

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION NEWS ROUNDUP

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Read this on the web at <http://www.acsso.org.au/RU081023.pdf>

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DENMARK

"Education for Intercultural Understanding and Dialogue"

The Copenhagen Conference, 21-22 October 2008

Denmark is proud to host The Copenhagen Conference: "Education for Intercultural Understanding and Dialogue" in Copenhagen 21-22 October 2008.

The Copenhagen Conference is a follow-up to the 'Conference on Fostering Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations through Concrete and Sustained Action' in Rabat 14-16 June 2005.

The general focus of the conference will be on education as an essential condition for promoting intercultural understanding and dialogue.

The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs is pleased to convene the conference in partnership with UNESCO, ISESCO, OIC, ALECSO, the Council of Europe and the Alliance of Civilizations and Anna Lindh Foundation as co-sponsoring organizations.

The aim of the conference is to further and sustain the dialogue process and initiatives set in motion in Rabat in 2005 through a specific focus on education. In the spirit of the Rabat Commitment, experts and practitioners in the field of intercultural dialogue will share their knowledge and experiences in the three working groups of the conference.

Read more at <http://www.cc2008.dk/>

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EUROPE

What should our schools be like in the 21st Century?

European Commission, 3 July 2008

In its Communication "Improving Competences for the 21st Century: An Agenda for European Cooperation on Schools", presented on 3 July, the Commission is proposing an agenda for cooperation among the Member States in three main areas, to make school systems more relevant to the knowledge-based Europe of the future.

First, there needs to be a focus on giving all pupils the competences they need for life in our rapidly changing knowledge society. This includes: increasing levels of reading literacy and numeracy; reinforcing learning-to-learn skills; and modernising curricula, learning materials, teacher training, and assessment accordingly.

Second, there needs to be a commitment to provide high quality learning for every student. This involves generalising pre-school education; improving equity in school systems; reducing early school leaving; and improving support within mainstream schooling for students with special needs.

Third, we need to strive to improve the quality of teachers and school staff. This will require more and higher quality teacher education; more effective teacher recruitment; and help for school leaders to focus on improving learning.

Read more at http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/news492_en.htm

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INDIA

Ministers to decide on providing hot meals to schoolchildren

Indo-Asian News Service, 16/10/2008

The cabinet Thursday decided to constitute a Group of Ministers (GoM) on the controversial issue of providing hot cooked meals to schoolchildren under the the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme.

The cabinet also approved the continuation of the ICDS, providing health, nutrition and education services to children from marginalised and remote areas and expansion of its third phase.

The GoM will give its recommendations after consultations with the state governments, said a statement issued here.

Women and Child Development Minister Renuka Choudhury had proposed that children from poor families should be given free hot meals to get them to stay in school.

The proposal was opposed by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the finance minister and the Planning Commission, which said: "Earlier experiments with fortified foods had failed to reduce the high levels of malnourishment in the country."

Choudhury wanted that children be given pre-packaged micronutrient fortified food instead of hot cooked meals. In her defence, she had said that it was logistically impossible to provide healthy, cooked meals to children in 110,000 Anganwadis.

Read more at <http://www.aussieindolanka.com/news/india/education/?newsid=65185&NewsDate=>

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IRAQ

UNESCO and Iraqi Ministry of Education launch educational TV channel

UNESCO, 21 October 2008

UNESCO and the Education Minister of Iraq yesterday launched the Iraqi Educational TV Channel, IRAQI EDU.

The channel is a response to the difficult security conditions in the country that keep many children away from school, and will provide support to students through distance learning.

A measure taken to strengthen an endangered educational system, the \$6.5 million project, financed by the European Union as part of their overall support for the Sector in Iraq, is being implemented by UNESCO in cooperation with the Iraqi Ministry of Education.

The channel will broadcast 24 hours a day (on NILESAT at 10775 Hz) educational episodes based on the Iraqi school curricula.

The project is designed particularly for primary and secondary school students both within and outside of Iraq.

It is mainly a response to security risks that result in a high rate of absenteeism and the closing of schools.

Read more at http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=43730&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

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IRELAND

€100m funding for fee-paying schools can be cut, says TUI

John Walshe Education Editor, Independent.ie, October 23 2008

The Government should look to the €100m subsidy for fee-paying schools to make savings, the Teachers' Union of Ireland suggested last night.

