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Read this on the web at <http://www.acsso.org.au/RU080605.pdf>

News items in this edition:

- [USA: Parental involvement boosts student achievement](#)
- [USA: Senator Barack Obama Centres Education](#)
- [UK: the positive impacts of integrated services on children, young people and their families](#)
- ['Systems of Care' Found to Benefit Troubled Youths](#)
- [Canada: Canada examines abuses of church-run schools](#)
- [UK: University's exam to counter A-level grade inflation](#)
- [UK: Universities Offer Downloadable Lectures](#)
- [UK: Private schools plan kite-mark quality scheme](#)
- [UK: Most teachers lack degree in their subject](#)
- [UK: Government failing to meet maths teaching target](#)
- [UK: Don't knock exams - they're a test of character](#)

USA: Parental involvement boosts student achievement

Durham, New Hampshire (AP)

University of New Hampshire research shows that students do much better in school when their parents are actively involved in their education.

Researchers Karen Smith Conway and Andrew Houtenville used information from around the country from more than 10,000 eighth-graders, their parents, teachers and school administrators. They looked into how frequently parents discussed activities or events of interest to the child or things the child studied in class. They also reviewed how often parents discussed selecting courses or programs, attended a school meeting and volunteered at school.

Conway said that parents being involved is consistently associated with higher levels of achievement. She said the study found that schools would need to increase spending by more than \$1,000 per child to achieve the same results gained with parental involvement.

The paper "Parental Effort, School Resources and Student Achievement", published in the Journal of Human Resources, is available for a fee at <http://jhr.uwpress.org/cgi/content/refs/XLIII/2/437>

USA: "What's Possible for Our Children?"

Senator Barack Obama, 4 June 2008

"It's an honor to be here at Mapleton Expeditionary School of the Arts. Just three years ago, only half of the high school seniors who walked the halls of this building were accepted to college. But today, thanks to the hard work of caring parents, innovative educators and some very committed students, all 44 seniors of this year's class have been accepted to more than 70 colleges and universities across the country.

"I'm here to congratulate you on this achievement, but also to hold up this school and these students as an example of what's possible in education if we're willing to break free from the tired thinking and political stalemate that's dominated Washington for decades, if we're willing to try new ideas and new reforms based not on ideology but on what works to give our children the best possible chance in life.

"At this defining moment in our history, they've never needed that chance more. In a world where good jobs can be located anywhere there's an Internet connection- where a child in Denver is competing with children in Beijing and Bangalore - the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge. Education is the currency of the Information Age, no longer just a pathway to opportunity and success but a prerequisite. There simply aren't as many jobs today that can support a family where only a high school degree is required. And if you don't have that degree, there are even fewer jobs available that can keep you out of poverty.

"In this kind of economy, countries who out-educate us today will out-compete us tomorrow. Already, China is graduating eight times as many engineers as we are. By 12th grade, our children score lower on math and science tests than most other kids in the world. And we now have one of the highest high school dropout rates of any industrialized nation in the world.

Read more at http://origin.denverpost.com/headlines/ci_9405199

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UK: the positive impacts of integrated services on children, young people and their families

UK National Foundation for Education Research, 15 May 2008

New research indicates that more integrated working across children's services is already having a positive impact. As a result of the support they are receiving, children and young people report feeling safer, happier and more confident, and believe they are doing better at school. Parents also mention raised future aspirations for their child. Local authority staff report that children and families are getting better support and that the process of culture change in authorities is well underway.

The research, which includes some interesting cameos, comes from the Local Authority Research Consortium (LARC), a unique partnership between local authorities and research organisations. LARC's collaborative approach, with LA staff and researchers sharing the work, has encouraged the authorities to 'tell their own story' and provided opportunities to learn from each other.

During its first year LARC's focus was to identify across 14 local authority areas the impact of integrated children's services on three groups of vulnerable children and young people where they might particularly make a difference: looked-after children, children under 12 with autistic spectrum disorder and 11 to 14 year olds with over 20% absence from school.

