

Values Education

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BEHAVIOUR & DISCIPLINE

Lessons still to be learned

Paul Williams, Courier Mail, November 09, 2009

ANTHONY Burgess's grim look into a violent future *A Clockwork Orange* was intended to be a work of fiction. But teachers' fears for the future of Queensland schools bring the novel uncomfortably close to truth.

Last Saturday's report in *The Courier-Mail* about state school teacher Cooper Dawson's frustration with petty crime and disrespect in classrooms drew more than 450 online responses, almost all sympathetic to the plight of Dawson and other teachers doing a difficult job under near-impossible conditions.

This is hardly an isolated story. For years we've seen violence grow in and beyond the school yard. Many blame technology: armed with mobile phone cameras and the internet, students now film their brutality and share it with the world. It all came to a horrible head in August when a 15-year-old boy died, allegedly during a schoolyard fracas, at a Mullimbimby high school in northern New South Wales.

As the response to Dawson's story shows, the public knows state schools are in rapid decline, but governments appear unconcerned. Over time, a cavernous gap has opened between what parents and teachers know, and what bureaucrats and ministers publicly maintain. And it's a gap ripe for electoral backlash.

But at least two more variables in the education equation remain unsolved: the children, and their parents.

Student apathy, aggressive children and their often spiteful parents turned the noble profession nasty. And it's the lack of parental support that's the linchpin. Without parental support, there is no classroom discipline.

The Government must therefore directly engage the parents of disorderly children, and perhaps link

state benefits to parental co-operation to ensure students meet behavioural standards. And this should be orchestrated officially at bureaucratic levels, and not palmed off on to school principals.

Read entire article: <http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,,26325013-27197,00.html>

Dr Paul Williams lectures at the School of Humanities, Griffith University, Gold Coast.

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Frustrated teacher has much support

Paul Williams, Courier Mail, November 09, 2009

THE Courier-Mail on Saturday reported the views of 38-year-old school teacher, Cooper Dawson, a veteran of 12 primary schools across the state. In summary, he was roundly critical of the thousands of students in the system, and their parents, who seemingly couldn't care less about education.

He claimed that levels of apathy, petty crime and disrespect in classrooms were now so bad that Queensland could face a dumbed-down and immoral future.

The response from readers has been remarkable. The Courier-Mail received close to 500 online responses alone, many of them agreeing in whole or in part with Mr Dawson's bleak view of today's classroom standards.

This was more than just a cry from the heart from a frustrated teacher. The numbers also support the view that standards of discipline are falling in Queensland's school. State Government figures show there were more than 6600 suspensions last year for "refusal to participate", a 46 per cent increase since 2006. Suspensions for "property misconduct" jumped by 40 per cent over the same period of time.

Schoolyard and cyber-bullying, by all the anecdotal evidence, would also appear to be on the increase, with an average of three students in each class bullied every day, according to one assessment.

School children behaving badly has been a problem for teachers, and society, presumably since the day of the first classroom, and an older generation despairing of the standards of the young is nothing new, but the evidence to hand does suggest we have a serious and growing discipline problem in our schools.

This is not a problem for teachers alone.

Read entire editorial: <http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,,26326694-13360,00.html>

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Parents need to take a responsible role in education

James O'Loan, Courier Mail, 10 November 2009

THE key to reversing a huge rise in school students not interested in learning is getting parents and teachers to work together, education lobbyists say.

Widespread student apathy across Queensland's primary schools was highlighted last week in The Courier-Mail when brave teacher Cooper Dawson lifted the lid on students and parents who couldn't care less about their education.

Yesterday, a school-parent board set up in early 2008 by the Federal Government to improve parent

commitment said there were now more children than ever turning up to school without a "foundation of curiosity" because parents didn't seem to think it mattered.

"There are more parents who don't understand it's their role to give them that foundation, or take an interest in their child's schooling," Family-School & Community Partnerships Bureau director Ian Dalton said from Canberra. "You generally find if parents don't see school as a priority it becomes difficult to keep the children engaged."

Former parent advocate, teacher and ex-Tasmanian Education Minister Terry Aulich said a "new breed" of students had shorter attention spans and less home-bred discipline.

He said Queensland's huge rise in suspensions for disaffected students was symptomatic across Australia where problem students were turning up to class and that was about it.

Mr. Aulich said in his experience of education systems since the 1960s, more parents were struggling to control their children and teachers were not getting the right training in how to effectively re-engage these parents in the process.

"That (lack of training) is the greatest deficiency in the industry and it's just missing," he said.