The union said that taxpayers were continuing to fund fee-paying schools while the Government was cutting provision for the disadvantaged.

"Effectively, taxpayers' money funds schools to the tune of €100m that only the most affluent in society can afford to attend. Such schools will be virtually unscathed by the brutal cuts aimed against the minority ethnic or Traveller students announced last week," it said.

The subsidy is in the form of the State paying the salaries of an estimated 1,500 teachers, principals and deputy principals in the fee-paying sector where there are some 26,189 students at present.

Read more at <http://www.independent.ie/national-news/budget-2009/news/8364100m-funding--for-feepaying-schools-can-be--cut-says-tui-1506107.html?r=RSS>

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NEW ZEALAND

School funding to go on the election agenda

NZ School Trustees Association, 20 October 2008

The people who manage school budgets say the adequacy of funding of schools must be up for debate during the election campaign.

President of the New Zealand School Trustees Association Lorraine Kerr says parents all over New Zealand will be interested to hear how many cake stalls and galas they are going to have to run to support their kids achieving at school.

She says last year schools fund-raised \$560 million for their schools, with a significant amount coming direct from the parent community. In addition, boards have funded over three thousand teachers out of their own pockets.

"We want to know how each political party plans to support our schools which continue to struggle to make ends meet through an inadequate operations grant."

Read more at <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/ED0810/S00080.htm>

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Launch of revolutionary guide for schools

Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand, 16 October 2008

Dyslexia Foundation launches revolutionary guide for schools in face of political inaction.

Dyslexia in schools a ticking time bomb.

The Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand (DFNZ) today launched a revolutionary guide for New Zealand schools to tackle dyslexia in the classroom – a resource designed to support educators on the frontlines in the absence of dedicated government funding or resources.

The Foundation also today challenged political party leaders to publicly announce their policy on dyslexia, noting that funding for dyslexia would substantially reduce flow-on social issues caused by failure at school.

It is estimated that 50% of people who come before the Youth Court have some sort of learning difficulty, and DFNZ Chair of Trustees Guy Pope-Mayell says the link between dyslexia and social dysfunction is clear.

Read more at <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/ED0810/S00069.htm>

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NIGERIA

Stakeholders Brainstorm On Strategies for Achieving Education for All By 2015

Olubusuyi Adenipekun and Flora Onwudiwe, Vanguard, 23 October 2008

Recently, important stakeholders of education gathered in Lagos for a roundtable discussion to identify those factors impeding progress towards the attainment of Education for All by 2015 and to seek ways of rejuvenating the nation's educational system.

At the event, which took place at Goethe Institut, Lagos and was attended by school owners, education agencies, operators of the nation's education, lecturers and well-meaning education individuals, it was unanimously agreed that corruption has been the bane of the country's education sector, a factor which has been frustrating attempts to revamp the sector.

Another obstacle in the way of achieving education for all is the poor quality of teachers in the nation's schools.

Dr. Dayo Olagunju of the National Commission for Mass Education stressed the need for government to engage in capacity building programmes for teachers, adding that by so doing they will be kept abreast of developments.

Mrs Margaret Yau said the agency she works with, Education for All, has authoritatively established that girls are in the majority of the millions of pupils that are out of the nation's school system.

Read more at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200810230742.html>

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RWANDA

Global Higher Education Summit Opens

Joseph Mudingu, The New Times (Kigali), 23 October 2008

A four-day high level summit on African regional education opened yesterday at Serena hotel in Kigali.

The summit which brought together leaders of higher institutions and representatives from over 200 universities across the globe was attended by the US Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings.

Spellings told participants that higher education can boost economic growth and global competitiveness.

"Education is the most powerful tool in addressing world challenges and it's good to know that Rwanda is taking higher education as a priority. Today Rwanda has over 26,000 students enrolled in higher education, 24 times more than those who graduated in the three decades since 1963," Spellings said.

The summit aims at building on discussions that began during the Higher Education Summit for Global Development that was held at the US Department of State in April this year.

Read more at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200810230356.html>

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SOUTH AFRICA

A class in curriculum cogs

Noelene Barbeau, Independent Online, 12 October 2008

The matric class of 2008 will sit down to write their final examinations at the end of this month.

