



Australian Council of State School Organisations

The National Voice of Parents of Children in Australia's Public Schools and Their School Communities

AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION DIGEST

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COMPARING SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

Call to focus on schools' and students' progress

Justine Ferrari, The Australian, October 13, 2009

AN international expert on assessing schools and students has urged the federal government to use the national literacy and numeracy tests to measure the progress made by students and schools from year to year, rather than compare schools in groups of their peers.

A former education analyst with the OECD, Bert Jensen, is now at the Grattan Institute in Melbourne. He said yesterday Australia should adopt a system that measures the value added by schools and teachers from year to year.

While assessing student and school performance was the first step, Dr Jensen said the National Assessment Program -- Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) should track not only student and school progress but also the progress of government programs and policies.

The Grattan Institute is a new independent think tank based in Melbourne that is politically non-aligned, and Dr Jensen joined last month as director of its school education program.

Read more at <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,26202072-5013404,00.html>

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COMPARING STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Student Results in Australia are High, but Very Unequal and not Improving

Trevor Cobbold, Save our Schools, 26 September 2009

The latest results from the National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) generated a wave of self-congratulation from Education Ministers around Australia which should be qualified.

While student achievement remains high, there has been little improvement in recent years and there is a large gap in the results of rich and poor students. Reducing this gap is the greatest challenge facing Australian education.

The 2009 NAPLAN results show that only about 6-9 per cent of all students tested do not achieve the national reading benchmarks. About 4-8 per cent of Year 3, 5 and 7 students and about 12-13 per cent of Year 9 students do not achieve national writing benchmarks. About 5-7 per cent of all students do not achieve the national numeracy benchmarks.

However, recent international assessments show higher proportions of students not achieving expected standards in Australia.

Read more at <http://soscanberra.com/national-issues/student-results-in-australia-are-high-but-very-unequal-and-not-improving>

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National literacy and numeracy tests 'not reliable'

Justine Ferrari, The Australian, October 12, 2009

THE results from the national literacy and numeracy tests are unreliable and cannot accurately compare a school's performance from year to year or track the progress students make as they go through school.

Melbourne University associate professor Margaret Wu argues that the test results are too imprecise to be used as proposed by the federal government - to compare schools and identify those struggling to improve student performance.

In a report analysing the results from the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy, Professor Wu says the change in student scores from last year to this year was greater in one-third of the tests than could be statistically expected.

NAPLAN, which started last year, tests all students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 on reading, writing, spelling, punctuation and grammar, and numeracy.

Read more at <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,26196631-601,00.html>

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STUDENT BEHAVIOUR

Bullying 'mostly old school, not cyber'

Danny Rose, The Australian, September 30, 2009

FACEBOOK and Twitter may have handed bullies some powerful new avenues for attack, but they are still most active in the playground, an Australian study shows.

Research taking in more than 600 children found that 37 per cent had experienced bullying - of which just seven per cent was a more tech-savvy version of "cyber bullying".

Psychologist Kay Bussey says the rate of cyber bullying was low but growing, and it was additional to an otherwise stable level of conventional playground bullying.

"Cyber bullying is a growing problem in schools ... but it's not as high as we would think," says Dr Bussey, who will present her findings at the Australian Psychological Society's 44th Annual Conference in Darwin this week.

"Everybody is talking about cyber bullying and that it is really prevalent. When we did the study we were surprised - yes, it is there but it is not at the highest level."

Read more at <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,26146649-26103,00.html>

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Can I have your attention?

Caroline Milburn, *The Age*, October 12, 2009

One in four teachers loses 30 per cent of classroom time because of disruptive student behaviour and administrative tasks, according to a report card of the world's education systems.

The survey of public and private schools in 23 countries, including Australia, is the first to provide an international comparison of the conditions of teaching and learning.

It found the classroom climate — one of the most important predictors of student achievement — is being undermined by discipline problems and administrative tasks in many countries.

Teachers in Australia, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain and Iceland spend on average more than 14 per cent of their classroom time restoring order, slightly more than the international average of 13 per cent.

Teachers in Brazil and Malaysia spend on average the largest portion of classroom time (18 per cent) dealing with disruptive students, while their counterparts in Poland, Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary and the Slovak Republic spend less than 10 per cent of time on maintaining order.

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/can-i-have-your-attention-20091009-gqkw.html>

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HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

Australian Human Rights Commission says action needed on report recommendations

The Government Monitor, 8 October 2009

The Australian Human Rights Commission has today welcomed the release of National Human Rights Consultation Committee's Report.

