.htm>

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Visual art to lose special focus in schools curriculum

Justine Ferrari, the Australian, 11 June 2010

VISUAL arts teachers are "appalled" by the proposed national arts curriculum for schools, saying it forces the subject to compete with the other arts disciplines instead of being treated as a separate field of study.

The initial advice paper for the arts curriculum, released last month, makes the five subjects of visual arts, music, dance, drama and media studies mandatory for all students from kindergarten to Year 8 for two hours a week.

Art Education Australia vice-president Wesley Imms and Kerry Thomas, a senior lecturer at the College of Fine Arts at the University of NSW, said combining the five arts disciplines into one general subject left about 20 minutes for each area, a vast reduction in time and focus on visual arts than it was currently afforded in schools.

Dr Imms, co-ordinator of visual art education at Melbourne University, described the proposed course as creating a "blancmange, and unfortunately not everyone can eat it".

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/visual-art-to-lose-special-focus-in-schools-curriculum/story-e6frg6nf-1225878162650>

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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Early years learning has 'no impact' according to official British study

Joanna Sugden, the Times, 9 June 2010 [reported in the Australian]

Children who learn to read from a very young age perform no better by the age of five than those who learn later, a British government study has revealed.

Research from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) indicated that billions of pounds spent on the "nappy curriculum" failed to boost achievement and will reinforce calls for the under-five curriculum to be reformed in order to bring England into line with mainland Europe, where children learn through play until the age of six.

The study found that in a sample of the results of 7,000 five-year-olds "on average ... early years education had no impact on any of (the) outcome measures."

In England a free nursery place has been available for all three and four-year-olds since 2004 in a drive to improve standards, especially among those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

But the study found that although those children from the lowest socioeconomic groups did slightly better at the age of five if they had learned to read and write from a very young age, the finding was only 90 percent reliable -- too low to be statistically credible.

Read more: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/education/article7145706.ece>

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HEALTH & WELL-BEING

School garden program prompts kids to try new foods

ABC News, 15 June 2010

New research shows a school program developed by celebrity chef Stephanie Alexander is winning children over.

Ms Alexander's Kitchen Garden Foundation is now running in almost 140 schools across Australia, nine years after it was launched.

Melbourne and Deakin Universities have studied the impact of the program, where children learn to grow food then prepare it.

Ms Alexander says the findings confirm what students, teachers and parents have been saying for years.

"There was strong evidence of increased child willingness to try new foods," she said.

"The other thing that came out very, very strongly is how enjoyable classes were. And the other thing was that there was a tremendous increase in the way the schools related to the community."

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/15/2927152.htm>

Find out more about the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation:
<http://www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au/>

Grant applications close 25 June 2010: <http://www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au/grants-national.shtml>

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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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Environmental education

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/factsheets-index.html>

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AROUND THE STATES & TERRITORIES

ACT: New units to ease rental pressure on university students

ABC News, 15 June 2010

More than 1,000 units offering subsidised accommodation for students will be built at the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra.

The Commonwealth and ACT governments have joined forces with the ANU to provide the extra student accommodation, which will be rented at 20 per cent below the market rate.

Around half of the units are already being built in the ANU precinct.

Chief Minister says the ACT Government will also provide land for another 500 apartments in City West, at an estimated cost of \$28 million.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/15/2927488.htm>

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NSW: NSW to replace controversial school gas heaters

ABC News, 9 June 2010

The New South Wales Government has announced a plan to begin replacing unflued gas heaters for schools in the coldest parts of the state. Parents and campaigners have raised concerns that exposure to nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide from the heaters can cause health problems.

The Government is yet to release an independent report it has commissioned into whether the heaters pose any health risks. However, it recently announced all future gas heaters in schools would be properly ventilated.

Education Minister Verity Firth says the Government will release the Woolcock Institute report as soon as it is peer-reviewed. But says she is acting now.

"The announcement today is that we will be providing \$15 million immediately to start replacing unflued gas heaters in our coldest schools in the state," she said.