What makes this experience more nerve-racking than normal is that these pupils are the first to write the matric exam under the national curriculum statement ("new matric" or Curriculum 2005) implemented in 2006, when they were in Grade 10.

For most parents - even some teachers - the changes are baffling.

Six subjects were written in the past, with a choice of tackling them on higher or standard grades.

Maths, English and Afrikaans were compulsory and the other three subjects were chosen from a list of 124, which included history, geography, biology, physics, computer studies and accounting.

All had subject groupings and combinations, such as science, commerce and general courses. For example, the S17 entailed the study of physics, biology and computer studies plus the three compulsory subjects.

The C1 comprised business economics, economics and accounting, plus the three compulsory subjects.

Today, the higher and standard grades have been done away with, and all matric pupils write on the same level.

They also have to study seven subjects instead of six, and many of the subjects have expanded from the old system. Subjects are divided into four groups.

Read more at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=105&art_id=vn20081012085454456C889820

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UNITED KINGDOM

Huge scope to end under-achievement and improve mental health of nation

Anthea Lipsett, The Guardian, 22 October 2008

Spotting and treating learning difficulties early is vital for children's mental wellbeing, a government report has found.

Children's wellbeing is a key issue for the government and the schools minister, Baroness Delyth Morgan, recently outlined plans to measure schools on their efforts to promote it.

The report from Foresight, the government thinktank on the future, said learning difficulties were a problem that affected up to 10% of children.

"Yet too often they remain unidentified, or are treated only when advanced. The result can be under-achievement in school and disengagement by the child, sometimes leading to a long-term cycle of anti-social behaviour, exclusion and even criminality," it said.

"Improvements in early detection combined with focused interventions could prevent problems developing and create broad and lasting benefits for the child and society."

Read more at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/oct/22/specialeducationneeds-schools>

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Rise in primary school truancy

The Independent, 21 October 2008

Increasing numbers of primary school pupils skipped lessons this year, figures showed today.

Statistics published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families showed that on average state primary school children missed 0.56 per cent of sessions over the course of the autumn term last year and the spring term this year. This is up from 0.52 per cent of sessions missed through truancy over the same period during the previous school year.

The figures also showed that the number of state primary school pupils deemed "persistent absentees" has risen.

In total 81,530 pupils missed more than 20 per cent of all possible school sessions, up from around 74,000 last year. This figure includes pupils who were off for authorised absences, such as illness.

But persistent absentees also account for almost 52 per cent of all truancy across primary and secondary schools.

Read more at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/rise-in-primary-school-truancy-968008.html>

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School that hands out iPods wins award

Richard Garner, The Independent, 20 October 2008

Persuading youngsters to adopt a healthy lifestyle could not be more crucial than in Glasgow, where the gap in life expectancy between the poorest and most affluent areas is a staggering 28 years.

Shawlands Academy, a 1,250-pupil school serving some of the city's most deprived wards, has come up with a novel answer to the problem.

The school, one of the most ethnically diverse in Scotland with pupils speaking 47 languages at home, has turned its youngsters on to healthy eating by awarding them points according to their choice of school dinner.

The healthier the option, the more points they get, so a mixed nutritional meal including fruits and yoghurt beside the main dish will get them the maximum.

At the end of term, the points are added up and earn pupils a prize – a new iPod or camera for those who have totted up the most. As one youngster, Niamh Murray-Sheridan, put it: "In the past, people went outside [school] to eat but now they are staying in and eating more healthily."

Read more at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/school-that-hands-out-ipods-wins-award-966924.html>

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I think, therefore I am: Philosophy in Year Three

Philosophy lessons in primary schools teach children how to think

Richard Garner , The Independent, 18 October 2008

"Eyes closed, take a deep breath through the nose, hold it and breathe out through the mouth," the teacher tells the class. "Now think of that place that makes you feel happy and relaxed."

This may not be what one would normally expect to hear from a teacher at the start of a primary school lesson in these days of concentrating on raising standards at every opportunity.

But the seven- and eight-year-olds being given the instruction were at one of several schools in the country pioneering new lessons in philosophy for children of primary school age.

The plan is that they should clear their minds so they can think, something some teachers would argue is a novel idea in the modern educational world of the three Ts, tests, targets and [league] tables.

