

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION NEWS ROUNDUP

Volume 3 Number 3, June 2009

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Canada: New education subsidy to enable First Nations, Metis and Inuit adults to become teachers

Government of Alberta, 22 June 2009

The Government of Alberta has teamed up with Northland School Division and other northern school jurisdictions to provide a tuition and cost-of-living subsidy to support up to 40 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) adults in northern communities as they study to become teachers.

"Our goal is to increase the number of educators in Alberta with the knowledge, skills, and attributes necessary to support FNMI student success," said Education Minister Dave Hancock. "By reducing barriers to education, we hope more members of the FNMI community will consider entering the teaching profession and in return share their knowledge of Aboriginal histories, languages and traditions with students."

These students can engage in the Community-Based Teacher Education Program, thanks to more than \$4 million in government support over the next four years.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/nbxemk>

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Egypt: Aussie Muslim School Gets Fatal Blow

IslamOnline.net, 2 June 2009

The endeavor of Aussie Muslims in the small town of Camden to build an Islamic school to serve nearly 1200 students has been dealt a major, final blow as a superior court ultimately supported the locals who have long rejected the school plan.

"The commissioner upheld the view that ... it (the proposed school) was inconsistent with the rural character of the locality and that it would detract from that rural character," Sue Morris, planning and development director of the Camden Local Council told the Brisbane Times on Tuesday, June 2.

Ruling in the bitter, long wrangle between the Council and Dar Tahfez El-Quran Society over the latter's plan for a 1,200 student campus in the Sydney suburb, the Land and Environment Court commissioner Graham Brown embraced residents' concerns about planning matters in the judgment.

"Other matters raised by local residents as being in the 'public interest' have been given no weight in the consideration of the development application as they are irrelevant considerations," Brown stated in the judgment.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/lba3m3>

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Europe: Teacher effectiveness hampered by lack of incentives and bad behaviour in the classroom

European Commission, Education & Training, 17 June 2009

Three out of four teachers feel that they lack incentives to improve the quality of their teaching, while bad behaviour by students in the classroom disrupts lessons in three schools out of five, according to a new OECD report prepared with the support of the European Commission.

The report is based on the new Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) and provides, for the first time, internationally comparable data on conditions affecting teachers in schools based on survey findings in 23 participating countries.

Launching the report, OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría insisted on the need to push for better teacher performance. "High-quality teachers are key to the successful implementation of education policies," he said. "The bottom line is that the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers and their work."

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/l6luz6>

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India: Law to prohibit malpractices in education system - Sibal

India EduNews, 25 June 2009

A law to prohibit and punish malpractices in the educational system will be brought within 100 days, Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal said on Thursday.

"We are going to bring a law to prevent, prohibit and punish educational malpractices in the country. It is meant to make the system more transparent," Sibal told reporters of his ministry's plans in the first 100 days of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government after being returned to power.

Anyone breaching the law should be punished, he added.

"Many a times, students going to Australia are being told that they are going for vocational training but when they land there it turns out to be something else. These things should be transparent," he said.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/mork72>

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India: Attacks distressing, but I will fix it - Victoria's premier

India EduNews, 25 June 2009

Premier John Brumby prides on people from 230 nations speaking 220 languages and dialects and following 116 faiths living in Australia's Victoria state, but the attacks on Indian students in capital Melbourne over the last few weeks have left him a worried man.

"It is a pity that these incidents have happened and it is distressing. But I am determined to fix it. Waves of immigration from Asia, Europe, Africa and the Pacific has always made Victoria, and especially Melbourne, the most diverse and multicultural place in the world," he told sources.

There have been at least 16 such incidents, a majority happening in Victoria. It has sparked allegations of widespread racism in Australian society and a failure by law enforcement authorities to act, thus putting his government in a spot.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/m6g5f6>

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Kenya: School Doesn't Make Better Leaders

Ndung'u Njaga, Daily Nation, 24 June 2009

In every corner of the country are signs of desperation, and a leadership failure which may precipitate the nation's collapse. And this dream is dying in the hands of the most educated class.

If education imparts administrative skills and competence, how can we account for this dismal performance by the current leadership?

If education imbues the learners with superior moral and intellectual ethos, how come our learned ministers have been unable to bring in more dignity to their offices which are rife with ethnicity and corruption?

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/n5yf7j>

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Korea: Survey shows 6 out of 10 teachers suffer from occupational illnesses

Education International, 22 June 2009

On the occasion of the 58th Education Week, the Korean Federation of Teachers' Associations (KFTA) conducted a teacher survey. The survey showed that six out of ten teachers have experienced or are now suffering from occupational diseases and many of them are under great stress from negative media reports and social criticism against them.

The overall morale of teachers is found to be low due to these factors.