The Campaign Opposing Unflued Gas Heaters (COUGH) has been calling for immediate action, saying there is already enough evidence to show that unflued gas heaters are unsafe in schools.

New South Wales is the only state to allow unflued heaters in its schools.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/09/2922691.htm?section=justin>

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NSW: Union turns up heat on school health issue

ABC News, 10 June 2010

The New South Wales Teachers Federation says it will be pushing the State Government to expand the replacement of un-flued gas heaters in schools to those in the Hunter.

A \$15 million replacement program is only targeting cold climate schools but the Government has also commissioned an independent study into the health risks of the heaters.

The federation's Hunter organiser, Fred Dumbrell, says the union has been campaigning for years about the heaters, which he believes pose an occupational health and safety risk to teachers and students.

"Well definitely the high rates of breathing difficulties caused by these heaters and the fact that it [has] taken a concerted campaign by many parents to have this action taken, I think they should feel very pleased but it shouldn't have taken anything like this long," he said.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/10/2923286.htm>

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NSW: TAFE teacher's luxury kennel deals corrupt: ICAC

Jamelle Wells, ABC News, 10 June 2010

The Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) has recommended criminal charges for a senior teacher who defrauded a Sydney TAFE to build a dog kennel.

After a public inquiry in March, the ICAC has found that Garrie Cooper, the head of carpentry at Miller TAFE in Sydney's south-west, engaged contractors to do TAFE work.

He then told them to inflate their invoices to cover work they did for him on the side.

It included building an upmarket kennel for greyhound racing dogs at Londonderry. The commission found he falsely claimed up to \$21,000 for work on the kennel.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/10/2923921.htm>

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NSW: MP lobbies for removal of unflued heaters

ABC News, 11 June 2010

The State Member for Monaro, Steve Whan, says he will be lobbying for schools in South East New South Wales to be included in a funding list for the replacement of unflued gas heaters.

The Department of Education will use \$15m in state funding to remove the heaters from the state's coldest schools.

Mr. Whan says the Department will be selecting schools in the coming weeks, and he expects schools in the region to be included.

Mr. Whan says schools in the High Country and on the Monaro have expressed concern.

"I've had concerns raised by Braidwood and Bungendore particularly, but also concerns from Bombala, and Berridale..."

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/11/2924237.htm>

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NT: Lifesavers want compulsory swimming lessons

Alison Middleton, ABC News, 9 June 2010

The Royal Lifesaving Society is concerned many children are not learning how to swim because swimming lessons are not compulsory at Northern Territory primary schools. The society says other state governments pay for swimming programs at primary schools, but in the Territory it is up to parents to pay.

The society's Floss Roberts says only about a third of Territory primary school students are taking part in a swim and survive program.

"We've got the highest drowning rate in Australia," she said... "We promote our lifestyle and if we're going to promote our lifestyle we need to be able to promote that safe recreation around the water as well."

A spokeswoman for Education Minister Chris Burns says the Government funds five free water safety lessons for all children under five.

He says water safety education is part of the curriculum for primary and middle schools, but he is keen to discuss the issue further with Royal Lifesaving NT.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/09/2922597.htm>

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QLD: Out-of-control students risk bus safety

James Kelly, ABC News, 15 June 2010

A Brisbane-based public transport support group has warned it is only a matter of time until out-of-control students onboard local school buses cause a fatal crash.

Robert Dow from the community group "Rail Back On Track" says bus drivers at Caboolture, Logan, Ipswich and inner Brisbane have told him bad behaviour from school children is making the job dangerous.

"It's unreasonable to expect bus drivers to have to put up with out-of-control students, particularly when missiles are being thrown on buses which, in turn, can distract the driver and cause a crash," he said.

Transport Workers Union (TWU) spokesman Hughie Williams says the problem is getting worse.

"Driver after driver is being assaulted by school kids," he said.

They have called on the Transport and Education departments to put security guards or supervisors on buses and conduct an education campaign for students.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/15/2927336.htm>

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SA: Birth-to-8yo data tracking for SA children

ABC News, 10 June 2010

A data tracking system for South Australian children will help measure their health and education progress, says Education Minister Jay Weatherill.