Read more at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/i-think-therefore-i-am-philosophy-in-year-three-965456.html>

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Education Minister eyes New York's way of grading schools

Every state school gets a grade from A to F in a new 'no-excuses' ranking system

Joanna Walters, The Guardian, 16 October 2008

New York City has just completed its second year of a controversial system of school report cards that grades schools from A to F, a model the education secretary Ed Balls seems eager to adopt.

New York's mayor, Michael Bloomberg, has executive power over the city's schools and introduced the reports in 2006 to give parents, teachers and pupils more information about school performance, and more choice.

It introduced a clear ranking system, so that each school is compared with city rivals drawing their student populations from similar socio-economic backgrounds.

"It's a no-excuses system - and it is as much about diagnosing where a school needs to improve as simply evaluating it," said Jim Liebman, chief accountability officer of the New York City department of education.

Information on test results has always been available, school by school, in New York.

Read more at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/oct/16/schoolsworldwide-schools>

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Row over 'appalling' GCSE results

The Independent, Thursday, 16 October 2008

Another improvement in GCSE results was hailed by ministers today but critics dubbed the failure of more than half of pupils to meet the Government's benchmark "appalling".

Provisional statistics from this summer's exams showed 47.2 per cent achieved five or more A*-C grades including English and Maths, up 0.9 per cent on last year.

There were also small increases in the numbers getting any five top grades (up 3.2 per cent to 64.6 per cent) and students passing at least one GCSE or equivalent (up 0.6 per cent to 98.6 per cent).

Shadow school secretary Michael Gove said: "The Government has ploughed money into education and rightly so but they have not achieved the improvements to match."

Read more at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/row-over-appalling-gcse-results-963768.html>

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Forget exams: lesson one is a basic emotional education

Mark Johnson, The Guardian, 15 October 2008

Our schools curriculum is designed by the middle classes, delivered by them, and is successful primarily for the middle classes. I know that being middle class isn't automatically a passport to a loving, stable background, with parents who take an interest in your education, but it certainly helps. With a start like that, you're ready to learn - so here's your laptop, see you at university.

Recent broadening of the curriculum (citizenship, recycling, cookery and the cadet corps) may aim to address the reality of children's lives, but it misses the point. Why not tackle something so fundamental that it is undermining many of our kids' ability to learn? I'm talking about mental and emotional health.

Too many children live with a dysfunctionality that goes back generations. They might be living with poverty, unemployment, violence, drug use, acute emotional problems, varying degrees of neglect and abuse. Their problems are manifested through violent and inappropriate behaviour.

At school, these children aren't mentally or emotionally ready for the academic learning designed for others. The curriculum races ahead of them, while their life sentence of labels begins. They are difficult, troublemakers, a problem. Then they're excluded, hoodies, yobs. There's an inevitability about the next label: criminal. However long their sentence, once they've got that label, the prejudices of others ensure they're really lifers by instalment. And maybe they'll add another label too: addict.

We could have predicted it by spending time with them in their early years. Instead, we let the inevitable happen, then slapped labels on them. Our schools foster the academic achievements only accessible to kids from nurturing homes. How does this education measure up to the emotional needs of children from homes without nurture?

Read more at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2008/oct/15/children-young-people-emotional-health>

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Parents get the blame for naughty children

Richard Garner, The Independent, 15 October 2008

Poor parenting is to blame for a major deterioration in the behaviour of primary school pupils over the past five years, a study suggests today.

Classroom disruption is a significant problem for teachers, according to researchers at Cambridge University. In interviews with teachers, Professors Maurice Galton and John Macbeath found that many blamed their pupils' unruly behaviour on the inability of parents to control children at home.

Many pupils lacked the social skills required to get on in class, said the researchers, commissioned the National Union of Teachers. "Teachers describe 'highly permissive' parents who admitted to indulging their children, often for the sake of peace or simply because they had run out of alternative incentives and sanctions," the authors added.

Examples included a mother who, after great effort, succeeded in getting her five-year-old to bed at 1am instead of 3am, and a boy of seven who smashed his Sony PlayStation in a tantrum, then would not behave for a week until his mother bought him a new one.

Professors Galton and Macbeath were also told of parents who would do anything to shut their children up "just to get some peace". Their report says schools face "formidable challenges" – particularly in poor areas where there has been "an increase in the incidence of confrontation and conflict".