In the survey, 67.2% of teachers said they have or have experienced occupational diseases. The most common symptom was vocal nodule (34.4%) and others complained of hair loss due to mental stress or varicose veins caused by long standing pressure during class.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/kiclge>

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Malaysia: Teachers' forum urges Commonwealth governments to invest in developing the teaching profession

Education International, 22 June 2009

Teacher organisations from 29 Commonwealth countries urged their governments to invest in teachers and in developing the teaching profession in a Teachers' Forum held recently in Kuala Lumpur.

The participants insisted that the current financial crisis cannot be used as a pretext for failing to invest in education.

The Teachers' Forum, mainly comprising participants from EI member organisations in Commonwealth countries, met in the Malaysian capital from 15–18 Jun, concurrently with the 17th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers.

Addressing the Forum, Susan Hopgood, Federal Secretary of the Australian Education Union and EI Vice President, reminded the participants that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) targets requires a global effort.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/nbtjz2>

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New Zealand: QPEC welcomes criticism of integrated school fees

Quality Public Education Coalition, 25 June 2009

QPEC welcomes the Minister of Education, Anne Tolley's, criticism of the very high fees charged by some integrated schools.

We are concerned in particular at those integrated schools that have been allowed to charge thousands of dollars in fees each year, while also receiving full state funding. We believe this is an abuse of integration policy.

This is an issue that QPEC raised frequently with the previous government but to no avail. Anne Tolley's comments give us hope that change is underway.

The schools concerned are former private schools which have integrated into the state system and are fully funded by the government for teacher salaries and day to day operations. Despite this they are asking parents for thousands of dollars in fees with the clear expectation that these fees will be paid as a condition of attendance.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/mnzm2f>

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Nigeria: Nigerian and UK teachers swap notes

Tomi Oladipo, BBC News, 24 June 2009

A group of six teachers from different schools around England recently visited Enugu in eastern Nigeria for a week, teaching in schools there.

It is part of a scheme organised by the British Council to connect primary and secondary schools in Nigeria with ones in England.

The first teachers to take part have already learned some interesting lessons about their respective educational styles, cultures and traditions.

Independence Layout Junior Secondary teacher Veronica Nwafor and visiting St Mary's Church of England Primary School teacher Colette Cotton each comment.

Read more at <http://preview.tinyurl.com/neku4b>

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Singapore: Singapore to Hold International Education Roundtable

Zakaria Abdul Wahab, Malaysian National News Agency, 24 June 2009

Singapore will hold an inaugural international education roundtable (IER) next month to discuss the education systems worldwide.

Education ministers and senior government officials from Australia (Victoria), Canada (Alberta), China, Hong Kong, Sweden and the United States will take part in the three-day roundtable beginning July 6.

In a statement today, the education ministry said, among the matters that would be discussed include defining and preparing educated citizens of the future, attracting and recruiting good teachers and grooming school leaders.

Education Minister and Second Minister for Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen and Sir Michael Barber, Partner at McKinsey & Company and former Chief Advisor on Delivery to former British prime minister Tony Blair, will co-chair the roundtable.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/neku4b>

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South Africa: Language Policy 'Discriminates'

Ernest Mabuza, BusinessDay, 24 June 2009

THE governing body's preservation of the Afrikaans language policy at Hoërskool Ermelo at all costs demonstrated that it intended to preserve the school exclusively for Afrikaners, head of the Mpumalanga education department Monwabisi Tywakadi has said in his application to the Constitutional Court.

The department has appealed against a Supreme Court of Appeal judgment in March that the governing body, and not the education department, had exclusive power to determine the language policy of an existing school.

In January 2007 the school's governing body refused to change its language policy to accommodate 27 pupils who wanted to be taught in English.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/lzx3o4>

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United Kingdom: Ofsted finds schools failing on new secondary curriculum

Anthea Lipsett, The Guardian, Thursday 25 June 2009

Schools have made little progress in implementing the new secondary curriculum introduced last September, inspectors have warned. Most schools have left subject teachers to interpret it as they saw fit, which has led to an incoherent "whole-school curriculum".

Ofsted inspectors visited 37 schools between May 2008 and March this year to see how well they had implemented the changes. Only four schools were judged to have done so "outstandingly", 21 were deemed "good", eight "satisfactory" and one "inadequate".

The successful ones had developed a coherent curriculum throughout the school which was led and monitored by senior staff, the study found. But most schools left subject leaders to interpret the changes themselves.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/kjrmlp>

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United Kingdom: Heads could receive £200,000 in return for running more than one school

Anthea Lipsett, The Guardian, Tuesday 23 June 2009

Governing bodies of state schools will be free to decide what they pay headteachers who agree to help lead struggling schools, under plans set out today.

The schools secretary, Ed Balls, told the School Teachers' Pay and Review Body (STRB) that he does not want a cap on pay for headteachers who run more than one school on a permanent basis.