Mr. Dalton agreed and claimed some teacher training courses gave the topic of parental engagement just one lecture in the syllabus.

Education unions across Australia have advocated for some time the need to increase parent co-operation training for teachers who can then maximise learning potential.

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PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

82% of parents 'in the dark' when it comes to their child's schooling

Becta, 23 March 2009

A recent survey exposes the communication challenge which parents face in being involved in their children's schooling:

- Nearly a third of parents feel excluded by their children.
- Only 16% of children proactively talk about their school day.
- Children admit they want to keep 'hassling' parents away from school life.
- 82% of parents want schools to keep them better informed.

The survey of 1,000 children aged between seven and 14 years and 1,000 parents, reveals that 43% of parents admit they find it either difficult or very difficult to extract information from their child about their day at school.

Parents are not alone in facing this communication challenge: almost half of children (44%) don't like sharing information with their parents, they like to keep their school day private; and over a third (37%) of children say they find it quite or very difficult to speak to their parents about their education.

The report shows that while more than 90% of children say their parents are interested in their education, the majority of parents are struggling to get involved with their child's learning, with many finding it difficult to get information on what is actually happening once their child is at school.

Despite packed lesson plans and innovative use of technologies, the research reveals that just 16% of children proactively communicate with their parents about their school day.

The report also reveals that the vast majority - 82% - of parents want schools to keep them better informed of their child's progress at school, indicating there's a need to improve communication on two levels.

Read entire release: <http://news.becta.org.uk/display.cfm?resID=39820&page=1661>

Becta is the UK government agency leading the national drive to ensure the effective and innovative use of technology throughout learning.

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'Invisible' parents put their child's education at risk say schools

Becta, 5 November 2009

The just-released research report "Schools and Parents: A New Partnership" finds that:

- Over half (59%) of parents admit to little contact with their child's school
- 60% of school staff say parents feel their job stops at the school gates
- However, 43% of teachers admit parents might find them 'difficult to approach sometimes'.
- Almost half (48%) of teachers believe that whilst parents are a great source of support, they don't always know the best ways to get in contact.
- Over a third (39%) of teaching staff say they would welcome ways to show parents how they might communicate differently.

Misunderstandings, a lack of confidence and unclear communication channels are putting children's education at risk.

The report, *Schools and parents: A new partnership*, part of Becta's 'Next Generation Learning' campaign and available to download from the Next Generation Learning website, suggests that simple technologies, such as online reporting can support a new, more effective partnership between parents and schools.

Read entire release: <http://news.becta.org.uk/display.cfm?resID=41240&page=1658&catID=1633>

Download the report at: <http://nextgenerationlearning.org.uk/Global/Schools%20and%20parents%20-%20a%20new%20partnership%20A4.pdf>

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TEACHING THINKING

Program focuses on teaching pupils to think and reason

BBC News, 18 April 2009

The headmaster of an independent school has employed a thinker-in-residence and a philosopher-in-residence to teach pupils "to think and reason".

Dr Anthony Seldon, master of Wellington College in Crowthorne, Berkshire, believes the teaching of reasoning and philosophy is a "basic right". Dr Seldon, who also advocates well-being classes, hopes to put "discovery back at the heart of education".

Pupils will learn how to construct arguments, understand reasoning and also be taught the basics of the philosophy of knowledge, as part of the programme involving teachers, parents and governors.

It was prompted by Dr Seldon's concerns about the state of the national curriculum.

"We have allowed ourselves to believe it is all about exams and testing," he said.

"Education is about teaching the whole child and this involves being taught how to think and reason independently."

Read entire article: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/berkshire/8005636.stm

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Philosophy Zone inspires pupils

Katherine Sellgren, BBC News, 20 October 2009

"What came before the Big Bang?" "What's so special about human beings?" "Is our universe the handiwork of an intelligent designer?"

These are just some of the questions being debated by sixth formers in Warwickshire, with the help of an online forum set up and maintained by the independent Rugby School.

The Philosophy Zone offers 50 Rugby School pupils and 70 pupils from three local state sixth forms the chance to network online over philosophical issues.

The website includes weekly podcasts from teachers on a range of issues such as a designer universe and the limits of science, as well as topic discussions where pupils can add their thoughts to online debates. The site also has a resources section and a philosophical quote of the week.

The website was set up to complement a weekly programme of philosophical discussions held at Rugby School, with pupils from the three partner schools coming in to join the debate.