Read more at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/parents-get-the-blame-for-naughty-children-961392.html>

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National tests for 14-year-olds are scrapped after marking chaos

But 11-year-old children at schools in England still face Sats next summer

Richard Garner, The Independent, 15 October 2008

National curriculum tests due to be taken by 600,000 14-year-olds at schools in England next summer have been scrapped in the wake of this year's marking fiasco.

The Schools Secretary, Ed Balls, said yesterday that an expert group would develop a system of assessment by teachers instead. The decision, described as a U-turn by his political opponents, was welcomed by teachers' leaders, parents and MPs as reducing the exams burden on children.

Mr. Balls made clear that externally marked Standard Assessment Tests (Sats) for 11-year-olds, taken at the end of primary school and used to compile league tables, would remain. However, he said pupils might in future be allowed to

sit them when they were ready, rather than sit all their exams on the same day at the end of term. Seven-year-olds will continue to be tested by teachers.

In addition, the Government unveiled plans for a school report card – giving every state school an A to F grade depending on its exam performance, truancy rate and how well it improved pupils' attainment – as a simpler guide to performance to run alongside league tables and inspectors' reports.

Read more at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/national-tests-for-14yearolds-are-scrapped-after-marking-chaos-961393.html>

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A test that deserved to fail

Leading Article, The Independent, 15 October 2008

You could, if you were of a cynical cast of mind, argue that the Government has exploited the big news of the banking rescue to "bury" a slew of reversals in other areas.

These would include the abandonment of the anti-terrorist measures discussed in another of today's leading articles, and the abolition – announced out of the blue by the Children's Secretary, Ed Balls, yesterday – of national tests for 14-year-olds. Political opportunism cannot be excluded.

But that does not mean that the decision taken on testing was not the right one.

National testing has a place, and an important one, in the schools system of England and Wales.

It offers parents and ministers a gauge of how children, teachers and schools are performing against a national standard – information that was not available, or at least not openly and systematically, before.

Of course, testing has its downside, too. There is substance in charges that too many teachers "teach to the test"; that pupils learn less about reading and writing than how to pass tests; and that schools (and ministers) have mastered the finer arts of statistical manipulation to present themselves in the best light.

Read more at <http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/leading-articles/leading-article-a-test-that-deserved-to-fail-961305.html>

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With Sats scrapped, maybe league tables should be next?

Richard Garner, The Independent, 15 October 2008

The Government's decision to abolish tests for 14-year-olds has been welcomed by almost everyone as a good way of reducing the testing burden on pupils - the only small note of dissent has come from some teachers who believe their workload will increase through a move to teacher assessment.

They should get real.

They won't have to teach to the test - and they should only be doing what they were before the whole key stage three apparatus was thrust upon them.

There is more dissent over the decision to stick with key stage two tests for 11-year-olds being externally marked.

Read more at <http://blogs.independent.co.uk/openhouse/2008/10/with-sats-scrap.html>

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Children with learning difficulties need 'safe' areas, research shows

Anthea Lipsett, The Guardian, 14 October 2008

Schools and colleges need to help students with learning difficulties feel safer and more secure between lessons, new research has found.

While most children look forward to a break between lessons, many pupils with special educational needs (SEN) feel vulnerable and anxious at break times, lunchtimes and while moving between classrooms, researchers found.

The study by Cambridge University's Faculty of Education and the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities (FPLD) argues that children with SEN should be given more access to "safe" areas, such as libraries, or have access to support, supervision or guided activities outside of lessons.

The recommendation is among those made in a new report - What about us? – looking at how to improve the experiences of students with learning difficulties in mainstream education.

Government policy is increasingly geared towards teaching students with SEN in mainstream settings, but researchers warned it could lead to problems for young people with learning difficulties if not properly implemented.

Read more at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/oct/14/specialeducationneeds-schools1>

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Ofcom begins inquiry into effects of TV on toddlers

Rachel Shields and Ian Johnston, The Independent, 13 October 2008

There is evidence that some parents are using television as a babysitter, but the BBC denies that carefully-made programmes cause harm

Pre-school programming has undergone a boom in recent years thanks to series such as Teletubbies and In The Night Garden and dedicated channels such as the BBC's CBeebies.