The SA Government will combine information already being gathered by various departments on children from birth until they are eight.

Mr. Weatherill says tracking children's progress will help researchers and policy-makers deal with a range of social and health problems.

"What's new about this is linking it to other fields of data, so say school results, so we'll be able to make those links and see whether some of these things that we might hope are making a difference for people whether they really are," he said. "A lot of policy-making in this area is made intuitively based on some data that we have."

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/10/2923397.htm>

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TAS: Opposition seeks apology over education 'waste'

ABC News, 8 June 2010

The Tasmanian Government has come under fire in Parliament after rolling back the Premier's post-year 10 education system. The Opposition says the Government has wasted taxpayers' money and people's time and effort.

The Opposition Leader Will Hodgman says there is speculation Tasmania Tomorrow has cost taxpayers \$50 million. He asked the Premier, David Bartlett, to apologise to those involved in what he said was another failed Labor education system.

"We're now actually entering our fifth iteration of the education system since 2002," he said.

Mr. Bartlett said the Government has had to top up the Tasmania Tomorrow budget allocation by less than \$20 million. The extra money has been for facilities and to cater for an increase in the number of students.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/08/2921453.htm>

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TAS: Tasmanian teachers trained to treat allergic reactions

ABC News, 14 June 2010

A new program has been developed to help Tasmanian teachers deal with increasing rates of allergies and severe allergic reactions in children.

About 15,000 Australian children born this year will develop a potentially fatal food allergy before reaching school age.

In a national first, the Asthma Foundation has developed a program to deal with allergies in Tasmanian schools. The foundation's chief executive Cathy Beswick says teachers need to be able to act quickly when a child is suffering a severe allergic reaction, known as anaphylaxis.

"You're talking about a life and death situation, you've got a major occurrences happening in the heart and the lungs," she said. "You've got literally up to two minutes before that child needs an adrenaline injection through an auto injector."

The foundation's schools program will train teachers to deliver life-saving medical attention to children suffering potentially fatal allergic reactions.

Ms Beswick says it is the first of its kind in Australia.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/14/2926116.htm>

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VIC: Ultranet rollout delayed by privacy concerns

ABC News, 10 June 2010

Privacy concerns have forced the a delay in the roll-out of the Victorian Education Department's ultranet, which is designed to act as a "virtual classroom."

It is also designed to enable parents to keep across their child's education, giving them access to their homework, attendance and assessment.

The Privacy Commissioner raised concerns about children chatting on Facebook-style pages on the ultranet website.

The Victorian president of the Australian Education Union, Mary Bluett acknowledges there have been delays.... She admits the results of an audit have revealed privacy concerns, specifically about children chatting on Facebook-style pages. Ms Bluett says the key is getting it right for teachers and students.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/10/2923406.htm>

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VIC: Plug pulled on students' virtual chatroom

Jewel Topsfield, the Age, 10 June 2010

THE Education Department has been forced to scrap part of its \$77 million virtual-classroom project after the Privacy Commissioner raised concerns about children chatting on Facebook-style pages.

The ultranet - an online network that will give parents round-the-clock access to their children's lessons, homework, results and attendance - will be rolled out in every state school in Victoria by September. But the department has ditched plans for every student to have a so-called "eXpress landing page", which would have allowed them to chat via Facebook-style message walls.

Students also will no longer be able to have "learning contacts" - similar to friends on Facebook - access their personal profiles on the ultranet.

Victorian Privacy Commissioner Helen Versey said the Education Department commissioned a privacy impact assessment from an independent consultant that highlighted concerns, including issues relating to the eXpress landing page. "I share those concerns," she said. "I have been advised that the department is addressing the privacy issues raised by the privacy impact assessment, which will result in some changes being made."

Cyber bullying is a growing problem in schools, with research suggesting one in 10 students is bullied online or via other digital technology.