Service managers and practitioners report a range of positive impacts for children, young people and parents as a result of the support these users are now receiving through integrated children's services. These include:

- Improved outcomes for children and young people: improved emotional wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem, enhancements to their social skills (especially how they get on with their peers, adults and parents), children having better physical health, attending school, learning and achieving
- Improvements to parents' views on and understanding of services: knowing where to go for help, knowing who is doing what, a greater awareness of local resources and of the support available for their child, having an understanding that education and social care are working together, not having to repeat their 'story'
- Improvements to parents' and families' wellbeing: families feel more supported and valued, parents gain confidence, are less stressed and more able to cope, feel involved and listened to

- Better access to services for children and their families: quicker response with appropriate support in place, a more coordinated and joined up response, earlier identification of needs, a single point of contact, and identification of additional needs, such as bereavement support.

Read more at <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/latest-news/press-releases/the-positive-impacts-of-integrated-services-on-children-young-people-and-their-families.cfm>

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USA: 'Systems of Care' Found to Benefit Troubled Youths

Christina A Samuels, Ed Weekly

Teenagers involved in "systems of care"-coordinated networks of providers and schools that work to get services to adolescents with mental-health issues-have fewer disciplinary problems, and attend school more regularly within a year and a half of getting services, a government report says.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, a branch of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, oversees a federal grant program to expand the "systems of care" service-delivery model nationwide.

As part of an effort last month to promote awareness of children's mental-health problems, the agency examined the outcomes of youths ages 14 to 18 involved in such programs.

Schools tend to be the most common avenue used to refer teenagers to mental-health services. Within 18 months of students' involvement in a systems-of-care model, suspension and expulsion rates dropped from about 52 percent to 29 percent, the study found.

Read more at <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/06/04/39health.h27.html>

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Canada: Canada examines abuses of church-run schools

Rob Gillies - 2 June 2008

A truth and reconciliation commission is examining a decades-long government policy that required Canadian Indians to attend schools where students were forced to lose their cultural identity and routinely were subjected to abuse.

The commission's five-year mandate began Sunday and its work starts Monday. Members will eventually travel across Canada to hear stories from former students, teachers and others. The goal is to give survivors a forum to tell their stories and educate Canadians about a grim period in the country's history.

"It's the darkest, most tragic chapter in Canadian history and virtually no one knows about this," Phil Fontaine, the national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, told The Associated Press.

From the 19th century until the 1970s, more than 150,000 aboriginal children were required to attend state-funded Christian schools in a painful attempt to rid them of their native cultures and languages and integrate them into Canadian society.

Read more at http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5j5TTtKUMVW69ZssdYs2_1Xbbgbzwd911CSR80

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UK: University's exam to counter A-level grade inflation

Owen Bowcott, The Guardian, June 4, 2008

One of Britain's most successful universities is developing its own entrance exam because it believes "grade inflation" has rendered A-levels useless as a means of selecting the best undergraduates.

Sir Richard Sykes, the rector of Imperial College London, yesterday warned that the state education system was failing the country's most gifted children and called for radical action to "save" bright students.

Speaking at the Independent Schools Council's annual conference in London, Sykes said: "Top institutions have great difficulty separating out the best students. Even if you interview all the students, you still have a problem."

The new entrance exam will assess candidates' general intelligence and creativity. It could be brought in from 2010.

Read more at

<http://education.guardian.co.uk/universityaccess/story/0,,2283639,00.html?gusrc=rss&feed=8>

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UK: Universities Offer Downloadable Lectures

Natasha Gilbert, Education Guardian, June 3, 2008

University College London (UCL) is aiming to reach wider audiences by becoming the first mainstream UK university to make audio and visual content available for download on Apple's iTunes U - an area of the iTunes store designed for universities.

UCL, together with Trinity College in Dublin and the Open University, has today launched its iTunes platform, making lectures, interviews, seminars and news freely available to download onto iPods or computers.

Up until now, only North American institutions have featured content on iTunes U.

UCL will broadcast talks and lectures by its academics and other invited speakers, such as Dr Tadataka Yamada of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. UCL's platform will also feature a virtual tour of the university's 2008 summer fine art show, weekly round-ups of news from UCL and an interview with Prof Malcolm Grant, UCL president and provost.

A spokesman for UCL said the university is planning to broaden the content it makes available, including course and lectures notes for students. But he said there would be limited access to some of this content.