However, amid rising concern that television is being used by some parents as a form of babysitter, the industry regulator is carrying out a review into the potential for harm. A spokesman for Ofcom said it had been made "aware of concerns regarding TV programming aimed at very young children", and added "there are elements we are considering now".

Cable and internet channels, such as BabyFirstTV, have also emerged in recent years, offering shows 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Read more at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/ofcom-begins-inquiry-into-effects-of-tv-on-toddlers-959294.html>

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Education expert attacks schools for failing black students

Anthea Lipsett, The Guardian, 10 October 2008

The failure of schools to address institutional racism and help disaffected black boys has exacerbated the knife crime crisis in the UK, a leading educationalist warned today.

Gus John, associate professor at the Institute of Education and the former director of education at Hackney, attacked the role schools have played in the burgeoning violence in the second anniversary lecture to commemorate the death of Liverpool schoolboy Anthony Walker, who was murdered in a racist attack three years ago.

John, who is himself black, said schools fail to equip white and black young people with an understanding of their past and its connection with the present condition of Britain.

They also fail to "equip them with the knowledge, skills and understanding to take control of their own lives, understand the origin and genesis of the hard won rights they now enjoy, safeguard and extend those rights and own their responsibility for making the future they face the future they want for themselves and their children, and not leave that responsibility to the elites that the system creates while they continue to exist on the margins and to implode", he said.

John accused the education system of being "institutionally silent for generations" on the issues of race, inequality and social justice.

Read more at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/oct/10/raceinschools-race>

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Days of children reading books 'are numbered'

Richard Garner, The Independent, 9 October 2008

The days of children reading traditional books are numbered, claims the man spearheading a campaign to improve literacy in schools.

Publishers must adapt titles to the demands of modern young readers who spend more time on the internet if they are to succeed in persuading the next generation to read, says Jonathan Douglas, the director of the National Literacy Trust.

He made his remarks as researchers prepared to tell a conference starting today that children's reading habits slump dramatically after they start at secondary school.

The typical eight-year-old reads nearly 16 books a year but, by the time they reach 15 or 16, this has dwindled to just over three books per year.

The big drop-off starts after the first year of secondary school, when the number of books read falls from nearly 12 a year to just six.

The study, based on interviews with nearly 30,000 pupils aged seven to 16, also shows a growing trend towards reading comics, magazines, newspapers and online articles, and playing computer games, after the first year at secondary school.

Read more at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/days-of-children-reading-books-are-numbered-955497.html>

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Schools to be judged on how they boost wellbeing

Anthea Lipsett, The Guardian, 9 October 2008

The new children's minister, Baroness Delyth Morgan, has proposed that all schools are judged on their contribution to the wellbeing of pupils.

Morgan launched a consultation today on a proposed set of indicators to "recognise and reward" schools for their efforts towards pupils' wellbeing.

The consultation is part of government aims, set out in the Children's Plan, for schools to play a key role in the wider development of young people, not just their education.

The consultation outlines a standardised set of indicators to be used by schools themselves, and by Ofsted, in evaluating the contribution being made to the wellbeing of its pupils.

These include quantitative data already available, such as the school's overall attendance rate and the take-up of school lunches, as well as pupil and parent perceptions about how well the school promotes wellbeing.

Read more at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/oct/09/schools.ofsted>

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The burden of homework is too heavy

Peter Stanford, Independent, 9 October 2008

Homework has been a controversial subject in our house since my son's primary school starting setting it when he was seven.

Most of the controversy has consisted of me encouraging, bribing and sometimes all but forcing my children to do it.

But there have also been times, with them collapsed at 9pm over their maths, when they have raised their heads wearily to ask, "what is the point of it?"

To which, in that moment, I have no satisfactory answer.

That private stand-off, replayed around the land, has now taken on a wider resonance with the decision of the high-achieving Tiffin School in Kingston, Surrey and the soon-to-open Nottingham East Academy, to reduce and even abandon homework.

Gary James, Tiffin's deputy head, said too much homework could put pupils off learning. "We had boys doing three or four hours a night at the expense of sports, music practice or having fun. Something's not right when a boy can't sit down and watch a nature documentary on TV because he's too busy doing maths," he said.

Read more at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/schools/peter-stanford-the-burden-of-homework-is-too-heavy-955005.html>

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Schools given advice on preventing extremism

Alison Kershaw, The Independent, 8 October 2008

Schools secretary Ed Balls was today launching advice to schools on how they can help prevent violent extremism. He said that schools can play a "key role" in helping young people to recognise and reject moves that could draw them into extremism.