The ultranet, which has been introduced to 350 schools, can be accessed only by students, teachers and parents.

Read entire article: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/plug-pulled-on-students-virtual-chatroom-20100609-xwub.html>

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WA: Earlier return gives private school edge in NAPLAN testing: union

ABC News, 9 June 2010

A private school in Perth has changed its term dates for next year, sparking further controversy over the fairness of the Federal Government's NAPLAN tests, the National Literacy and Numeracy assessment.

...Anne Gisborne from the State School Teachers' Union says it gives Hale an unfair advantage over other schools and says it is likely other independent schools will follow suit.

"The proposition that some schools may change their school holiday time so they then get a chance to get back in and freshen up the children and prepare them for the NAPLAN testing a week out from the testing would in many people's views put them in an advantaged position."

The Education Minister declined to be interviewed but a statement was released on her behalf by David Whitely saying the Education Department is trying to resolve the situation.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/09/2922174.htm>

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WA: No review of Independent Public Schools until 2013

ABC News, 9 June 2010

Western Australia's independent public schools will not undergo any independent review process until 2013 - three years after they were introduced.

The first 34 trial schools handed in their business plans at the end of May, but they will not be assessed until they are due to renew the plans in 2013.

The system will expand in July when an independent panel will announce the second round of schools.

The Opposition Leader Eric Ripper says the Government should not be choosing the next schools without first examining the pilot group.

"If the Government is serious about this experiment, they should prepare to be open and accountable as they promised before the election and they should conduct an independent review before they expand the program."

The State School Teachers Union President Anne Gisborne says the three year gap before there is any independent review is concerning.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/09/2922923.htm>

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CONFERENCES & EVENTS

Stronger Smarter Approaches to Indigenous Education

30 June, QUT Kelvin Grove Campus, Brisbane, QLD

Executive Dean's Seminar Series, Faculty of Education, QUT

Dr Chris Sarra will discuss the Stronger Smarter Learning Communities (SSLC) project and the key objectives of the Stronger Smarter Institute. Dr Sarra will explain how these objectives will be met through the Stronger Smarter Leadership Program and the Stronger Smarter Learning Communities Project.

A high profile Core Research Team established within QUT's Faculty of Education and led by Professor Allan Luke has been evaluating the SSLC project. Two members of this team, Dr Annette Woods and Professor Val Klenowski, will provide a comprehensive overview of the evaluation research design.

Stronger Smarter Learning Communities (SSLC) is a national landmark project emphasising high-expectations and relational approaches to Indigenous Education in a range of targeted school sites across Australia. This \$16.4 million project is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. It embeds the Stronger Smarter philosophy, which is grounded in the Strong and Smart approach developed by Dr Chris Sarra as principal of Cherbourg State School.

Read more: https://fileshare.qut.edu.au/public/ruvic/Seminar_30_June_2010_images.pdf

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Second Annual Asian Conference on Education

2-5 December, Osaka, Japan

The International Academic Forum in conjunction with its global partners is proud to announce the second annual Asian Conference on Education, to be held from December 2-5 2010, at the Ramada Osaka, Osaka, Japan.

The aim of ACE 2010 is to encourage academics and scholars to meet and exchange ideas and views in a forum encouraging respectful dialogue. This international conference will bring together a number of university scholars working throughout Japan, Asia, and beyond to share ideas.

ACE 2010 will afford the opportunity for renewing old acquaintances, making new contacts, and networking across higher education. Academics working in Japan and Asia will be encouraged to forge working relationships with each other, as well as with colleagues from Europe and the US, facilitating partnerships across borders.

Read more: <http://ace.iafor.org/>

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REMINDERS

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://quest.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>

7-9 July - Conference of Association of Women Educators - Sydney, NSW - http://www.awe.asn.au/documents/AWE_WAVE_2010_conference_brochure_&_registration_updated-2010-05-26.pdf

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/>

4-5 August - Isolated Children's Parents Association Conference - Fremantle, WA - <http://www.icpa.com.au/Conference.asp>

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/islm/>

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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