Commission President, Cathy Branson QC, said the Committee's report was the result of one of the largest public consultations in Australia's history.

"The report emphatically demonstrates that human rights matter to Australians, wherever they live, and that they want our government to make sure that rights are better protected and better understood," President Branson said.

"We must now act on the report's findings to bring human rights home."

Ms Branson welcomed the report's major recommendations that the Australian Government focus on human rights education and adopt a federal Human Rights Act.

"The Commission wholeheartedly agrees with the Committee's recommendation that education should be the highest priority if human rights are to be meaningful and embraced by the whole community," she said.

Read more at http://thegovmonitor.com/civil_society_and_democratic_renewal/australian-human-rights-commission-says-action-needed-on-report-recommendations-9057.html

FREE SCHOOLS

The 'free schools' of Sweden

Emma Alberici, ABC Radio PM, October 9, 2009

MARK COLVIN: Britain's opposition Conservatives have released a controversial education policy that would shake up the way state schools are operated in the UK.

With a general election now less than seven months away, most pundits and pollsters say the Tories will form the next government.

Central to their plans will be so called "free schools" modelled on the hugely successful Swedish education system.

Sweden lets anyone, not just religious groups, set up a school and receive 100 per cent government funding to support it.

Europe correspondent Emma Alberici has been to Sweden to see how the system works:

EMMA ALBERICI: Since 1992, 1000 new schools have been launched in Sweden by parent groups, charities and large corporations.

Read more at <http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2009/s2710004.htm>

RELIGION, ETHICS & EDUCATION

Religion versus ethics

Jeff Corbett, Herald (Hunter Valley, NSW), 30 September 2009

It was in the 19th century that time was set aside in NSW public schools each week for scripture lessons, and that was done to make peace with churches horrified that the ungodly were going to offer what we know today as public education.

Much has changed since then, and among the biggest changes has been the churches' loss of power. But, it seems, this change has not been big enough.

The mainstream churches are fighting desperately to protect what is, to my astonishment, a government-backed monopoly over the teaching of ethics in schools.

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from the weekly scripture class but they do not have the right to have the children undertake any other structured activity during that hour.

And specifically not if it involves the teaching of ethics!

This has come to light because parents at seven Sydney primary schools want their children to take part in a trial 10-part ethics course in lieu of the weekly hour of scripture lessons.

The ethics course has been put together by the non-religious St James Ethics Centre and an internationally recognised specialist in philosophical and ethical inquiry for children, Professor Philip Cam of NSW University.

Read more at <http://www.theherald.com.au/blogs/jeff-corbett/religion-versus-ethics/1637666.aspx?storypage=0>

RURAL & REGIONAL EDUCATION

Helping drought-affected families with education expenses

The Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, 5 October 2009

The Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, and the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Tony Burke, today announced funding of \$17.4 million to help rural families whose children attend schools in drought-affected areas with education expenses.

More than forty regions are eligible for Exceptional Circumstances drought assistance, covering around one-third of Australia's agricultural land.

The funding will go to approximately 2310 primary and secondary schools in those regions, in recognition of the financial impact of years of drought on Australian families and school communities.

This was one of a number of drought assistance measures extended in the Federal Budget.

Schools may use the funding for items such as text books, uniforms, subject levies, excursions and school camps, or to provide other support which is directly related to schooling.

The funding is flexible which means it can be used to subsidise activities for a whole class or school. Principals can also direct support to families most in need.

Read more at http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_091006_103848.aspx

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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Early Years Developmental Learning at Mount Evelyn Primary School

Phil Comport and Cathy Sanders, Curriculum Leadership, 9 October 2009

Mount Evelyn Primary School in Victoria has in recent years implemented a new approach to the early years curriculum, which emphasises the development of oral language skills as a foundation for later development of literacy and social skills, and also increases teachers' ability to provide personalised learning opportunities for their students.

An evaluation of the project has found that the Developmental Curriculum approach has helped the students across a wide range of learning domains, including the social and emotional domains, without comprising the development of literacy and numeracy.

Read more at <http://cmslive.curriculum.edu.au/leader/default.asp?id=29172&issueID=11945>

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INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

\$34 million for Indigenous youth leadership scholarships

The Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, 13 October 2009

The Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, today announced the new partnership brokers to deliver the Indigenous Youth Leadership Program from 2010.

The Rudd Government is investing \$34 million in the Indigenous Youth Leadership Program over the next three years to help Close the Gap in Indigenous education.

The eight organisations that have been selected are: The Smith Family, Yalari Limited, Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership Development, Madalah Limited, Dubbo College Senior Campus, Presbyterian Ladies College Perth, Townsville Catholic Education and MADEC Australia-Mildura.