The Government is expected to officially announce the launch of its "learning to be safe kit" which shows schools how to raise awareness and address the issues and threats of terrorism.

The toolkit should give practical advice to teachers about they can build respect between pupils, encourage feedback and provide support to pupils who may be vulnerable to radicalisation.

It follows on from wide-ranging guidance issued by the Government in June for local communities on how to identify and challenge extremists.

The guidance said local groups which challenge the messages of violent extremists should be supported.

If a group is found to be promoting violent extremism, local agencies and the police should consider disrupting or removing funding, and deny access to public facilities, it suggested. The guidance also contained a "de-radicalisation" strategy to stop people from getting involved in extremist violence and make young people feel more valued.

Read more at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/schools-given-advice-on-preventing-extremism-954767.html>

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Financial sector's loss could spell gain for teaching

Greg Toppo, USA TODAY 22 October 2008

It's too early to say for sure, but a few observers believe public schools could be the beneficiaries of a brainpower shift from the trading floors of Wall Street and the hedge funds of Greenwich, Conn., to classrooms nationwide.

This fall, for instance, New York City's Teaching Fellows program, which trains career-changers to work in city schools, saw the percentage of applicants listing "finance" as their current job rise to 10%, up from 6% in 2006.

"As I've been trying to think of silver linings, that's the only one I've come up with," says Allan Taylor, a Greenwich attorney who chairs the Connecticut State Board of Education.

"We've taken some of the strongest mathematical minds and sent them to figure out computerized stock trading programs. I'm not an economist, but in my mind, the country would have been better off if some of them had gone into K-12 or college teaching."

Read more at http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2008-10-15-meltdown-teachers_N.htm

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Dress code will cover city teachers & school staff

Steve Campbell, Huntsville Times, October 21, 2008

A dress code is in the works for teachers and staff of Huntsville City Schools. An advisory committee will meet next month to discuss guidelines for employee dress and make a recommendation to the superintendent.

Shirley Wellington, co-chair of the group of local school and business leaders, said a dress code isn't meant to punish employees but to present a professional appearance for students. "We have to set an example for our students," said Wellington, a teacher at Lee High School. "If we want them to dress appropriately, we have to do the same thing."

Students have a dress code that forbids overly baggy, tight, or revealing clothes, including outfits that depict drugs, alcohol or violence. Teachers have no dress code. Support employees, such as custodians, have uniforms but no other dress-related guidelines.

Moore said some employees have misinterpreted what is considered professional attire for school, but recalled no "extreme" examples of employees wearing unsuitable clothes. Belinda Williams, director of human resources for city schools, said the dress code would clarify appropriate dress so principals know what's acceptable.

Read more at <http://www.al.com/huntsvilletimes/stories/index.ssf?/base/news/122458053118620.xml&coll=1>

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Growth Data for Teachers Under Review

Stephen Sawchuk, Education Week 20 October 2008

As states' information-collection systems grow more sophisticated, officials are grappling with where to draw the line on how "value added" data on teachers can be used.

Tennessee law permits the use of such data for teacher evaluation as long as the data meet certain technical requirements. The state's Hamilton County district, with union approval, also offers bonuses based on the data.

California serves as a counterpoint: A 2006 state law establishing a new teacher-identification database prevents such data from being used for teacher pay, evaluation, or personnel decisions. Some stakeholders there say it might not even be permissible to link teacher records to student data.

"I think we're going to see more and more state legislatures taking on this issue," said Aimee Guidera, the executive director of the Data Quality Campaign, an Austin, Texas-based group that promotes the use of longitudinal data to improve schools.

"Yes, some of those conversations are going to talk about merit pay," she said, "but that's not the point to start with. Any state that only has the conversation about merit pay is denying itself the benefits of having a truly informed education system."

New York City is piloting informal teacher-effectiveness reports.

Read more at http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/10/22/09value_ep.h28.html?tmp=1848145403

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States' K-12 Efforts Feeling Budget Sting

Linda Jacobson, Education Week, 20 October 2008

States are struggling—and sometimes failing—to hold the line on education budget cuts and day-to-day disruption in the face of budget deficits, flagging tax revenues, and credit jitters that threaten their cash flow.