Read entire article: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/8304409.stm

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BULLYING

Campaign against cyber bullying

"Life Matters", ABC Radio, 3 November 2009

Sixteen per cent of teenagers and children report that they have been bullied online. A new cyber-bullying campaign on YouTube is designed to encourage young internet users to think twice before forwarding humiliating material.

Called Smart Online, Safe Online, the campaign is the second internet safety program produced by NAPCAN, the National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect.

Listen now or download audio at: <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/lifematters/stories/2009/2730977.htm>

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HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

A fairer go for all

Frank Brennan, the Australian, 9 October 2009

MORE than 40,000 people participated in the National Human Rights Consultation.

Despite the burdens of the global financial crisis and the complexities of an emissions trading scheme, Australians are able to walk and chew gum at the same time. They are very interested in discussing the protection of human rights, even in times of economic uncertainty.

The four-member consultation committee has now reported to government, making 31 recommendations.

We spent four months traversing the country and attended 66 community round tables in 52 locations, from Christmas Island to Palm Island and from Thursday Island to Hobart.

The focus groups and the opinion survey conducted as part of our inquiry confirmed the concern expressed by many round-table participants that they were worried for the dignity of their fellow Australians, especially people with mental illness, the elderly, people with disabilities, people living in rural and remote areas (particularly in remote indigenous communities), and children in need.

For example, 75 per cent of those surveyed thought that the human rights of people with a mental illness needed to be better protected, and 72 per cent thought the same in connection with the elderly.

We found Australians were keen to be educated about human rights. They want school curriculums and public service training sessions to instill a deeper appreciation of rights and responsibilities.

Not just new Australians need access to a document listing in plain language the rights and responsibilities of those who live here, regardless of their culture or background.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,,26183726-32542,00.html>

Find out more about the National Human Rights Consultation at:
<http://www.humanrightsconsultation.gov.au/>

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Australia chosen to host 5th International World Summit on Arts and Culture in Melbourne

Government Monitor, 11th October 2009

Australian Race Discrimination Commissioner, Graeme Innes, has warmly welcomed the recent announcement that the Australia Council for the Arts will host the 5th International World Summit on Arts and Culture in Melbourne in October 2011.

“Human expression, including expression of one’s cultural identity, is a human right, as is the freedom of religion and belief,” said Commissioner Innes. “It is through human rights that respectful, creative, healthy and socially inclusive societies are built.”

“In a globalised world, the arts and the freedom to participate in cultural life and to enjoy the arts are fundamental to achieving these rights,” Mr Innes said.

Commissioner Innes said the Australian Human Rights Commission looked forward to working with the Australia Council, its various partners and the government to help promote the arts and culture as a key arm of human rights education in the years ahead.

Read more at http://thegovmonitor.com/civil_society_and_democratic_renewal/australia-chosen-to-

ETHICS & RELIGION

Values and ethics classes in school

"Life Matters", ABC Radio, 28 September 2009

Should ethics and values be taught to students who don't attend faith based lessons at school?

In some states, by law, schools must offer what's commonly known as 'scripture', or religious education. The instruction is provided by representatives from different faiths, in school hours.

The problem is that students who opt out of religious education often sit idle for the time their peers are at 'scripture'. At some schools, the majority of children don't attend religious instruction. So should those children be offered a secular alternative?

The issue has come to a head in our biggest state where the Education Minister has just been presented with a proposal by the St James Ethics Centre to trial an ethics-based complement to scripture in seven NSW primary schools.

The curriculum for the proposed trial will be devised by Associate Professor Philip Cam, from the School of History and Philosophy at the University of New South Wales, who has extensive experience in teaching philosophy and values in schools.

Listen to podcast at: <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/lifematters/stories/2009/2697679.htm>

Is This the Dumbest Education Policy in Australia?

Every week in NSW schools, thousands of kids sit for an hour doing nothing because of a deal cut a century ago with the church lobby.

David Hollier, New Matilda, 6 October 2009

But if you want to get some kind of detailed defence of the current policy from those church groups represented by the Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools (ICCOREIS) which advises the Government, you'll be disappointed, because apparently church spokespeople have gone to ground.

When newmatilda.com sought comment from the ICCOREIS, the Catholic Archdiocese and the Anglican Church, none were willing to comment on the issue (and have only put up a very basic defence on their website).

It's not clear how much influence the ICCOREIS really has on the Department — certainly Education Minister Verity Firth's spokesperson wouldn't comment either way. But the question is: Should they have any say in what non-religious students do or don't learn?