These organisations will work with schools, businesses and Indigenous communities to coordinate scholarships for more than 700 Indigenous students over the next three years.

Read more at http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_091013_160146.aspx

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Governor-General's Indigenous Student Teacher Scholarships

The Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, 13 October 2009

The Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, today announced the establishment of the Governor-General's Indigenous Student Teacher Scholarship to assist one Indigenous student in every State and Territory to undertake Education studies at university.

These prestigious scholarships will see \$25,000 per year awarded to successful recipients for the life of their teaching degree (up to four years). This will enable scholarship recipients to concentrate solely on their education studies whilst at university and fully develop their teaching skills and knowledge.

In addition, all scholarship recipients will be provided with the support of a highly accomplished teacher or teacher educator as a mentor throughout the duration of their studies.

Applications for 2010 Governor-General's Indigenous Student Teacher Scholarships are scheduled to open in November this year.

Read more at http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_091013_095635.aspx

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MATHEMATICS EDUCATION

Adding \$2 million to maths education

The Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, 13 October 2009

The Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, today announced funding of \$2 million to help improve mathematics education in Australian schools and universities.

The Government firmly believes that all Australian students need to be proficient in the basics like numeracy to be able to fully participate in the world of work and further study.

The Australian Government is funding the Improving Mathematics Education in Schools Project which is run by the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute (AMSI) in collaboration with business, industry and teacher professional associations.

The project supports the teaching of mathematics in targeted low socio-economic schools and raises the awareness of maths-related career opportunities.

Read more at http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_091013_115158.aspx

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TERTIARY EDUCATION

Unis do well in world rankings

Dan Harrison, Sydney Morning Herald, October 9, 2009

AUSTRALIAN universities have performed strongly in the latest world rankings, bolstering the country's reputation as a study destination after months of bad press about mistreatment of international students.

The University of Sydney climbed one place in the Times Higher Education Supplement world university rankings published yesterday, taking 36th spot. However, it lost its status as Australia's second-highest-ranked university - it now shares that honour with the University of Melbourne, which jumped two places to tie with it.

The rankings, compiled by the higher education consultant Quacquarelli Symonds, place six Australian universities in the world's top 50.

The Australian National University was once again Australia's highest-ranked university. It slipped from 16th place last year to 17th, but remains the world's highest ranked university outside the US and Britain.

Read more at <http://www.smh.com.au/national/unis-do-well-in-world-rankings-20091008-gozl.html>

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AROUND THE STATES & TERRITORIES

NSW: NSW dodges schools sustainability issue

Beverley Head, IT Wire, 7 October 2009

The NSW Department of Education and Training has flick-passed questions regarding the sustainability of its approach to the Digital Education Revolution which will see it gift notebook computers to each year of State High School students as they graduate from Year 12.

NSW is rolling out notebooks to Year 9 students which they can use throughout their school years, and which are theirs to keep if they complete Year 12.

Other states have taken a different approach, with most allocating DER funds to schools to invest as they wish.

While the Lenovo notebooks, featuring Windows 7 and an impressive array of software, are being enthusiastically adopted by NSW's Year 9 students, some educators are wondering how the programme will be sustained when the funding runs out, or when there is a change of Government.

Read more at <http://www.itwire.com/content/view/28296/53/>

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NSW: TAFE closes its doors to year 10

Anna Patty, Sydney Morning Herald, October 12, 2009

YEAR 10 students will be denied a second chance to complete their school certificate through TAFE from next year, a move that will disenfranchise thousands of students.

The NSW Opposition and the Greens say it will close doors on students who are struggling in the school environment and would be better suited to TAFE.

From next year, all students will be required to stay at school until the end of year 10, after which they must continue in education, training or paid work for more than 25 hours a week until they turn 17.

A memo to TAFE staff from Marie Persson, the deputy director general, TAFE and Community Education, says provision of year 10 equivalent education through TAFE for students under 17 "will only occur in a small minority of cases where the student, parent/caregiver, school principal and the TAFE Institute Director each agree".

Read more at <http://www.smh.com.au/national/tafe-closes-its-doors-to-year-10-20091011-gsdt.html>

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NT: No welfare cuts yet for parental slackers

Natasha Robinson, The Australian, October 01, 2009

NOT one parent who chronically fails to send their child to school has had their welfare payments suspended under a federal government trial aimed at lifting woeful school attendance in the Northern Territory.