Read more at <http://education.guardian.co.uk/higher/news/story/0,,2283508,00.html>

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UK: Private schools plan kite-mark quality scheme

Polly Curtis, Guardian, June 4, 2008

Private schools are to launch a kite-marking scheme to stop "rogue trader" schools around the world capitalising on the reputation of a British education.

Chris Parry, the chief executive of the Independent Schools Council (ISC), told the organisation's annual conference in London that the scheme would "maintain standards" in schools around the world.

Parry was speaking after making controversial comments in an interview with the Guardian last week referring to unteachable children and ignorant parents in the state sector. He said state school pupils could not be expected to get into top universities if they were bullied by classmates from "disadvantaged backgrounds".

In a notably low-key speech yesterday, he warned that the independent sector was facing challenges including the economic downturn, a demographic fall in the number of pupils over the next decade and innovations in teaching technology.

He told journalists that there were a lot of "rogue traders", who were "operating in the wider world calling themselves British schools which I think this country probably wouldn't want to put their name to. We have to establish what the benchmark is and that's got to be a very high standard if people are going to market it as a British school."

Read more at <http://education.guardian.co.uk/schools/story/0,,2283538,00.html>

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UK: Most teachers lack degree in their subject

Polly Curtis, The Guardian June 4, 2008

Less than half of secondary school teachers have a degree in the subject they teach, according to a report commissioned by the government.

The proportion of lessons being taught by teachers with no relevant post A-level qualification has increased in the past five years by four percentage points to 21%.

Most damaging for ministers, who yesterday claimed this generation of teachers was the best-qualified ever, the report found schools in the most disadvantaged areas were least likely to have teachers with relevant qualifications. Across all state schools only 43% of teachers have a degree in the subject they teach.

The National Foundation for Educational Research surveyed more than 14,000 teachers in nearly 330 secondary schools in England. It also found there had been an overall 10 percentage point rise in the proportion of teachers with degrees in their specialist subjects.

Source: <http://education.guardian.co.uk/schools/story/0,,2283552,00.html>

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UK: Government failing to meet maths teaching target

Natasha Gilbert, Guardian, June 3, 2008

The proportion of lessons taught by teachers with a relevant post A-level qualification has dropped across all subjects by 4% between 2002 and 2007, a survey released today shows.

The Secondary School Curriculum and Staffing Survey carried out for the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) also found that the government is failing to reach its target of having 95% of maths lessons taught by maths specialists by 2014. The proportion of maths lessons taught by teachers with a relevant post A-level qualification has dropped from 88% in 2002 to 84% in 2007, the survey says.

The findings coincide with the publication of a report from the centre right think-tank, Reform, which warned of a crisis in maths education at school. It said the standard of maths education has declined over the past 50 years and that the government must do more to improve the quality of maths teaching.

The survey of 327 secondary schools in England found that the majority of teachers had a degree in the subjects they taught. But between 2002 and 2007, the proportion of lessons being taught by teachers with relevant post A-level qualifications had dropped from 83% to 79%.

Read more at <http://education.guardian.co.uk/schools/story/0,,2283513,00.html>

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UK: Don't knock exams - they're a test of character

Chris Arnott, The Guardian, 3 June 2008

Not everyone thinks there are too many tests. Some psychologists believe they prepare children for life. Chris Arnot reports: -

The moment when Dr Peter Clough realised there's more to performance than ability came on a bleak rugby league field in Barrow-in-Furness. He was playing for Bradford University, and found himself up against a large and fearsome-looking winger who calmly announced that he was going to kill him.

"I believed him because, although I had fast hands for rugby, I lacked confidence," admits the stocky figure who is now head of psychology at the University of Hull.

We're on our way from Hull station to a nearby coffee bar. Clough is walking with a jauntiness that suggests confidence is no longer an issue. The painful lessons he learned on the sports field are what he's now trying to pass on to those who find themselves in the less bruising but equally intimidating environment of the examination hall.

"Life's tough; deal with it," is his motto. Or, to put it another way, those who can train themselves to work well under pressure are more likely to do well in exams than intelligent students who are not good at coping with stress.

Read more at <http://education.guardian.co.uk/gcses/story/0,,2283429,00.html>

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