The NSW Education Department has twice rejected similar ethics programs for schools. In any given week these students can be found in libraries or, in one case described by Helen Walton of the NSW P&C, picking up rubbish.

Read entire article: <http://newmatilda.com/2009/10/06/dumbest-education-policy-australia>

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Teaching ethics in schools

"Life Matters", ABC Radio, 4 November 2009

How can ethics and values best be taught in schools?

Dr Neil Hawkes, an internationally renowned exponent of values-based learning was recently keynote speaker at the National Education Conference in Hobart presented jointly by ACSSO and the Australian Parents Council. This discussion was recorded during that visit to Australia.

Dr Neil Hawkes believes that values need to be drawn from the community and are best taught through modelling by teachers, principals and parents.

Listen now or download audio at <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/lifematters/stories/2009/2732541.htm>

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SCIENCE & RELIGION

Teach both evolution and creationism, say 54% of Britons

Jessica Shepherd, Guardian, 25 October 2009

More than half of British adults think that intelligent design and creationism should be taught alongside evolution in school science lessons – a proportion higher than in the US.

An Ipsos Mori survey questioned 11,768 adults from 10 countries on how the theory of evolution should be taught in school science lessons.

About 54% of the 973 polled Britons agreed with the view: "Evolutionary theories should be taught in science lessons in schools together with other possible perspectives, such as intelligent design and creationism."

In the US, of 991 adults responding to the survey, which was organised by the British Council, 51% agreed that evolution should be on the curriculum alongside other theories, like intelligent design.

Prominent scientists and teaching unions have expressed shock at the poll's findings.

Fern Elsdon-Baker, head of the British Council's Darwin Now programme, which celebrates the 200th anniversary of Darwin's birthday this year, said the poll raised a debate about how effectively evolutionary science was communicated both inside and outside the classroom.

She said: "Overall these results may reflect the need for a more sophisticated approach to teaching and communicating how science works as a process."

Read entire article: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2009/oct/25/teach-evolution-creationism-britons>

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Science education for global citizenship

David Geelan

Students need an understanding of the nature of science – what it means to make a scientific claim,

what evidence is relevant to supporting such a claim and how to critically evaluate that evidence – and of the relationships between science, technology and society.

Such understanding will help science education to pursue its traditional role of training and educating the scientists and engineers of the future. Australia is currently struggling in this area, with fewer students choosing to study science in senior high school and at university.

However, an understanding of the nature of science will also help to prepare students as citizens for many of the biggest issues that Australia will face in the next few decades.

These challenges share two characteristics: firstly, they are global rather than national in scope, and secondly, science is important in finding solutions to them. Facing issues such as climate change, pollution, pandemics and the management of water and energy, all students need to leave our schools with an understanding of science that prepares them to take an active role in making political decisions for the future.

Read entire article: <http://cmslive.curriculum.edu.au/leader/default.asp?id=28985&issueID=11969>

Dr Geelan is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Queensland's School of Education

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CULTURE & RELIGION

School crucifix ruling makes Italians cross

The Age, November 5, 2009 (AP)

The European Court of Human Rights has ruled that Italy violates education and religious freedom by displaying crucifixes in classrooms, prompting anger in the fiercely Catholic country.

Ruling on a case brought by an Italian mother, the court found on Tuesday that the right of parents to educate their children according to their own beliefs was being breached. Displaying crucifixes also violated children's right to freedom of religion, the court said.

The Italian bishops' conference denounced the court as "partial and ideological", saying the crucifix "is not just a religious symbol but also a sign of cultural belonging".

Education Minister Mariastella Gelmini said the cross was part of Italian tradition. "No-one, and certainly not an ideological European court, will succeed in erasing our identity," Ms. Gelmini was quoted as saying.

The presence of the crucifix in classrooms is not a sign of belief in Catholicism, but it is a symbol of our tradition, she said.

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But the European rights court said the display of crucifixes "could reasonably be associated with Catholicism".

The Italian foreign minister said the Government would appeal against the ruling.

The Vatican has denounced the ruling, with Vatican spokesman the Reverend Federico Lombardi saying the crucifix is a "fundamental sign of the importance of religious values" in Italian history and culture.

He said the European court had no right intervening in such a profoundly Italian matter and that it seemed as if the court wanted to forget the role of Christianity in Europe's identity. Alessandra

Mussolini, granddaughter of the Italian dictator, said the ruling aimed to "wipe out our Christian roots". "We are in the process of creating a Europe with neither identity nor traditions," she fumed.