From this September, headteachers' pay could increase to up to £120,000, if they take on responsibility for more than one school on a temporary basis.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/mydoge>

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United Kingdom: Top state schools to be forced to merge with failing schools

Sophie Borland, Daily Mail, 23 June 2009

Top state schools will be forced to merge with those which are failing, Ed Balls said last night.

Under plans to be published next week, the best schools will be marked down in Ofsted inspections if they refuse to cooperate.

They will be made to share their budgets and staff in a bid to reduce public spending while improving performance.

It could mean that headteachers could earn more than £120,000 if they agree to lead the new merged institutions.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/m3dclv>

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United Kingdom: Fewer pupils eating school meals

BBC News, 23 June 2009

Uptake of school meals in secondary schools has dropped sharply since ministers first launched healthy eating policies, it has emerged.

Scottish Government figures showed only 39% of secondary pupils ate lunch in the school canteen compared with 49% five years ago.

But in primary schools, where nutrition regulations came into effect last year, meal uptake has increased slightly.

The government said it was disappointed by the secondary school figures.

Secondary schools will be obliged by law to serve only healthy food from August, in line with the regulations introduced in primary schools last August.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/nrjrv7>

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United Kingdom: The secret life of numbers

Marcus du Sautoy, The Guardian, Tuesday 23 June 2009

In mathematics, [my 13 year old son] has also been learning the basic grammar and vocabulary of the world of numbers.

Percentages, long division, some basic algebra and geometry. Techniques that are also regarded as core skills that every child should leave school with.

But the curriculum has not exposed him yet to the creative possibilities of mastering these tools. And nor is the curriculum likely to, even as he advances through the school system.

The teachers are required to teach a utilitarian and unadventurous curriculum that leaves them no room to explore the creative side of the subject. Indeed, most people are utterly surprised to discover that there is any creativity in mathematics.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/na4s2n>

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United Kingdom: How to light the early sparks of learning

Jackie Kemp, The Guardian, Tuesday 23 June 2009

Buckets and spades for their weekly beach trip, a firepit in the garden for making toast, and a mirrored dance floor.

The nursery at Whitley Bay's Rockcliffe school was described as "magical" at the North-East Teaching Awards finals last week.

Primary teacher of the year Lindsay Ford was inspired by a trip to Denmark's forest schools to introduce fire to three- and four-year-olds.

"Initially, some of them have an unnatural terror of it ... But what we notice is the patience it brings out in them. They will sit round it for ages, waiting for it to light and for the flames to die down so we can cook."

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/mrmspa>

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United Kingdom: Schools 'need business managers'

BBC News, 22 June 2009

Schools in England should employ dedicated business managers, says the new schools minister Vernon Coaker.

He will tell a conference of school business managers that they can save schools thousands of pounds per year.

They are vital in allowing school head teachers to devote more time to teaching and learning, he will say.

A survey of 1,100 school leaders suggests seven in 10 heads believe school business managers free up at least 20% of the head teachers' time.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/kuenpm>

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United Kingdom: Sats replacement system 'even more stressful for pupils'

Warwick Mansell and Polly Curtis, The Guardian, Monday 22 June 2009

A new testing system to replace Sats in state schools has been hit by "substantial and fundamental" problems, according to secret reports.

Pilot tests taken by 100,000 children in the last 18 months have faced severe problems, giving wildly unpredictable results and exposing children to even more high-pressure testing, the two reports conclude.

The government is piloting the "single level tests" (SLTs) in response to criticisms that the current system of Sats is too stressful for schools and pupils and does not provide high-quality information about their talents.

The scheme was designed to allow pupils to take tests at their own pace between the ages of seven and 14, instead of en masse at the ages of 11 and 14.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/mdxpxpu>

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United States of America: Bullying Top Issue for School Safety Chief

Michele McNeil, Education Week, 23 June 2009

To lead the federal effort to keep schools safe, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has tapped a Southern Baptist preacher's gay son who turned a childhood of prejudice, taunts, and harassment into an activist career that's sought to expand tolerance, safety, and opportunities for gay and lesbian students.

The selection last month of Kevin Jennings as the assistant deputy secretary in the Department of Education's office of safe and drug-free schools sends an important signal, experts in school safety and student mental health say, that safety is about more than keeping guns and knives out of schools.

It's also about improving school climate by decreasing bullying and teaching students tolerance.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/mkm8ux>

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United States of America: The Schoolhouse Flunks

Maria Gold, Washington Post, June 23 2009

Seven years ago, a rally at the Department of Education promoted one of then-President George W. Bush's most significant domestic achievements -- the No Child Left Behind law. The backdrop: a red schoolhouse.

"We serve the ideal of the little red schoolhouse," then-Education Secretary Rod Paige said of the structure attached to the agency's main entrance on Maryland Avenue SW. "It is one of the greatest symbols of America -- a symbol that every child must be taught and every child must learn."