The situation varies around the country. In deficit-strapped California, for example, officials last week had some success in selling billions of dollars in short-term notes needed to keep the state from running out of money for schools and other state services.

But Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick, a Democrat, last week ordered state agencies to cut more than \$1 billion to close a \$1.4 billion deficit, including \$3 million from kindergarten expansion and \$1 million from Head Start preschool programs.

Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley, a Democrat who is trying to plug a projected \$1 billion deficit, said the state may have to weigh reductions in local school aid provided under a formula that gives extra money to areas where the cost of education is high.

And in Hawaii, the state board of education on Oct. 9 approved more than \$46 million in cuts from its \$2.1 billion K-12 budget on the way toward meeting Republican Gov. Linda Lingle's instruction that each state agency trim spending by up to 20 percent.

Read more at http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/10/22/09fiscal_ep.h28.html?tmp=878367125

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Dallas district fires 375 teachers

Dallas Morning News, October 17, 2008

Campus by campus, hundreds of Dallas teachers learned their fate Thursday in whatever manner their principals saw fit.

Some fired teachers retained a measure of dignity; others had to pack up their desks in front of stunned students.

The layoffs were expected at the end of the day, but some teachers reported getting the news as early as first period.

At Pinkston High School, drafting teacher Tom Warner, 45, said he was called out of class, fired and sent back to collect his belongings as students looked on.

He was one of 375 Dallas teachers fired Thursday as part of a massive layoff designed to help the school district avoid a projected \$84 million budget shortfall.

Several hundred other district employees, ranging from clerks to assistant principals, have also been laid off in recent weeks.

Meanwhile, district officials said about 460 teachers were transferred among district schools.

Read more at

http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/dn/latestnews/stories/101608dnmetdisd.11b94d230.html#slcgm_comments_anchor

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Early teen drug, alcohol use ups sex and behaviour risks

Yahoo Health News 17 October 2008 (AFP)

Children who try drugs or alcohol before age 15 run a greater risk of being substance-dependent as adults, contracting sexually transmitted diseases, dropping out of school or being convicted of a crime, a study showed.

And girls who dabble in drugs and alcohol early on are more likely to become pregnant before they are 21, added the study, published in the October issue of Psychological Science, which followed 1,037 children from the age of three until 32.

At ages 13 and 15, the youngsters were asked if they had sniffed glue, gasoline or other inhalants, or if they had used illegal drugs or drunk alcoholic beverages in the past year.

The children were also assessed for conduct disorders -- fighting, bullying, destroying property, telling lies, truancy and stealing -- before their teen years, and their family history, including whether either parent had a criminal record and whether the child was mistreated.

Read more at

http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20081017/hl_afp/ushealthchildrenaddictioncrime;_ylt=At86izMnSW4s7BZD0fIOfefVJRIF

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10 Years On, High-school Social Skills Predict Better Earnings Than Test Scores

ScienceDaily, Oct. 16, 2008

Ten years after graduation, high-school students who had been rated as conscientious and cooperative by their teachers were earning more than classmates who had similar test scores but

The study's findings challenge the idea that racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic gaps in educational attainment and earnings can be narrowed solely by emphasizing cognitive skills, said Christy Lleras, a University of Illinois assistant professor of human and community development.

"It's important to note that good schools do more than teach reading, writing, and math. They socialize students and provide the kinds of learning opportunities that help them to become good citizens and to be successful in the labor market," she said.

"Unless we address the differences in school climates and curriculum that foster good work habits and other social skills, we're doing a huge disservice to low-income kids who may be entering the labor market right after high school, especially in our increasingly service-oriented economy," Lleras added.

She cited responses to employer surveys that stress the need for workers who can get along well with each other and get along well with the public.

Read more at <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/10/081015120749.htm>

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- **International News Roundup** : <http://www.acsso.org.au/roundup.htm> (monthly)
- **Values Education** : <http://www.valuesineducation.org.au/news.htm> (monthly)
- **Languages Education** : <http://www.languageseducation.com/news.htm> (monthly)
- **Ensemble - Music Education** : <http://www.ensemble.org.au/news.htm> (monthly)

- **Public Education Voice** : <http://www.acsso.org.au/pev.htm> (quarterly)

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