Read entire article: <http://www.theage.com.au/world/school-crucifix-ruling-makes-italians-cross-20091104-hxwp.html>

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RELIGIOUS LITERACY

Religious illiteracy alarms educators and creates barriers between cultures

Graeme Hamilton, National Post, October 02, 2009

Half of American high-school seniors surveyed recently thought Sodom and Gomorrah were a married couple. A McGill University professor's reference to the patience of Job drew blank stares from students in his religion course. An art history teacher in France found children were mystified by the "strange bird" (a dove representing the Holy Ghost) common in Renaissance paintings.

Until recently, such confusion was little more than fodder for faculty-room jokes, evidence of the increasing secularism of Western societies. But educators attending a conference at McGill University yesterday heard there is growing recognition in Europe and North America that religious illiteracy creates serious barriers between cultures.

"There exists a widespread illiteracy about religion that spans the globe," Diane Moore, a professor at Harvard Divinity School, said. "The most significant consequence is that it fuels antagonism and hinders respect for pluralism, peaceful co-existence and co-operative endeavours."

Quebec, which last year introduced a mandatory Ethics and Religious Culture course to replace Christian denominational classes, was held up as a leader in an effort to improve children's religious literacy. The Quebec class covers all major world religions and is taught throughout primary and secondary school.

Robert Jackson, a professor of religious education at the University of Warwick in the U.K., said the 9/11 terrorist attacks served as a wake-up call for Europe. "It has propelled the discussion of religion into the public sphere," he said. "We can no longer say that discussion about religion does not belong in the public sphere, and of course part of the public sphere is public education." One result, he said, was a 2007 Council of Europe report containing guiding principles for teaching about religion.

Read more: <http://www.nationalpost.com/news/story.html?id=2061004#ixzz0VxGWjOf>

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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

US Research shows that watching TV contributes to toddler aggression

Courier Mail, 3 November 2009 (Reuters)

THE more television that a three-year-old watches, the more likely he or she is to behave aggressively, according to a US study. Just having the TV on in the background, even if the child wasn't watching it, was also linked to aggressive behavior although the relationship wasn't as strong.

"Parents should be smart about TV use," said researcher Jennifer Manganello from the University at Albany, State University of New York. "They should limit the time that children use TV, pay attention to the content of TV programs and consider how TV is used throughout the home."

The study looked at 3128 women from 20 US cities who had a child between 1998 and 2000.

After accounting for factors known to be associated with aggressive behavior, such as living in a violent neighborhood, TV watching was still significantly associated with aggressive behavior, such as hitting others, having angry moods, being disobedient and screaming.

Read more at: <http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,,26299436-5003402,00.html>

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Professor warns early childhood is for playing, not formal learning

Courier Mail, 5 November 2009 (AAP)

ONE of Australia's leading early childhood educators has warned the Federal Government's strategy for young children could see them doing worse at school and not being prepared for later life.

Professor Gammage said the Federal Government has recognised that it's important to learn in the early years but had gone off half-cocked and mistakenly implemented curriculum targets for children as young as three.

"Children don't need to be taught curriculum, they need quality relationships, quality attachments and quality boundaries," he said. "Zero to six-year-olds should be concentrating on play-based learning, drama and aural learning."

Read more at: <http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,,26308635-5003402,00.html>

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CONFERENCES & EVENTS

“Bridging the Gap” – Building capacity with Indigenous communities

Two-day Seminar with Richard Trudgen & Yolngu presenters from Arnhem Land

- Melbourne: 19-20 November
- Canberra: 23–24 November
- Sydney: 26–27 November

Presented by Aboriginal Resources & Development Services Inc (ARDS), this is a unique opportunity to hear directly about the real issues facing Yolngu and other Indigenous people - plus real answers to these problems, shared by people working on the ground day to day.

Hosted by Richard Trudgen, CEO of ARDS, Educator on Yolngu Radio and author of acclaimed book *Why Warriors Lie Down and Die* in partnership with Witiyana Marika, founding member of internationally renowned Yothu Yindi band, and Dianne Gondarra, Yolngu language consultant and presenter on Yolngu Radio.

“This is not just a seminar, but an experience that all Australians should have.”

Read more at <http://www.ards.com.au>

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ACSSO EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

- Australian Education Digest : <http://www.acsso.org.au/aed.htm> (weekly)

- 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)
- Family School Partners : <http://www.familyschool.org.au/news/> (monthly)
- Public Education Voice : <http://www.acsso.org.au/pev.htm> (quarterly)

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