The measures linking welfare to school attendance came into force in six NT communities at the beginning of the year, but figures suggest a reluctance on the part of federal and territory bureaucracies to implement the tough policies announced by Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin.

Centrelink confirmed yesterday that no one had as yet had their welfare payments suspended under the trial, known as the School Enrolment and Attendance Measure, which has been in force for three school terms. This contrasts sharply with the indigenous-led experience in Cape York, where a similar welfare reform trial has resulted in 31 conditional income management orders being issued in just three months.

Read more at <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,26149144-2702,00.html>

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QLD: Positive not punitive the best approach to indigenous education

WHILE the Family Responsibilities Commission in Queensland may claim it is successful in getting Aboriginal children re-engaged in school, taxpayers have every right to question such claims.

In the interest of healthy debate and development of good public policy, there are alternative views I think must be considered.

All good business and public policy should be scrutinised within the context of the triple bottom line.

Policy must deliver on economic, environmental and social returns to be considered effective.

Against this background I suspect the public has reason to be outraged.

Read more at <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,26156676-7583,00.html>

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SA: More public schools increasing fees and charges to parents

Joanna Vaughan, the Advertiser, October 02, 2009

MORE than 100 public schools have increased fees above the standard level in the past year, sparking claims the State Government is not properly funding state schools.

Documents obtained by Family First MLC Robert Brokenshire using Freedom of Information laws show \$16.9 million was yielded from the 111 – or 18.6 per cent– of schools that increased fees.

Some parents are now paying up to \$20 a week for public education, which many argue should be free.

Public schools charge a materials and service fee that begins at \$194 for primary schools and \$259 for secondary schools. Any increases must be approved by the school's governing council.

Read more at http://www.news.com.au/adelaidenow/story/0,22606,26152343-2682,00.html?from=public_rss

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SA: Work begins on Adelaide's new public-private partnership schools

Hon Jane Lomax-Smith MP, SA Education Minister, 7 October 2009

Sites are being cleared to make way for six brand new State schools being built in metropolitan Adelaide through the Rann Government's Education Works program.

The State Government is investing \$323 million over the next 30 years to build, manage and maintain the new school facilities through a Public Private Partnership.

The State Government will staff and operate the schools.

Construction work on all six schools will be underway by the end of the year, with the first two schools to open in October 2010.

"This is the most significant rebuild of our public schools in more than three decades," Dr Lomax-Smith says.

Read more at <http://www.ministers.sa.gov.au/news.php?id=5458&page=1>

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SA: Rally for special needs funding

The Independent Weekly, 8 October 2009

Hundreds of protesters, led by the Australian Education Union (AEU), rallied on the steps of parliament today asking the State Government for more funding to educate children with special needs.

AEU President Correna Haythorpe said parents of disabled or disadvantaged children with were paying for extra resources out of their own pockets.

"Because of the limited founding that's available parents are paying for extra support services," she said.

She said there had been a spike in the number of special needs children attending public schools, but not enough funding to keep up with demand.

Read more at <http://www.independentweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/protest-for-special-needs-funding/1644417.aspx?src=rss>

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TAS: Premier confident on school changes

David Bartlett MP, Premier, 7 October 2009

Premier David Bartlett said today he would ask the Auditor General to release any audit of the number of students in post year education as soon as he was able.

"In normal circumstances such a report by the Auditor General would be made to parliament but if that is not possible before the election the AG can lodge the report with the clerk of the House and release it to the public.

"It would then be tabled at the next sitting of parliament.

"Work on such a report will be able to begin once all of the data is in.

"I am confident that the changes we have made that have resulted in greater choice and more course diversity for students will see more students staying on past year 10."

Read more at <http://www.media.tas.gov.au/release.php?id=28022>

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TAS: Independent Review of Tasmania Tomorrow Challenge

Nick McKim MP, 7th October 2009

The Tasmanian Greens today welcomed the Premier's acceptance of their proposal that the Auditor-General conducts an audit of the Post Year 10 enrolment and retention data, and have pursued their call for a full independent review of the Tasmania Tomorrow system, its implementation and educational outcomes.

Greens Leader and Education spokesperson Nick McKim MP said that independent and empirical data is needed on the impacts of the Tasmania Tomorrow reforms in order to test David Bartlett's current claims, especially given that these cannot be backed up with evidence.

"We are delighted that the Premier has adopted our suggestion that the Auditor-General conduct an audit of the enrolment and retention rate data, and the challenge now for David Bartlett is that he now also adopts our other suggestion of a full independent review of Tasmania Tomorrow," Mr McKim said.