But now that symbol has been ripped down.

The Obama administration has made clear that it is putting its own stamp on education reform. That will mean a new name and image for a law that has grown unpopular with many teachers and suburban parents, even though it was enacted with bipartisan support in Congress.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/las7pv>

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United States of America: Benefits of year-round schools touted

Icess Fernandez, Shreveport Times, June 23 2009

Shreve Island Elementary students attend class the same number of days as everyone else — 187. However, they have breaks after nine-week periods, sometimes as long as two weeks, and a summer vacation. That shift in the typical academic calendar makes school more effective, say parents, teachers and administrators.

"The difference is that they take a break after every nine weeks," Watson said. "They do get a six-week break, and that's plenty long. I don't feel like my child needs to spend time reviewing."

The school's state exam results show there may be something to it. This year, 20 percent of its fourth-graders achieved mastery on the English/language arts part on the state exam and 54 percent achieved the basic level. In math, 22 percent mastered the exam and 48 reached basic levels. Those percentages are near the state level and above the district level.

Read more at <http://preview.tinyurl.com/lkzfyf>

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United States of America: Unions seek bigger role in charter schools

Libby Quaid, Associated Press Education Writer, June 22 2009

As the Obama administration pushes for more charter schools, a teachers' union is pushing for a bigger role in them.

It's a new development for the charter school movement, a small but growing — and controversial — effort to create new, more autonomous public schools, usually in cities where traditional schools have failed.

On Tuesday in New York, the United Federation of Teachers expects to formalize a contract with teachers at Green Dot New York Charter School in the Bronx, a high school run by Green Dot, a nonprofit group that operates charter schools. Ten other New York charter schools are unionized.

And last week in Chicago, teachers voted to unionize three Chicago International Charter School campuses run by Civitas, a Chicago-based nonprofit organization.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/la5k77>

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United States of America: Court Affirms Reimbursement for Special Education

Tamara Lewin, The New York Times, June 22 2009

In a decision that could help disabled students obtain needed services and cost school districts millions of dollars, the Supreme Court ruled on Monday that parents of special-education students may seek government reimbursement for private school tuition, even if they have never received special-education services in public school.

The case before the court involved a struggling Oregon high school student, identified in court documents only as T.A., whose parents removed him from public school in the Forest Grove district in his junior year and enrolled him in a \$5,200-a-month residential school.

Although Forest Grove officials had noticed T.A.'s difficulties and evaluated him for learning disabilities, he was found ineligible for special-education services.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/kvxl7>

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United States of America: Education Chief to Warn Advocates That Inferior Charter Schools Harm the Effort

Sam Dillon, The New York Times, June 22 2009

The Obama administration has made opening more charter schools a big part of its plans for improving the nation's education system, but Education Secretary Arne Duncan will warn advocates of the schools on Monday that low-quality institutions are giving their movement a black eye.

Since 1991, when educators founded the first charter school in Minnesota, 4,600 have opened; they now educate some 1.4 million of the nation's 50 million public school students, according to Education Department figures.

The schools are financed with taxpayer money but operate free of many curricular requirements and other regulations that apply to traditional public schools.

At the same time, the movement is smarting from the release last week of a report by Stanford University researchers that found that although some charter schools were doing an excellent job, many students in charter schools were not faring as well as students in traditional public schools.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/nutblk>

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United States of America: Success at Small Schools Has a Price, a Report Says

Javier C Hernandez, *The New York Times*, June 16 2009

Replacing large, poor-performing high schools with smaller schools in New York City has led to lower attendance and graduation rates at other large high schools, which have struggled to accommodate influxes of high-needs students, according to a report to be released on Wednesday.

Small schools, which cap enrollment at several hundred students and boast themes like environmental science and the performing arts, have emerged as a hallmark of Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg's education reform efforts.

Over the past seven years, the city has closed more than two dozen large comprehensive high schools, which typically enroll thousands of students, and replaced them with smaller schools, which are supposed to foster more intimate relationships and higher student achievement.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/n6xnlf>

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United States of America: Draft Literacy Bill Would Boost Funds for Older Students

Mary Ann Zehr, *Education Week*, 15 June 2009

A draft of a bill that some members of the U.S. Senate hope to introduce this summer would replace three federal reading programs, including Reading First, and authorize nearly a fivefold increase in the amount of money the federal government provides for literacy in grades 4-12.

The draft calls for providing funds for literacy programs along a continuum from birth to grade 12.

Meanwhile, several members of the U.S. House of Representatives are crafting a literacy bill that has components similar to the Senate measure, according to Lara Cottingham, a spokeswoman for Rep. Jared Polis, D-Colo., who expects to be a sponsor.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/n6mir5>

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