Read more at http://mps.tas.greens.org.au/News/view_MR.php?id=4070

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TAS: Trip of a lifetime for six Tasmanian students

David Bartlett MP, Premier, 8 October 2009

Six Tasmanian students will have the unforgettable experience of visiting Gallipoli on Anzac Day next year after winning the Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize.

Premier and Minister for Education and Skills, David Bartlett, today announced the winners of the 2009 prize which gives students the chance to visit important World War 1 landmarks in Europe.

"The Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize honours Tasmania's World War 1 veteran, Frank MacDonald who died in 2003 at the

age of 107," Mr Bartlett said.

"Winners visit significant wartime sites in Belgium, France and Turkey including Gallipoli.

"This competition is a fantastic opportunity for our students to explore history in a proactive and exciting way.

"For many years to come, it will provide an important catalyst for all Tasmanian students to reflect on how we can continue to keep the Anzac spirit alive."

Read more at <http://www.media.tas.gov.au/release.php?id=28029>

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VIC: Regional school takes out top fire education gong

Australian Teacher Magazine, 6 October 2009 (AAP)

Regional Victorian students have been recognised in the state's annual Fire Awareness Awards.

The awards - a joint initiative of Victoria's three fire authorities - were developed to acknowledge the success of safety initiatives by individuals, organisations and fire agencies.

Year Nine students from Maffra Secondary College produced a Teenagers in Emergencies booklet for distribution to youths in their area.

Their efforts were recognised on Tuesday evening with a \$10,000 grant from the RACV.

The booklet will now be distributed across the broader Gippsland region in addition to an education day for junior students at the school.

Read more at http://www.ozteacher.com.au/html/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=354:regional-victorian-school-takes-out-top-fire-education-gong&catid=1:news&Itemid=8

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WA: \$5.8 million for new Early Learning and Care Centres

Hon Kate Ellis MP, Minister for Early Childhood Education & Care, 6 October 2009

The Federal Minister for Early Childhood Education and Child Care Kate Ellis today announced \$5.8 million for three new Early Learning and Care Centres at Karratha in the state's north-west, and Darch and Mirrabooka in Perth's northern suburbs.

The Karratha centre will be built at Tambrey Primary School with \$2.2 million of Australian Government funding. It will provide 120 new long day care places for Pilbara youngsters. Woodside Energy will provide more than \$4 million over three years to the centre.

Read more at http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Ellis/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_091006_153430.aspx

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CONFERENCES & EVENTS

4th Annual Forum of Australian National Schools Network (ANSN)

The Education Revolution – two years on

17 November 2009, Old Parliament House, Canberra ACT

Since the election of the Rudd Labor Government, the education community has been excited by the opportunities for new and imaginative work to begin again.

New partnerships are designed to challenge us all to think differently about how we do our work in schools – and how families, schools and communities can work together more innovatively to support young people's learning and development.

This forum is designed to give the broad education community the opportunity to explore these new agendas in a collaborative and critical way. We invite the systems, the unions, other agencies and associations, and probably most importantly those folk in the schools who have the ultimate responsibility to make this work, to join us as we focus on these issues of national significance.

Read more at http://www.ansn.edu.au/4th_annual_national_forum_2009_the_education_revolution_two_years_on

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REMINDERS

20 October - Symposium: Building school partnerships with commerce & industry - Melbourne, VIC - <http://www.spheresofinfluence.com.au/>

23-24 October - Art Education Victoria Annual Conference - Melbourne, VIC - <http://www.aev.vic.edu.au/pd/conference/2009/index.html>

24-25 October - Asian Conference on Education - Osaka, Japan - <http://ace.iafor.org/>

9 November - Innovation in Education One-Day Conference - London, UK - <http://www.guardian.co.uk/innovation-education>

9-12 November - London International Conference on Education - London, UK - <http://www.liceducation.org/>

18-21 November - NAEYC Annual Conference & Expo - Washington DC, USA <http://www.naeyc.org/conference/>

24-26 November - Family Relationship Services Australia National Conference - Sydney, NSW - <http://www.frsa.org.au/site/>

25-27 November - International Conference on Primary Education 2009 - Hong Kong - <http://www.ied.edu.hk/primaryed/>

24-26 March - Going Global 4 - London, UK - <http://www.britishcouncil.org/goingglobal.htm>

9-10 April - National Coalition against Bullying Conference - Melbourne, VIC - <http://www.amf.org.au/NCABConference/>

4-7 July - National Conference for Teachers of English & Literacy - Perth, WA - <http://www.englishliteracyconference.com.au/index.php?id=46&year=10>

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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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