What's New

COAG Reform Council reports strong results

In the final report on COAG’s $540 million five-year Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership, the COAG Reform Council found that the lowest performing schools and students are improving.

Deputy Chairman of the COAG Reform Council, Prof Greg Craven, said the Council was pleased that governments have met or made good progress on 104 of the 126 targets under this agreement.

“These strong results mean that more students now meet the minimum standards for reading and numeracy,” Prof Craven said. “This report is evidence of the value of targeted programs for schools and students with low achievement rates.”

The proportion of Indigenous students at or above the national minimum standard in reading improved by over 11 percentage points for Year 3 in Queensland, nearly 17 percentage points for Year 7 in Western Australia and over 16 percentage points for Year 3 in the Northern Territory.

However, there were also some disappointing results, most notably in South Australia, New South Wales and Tasmania.

www.coagreformcouncil.gov.au

NBN launches ‘For Schools’ on website

NBN Co has launched its ‘For Schools’ section of the website, with the aim of helping students and teachers understand what the National Broadband Network (NBN) is all about and how it will potentially impact their lives.

The website includes two key sections – one for students and one for educators:

The student landing page is designed to provide general factual information to assist students who may be researching the NBN and its potential benefits. This includes:

- Fact sheets on the NBN
- Information on the history of telecommunications in Australia
- Interactive videos and activities

The teachers tools page is designed to provide examples of how the NBN is currently being and can potentially be used today in Australian schools and education institutes. This includes:

- Case studies – video and written case studies of people and companies who are connected to the NBN or passionate about online learning
- Videos and discussions on the future of learning from education experts such as Prof Stephen Heppell an international education expert who is currently touring Australia speaking about the future of online learning
- Education resources on how teachers can teach their students about the NBN


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$30,000 prizes in GenerationOne competition

Teachers retire early, tired of competing in ‘league tables’

Experienced secondary school teachers are leaving teaching because it no longer provides them with a sense of professional satisfaction, says QUT researcher Mark Keogh.

Dr Keogh, from QUT’s Faculty of Education, said he found from in-depth interviews with 16 retired secondary teachers during his research that some of them viewed teaching as having the same status as ‘factory work’.

“They feel teaching has gone from being a profession that valued high standards and collegiality between teachers and principals to one focussed on ‘league table’ results and compliance with management demands,” Dr Keogh said.

“Perception of professionalism is especially important to mature-age workers as a source of job satisfaction for them.”

“Twenty to 25 years ago the emphasis was on encouraging students to think critically for themselves. Now, they say, it is ‘ramming information in, and getting it out’.

“The pressure to get students through the production line with high marks for ‘league tables’ such as the MySchool website and NAPLAN testing has led them to refer to it as the ‘McDonaldisation’ of education."

“This has led them to feel that they are not achieving the true purpose of teaching which is to equip students with critical thinking skills for the wider world.”

Dr Keogh said that consistent with national trends female teachers in the study reported retiring earlier than their male counterparts. “This is a concern in a profession dominated by women,” he said.

“Another big issue affecting job satisfaction and decision to leave early is what teachers call the corporatisation of schools.

“When they began teaching, principals and teachers were collegial but in the early 1990s schools started to be run by principals who were managers – schools became corporatised.”

www.news.qut.edu.au

More money for chaplains and welfare workers

The federal government has announced that 409 independent schools with existing chaplains or student welfare workers have been granted an extension to their funding for a further three years. These schools represent 16 per cent of all Australian schools that received funding under the extension of the program; a further 64 independent schools have been successful in their applications for funding, bringing the total of funded schools to 473.

www.news.qut.edu.au

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www.news.qut.edu.au

GenerationOne and the Australian School of Performing Arts is inviting schools to get involved in the CREAtiVe CHANGE GenerationOne School Competition, which aims to raise awareness and get young Australians actively involved in the initiative to end Indigenous disparity in one generation.

The competition encourages primary schools to perform and film their own version of the GenerationOne theme song Hands Across Australia, and secondary schools to use the Warumpi Band’s Blackfella/Whitefella to inspire their response to Indigenous disparity.

One primary school and one secondary school will win $15,000. A resource pack will be sent to schools during week commencing 18th June. The interactive DVD includes a step-by-step instructional clip to help primary school teachers teach Hands Across Australia.

Secondary schools are encouraged to use Blackfella/Whitefella, and some clips from the past two years, as the inspiration for their entry.

Entries close on 19th October.
Australian School of Performing Arts
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At just $195 per annum WEBiTLinks is incredible value.

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Daffodil Day

Cancer Council is inviting schools across Australia to help grow hope for a cancer-free future on Daffodil Day Friday 24th August.

There are two ways to get involved:
• Schools can receive a Dress Yellow for Daffodil Day kit
• Schools can register to sell Daffodil Day merchandise.

Merchandise is on sale or return, meaning it’s free for schools to get involved and gifts sold in schools are at specially reduced prices.

This year Cancer Council aims to raise $9.2 million for Daffodil Day.

To register, order a merchandise box or donate visit:

www.daffodilday.com.au

NOTICES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Education Today welcomes education news and announcements for the daily news service and magazine.

Send to minnis@minnisjournals.com.au

Australian Museum

2012 Exhibitions


Curriculum-linked programs can be explored in our permanent exhibitions: Dinosaurs, Surviving Australia, Birds & Insects, Skeletons, Planet of Minerals, Albert Chapman Mineral Collection, Search and Discover, Indigenous Australians… and more.

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www.australianmuseum.net.au

NOTICES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Education Today welcomes education news and announcements for the daily news service and magazine.

Send to minnis@minnisjournals.com.au
NAB Schools First: Apply now to share in $3 million of awards funding

NAB Schools First is a national awards program that recognises and rewards outstanding school-community partnerships which are having a positive impact on students beyond the classroom.

To date, NAB Schools First has awarded over $15 million in awards funding to 310 Australian schools. This year, $3 million is available to 130 school-community partnerships across our three award categories - Impact (for established partnerships), Seed Funding (for new or developing partnerships) and Student (for student-led partnership ideas).

Applications are now open and close at 5.00pm (AEST) on Friday, 29 June 2012.

NAB Schools First is a partnership between NAB, the Foundation for Young Australians and the Australian Council for Educational Research.

Find out more and apply now – schoolsfirst.edu.au
When Gungahlin College in the ACT opened its doors last year, staff took it as an opportunity to set some interesting initiatives in place, including an advanced science program.

Driven by teacher Liam Kirwan, who has been a dedicated science teacher since graduating with honours in physical organic chemistry from the Australian National University (ANU), the school’s Science Honours Program offers the opportunity for high-flying students to take on extra-curricular work, visit sites where actual scientific work is being done and access leading scientists through a visiting speakers program.

“These are really the kids who will become the scientific researchers of the future, giving them access to scientists at work broadens their horizons and gives the students contact with professionals who they will potentially be working with,” Kirwan says.

A recent high flyer to visit and speak was Prof Mahananda (Nanda) Dasgupta, an experimental physicist at the Heavy Ion Accelerator Facility in the Department of Nuclear Physics of the ANU. She is an international leader in accelerator-based nuclear fusion and fission whose research has resulted in a fundamental change in the current understanding of these processes. She also is the recipient of the inaugural 2011 Georgina Sweet Australian Laureate, which gives you an idea of the calibre of people Gungahlin College’s program attracts.

Mr Kirwan’s efforts haven’t gone unnoticed with the Australian Academy of Science in Canberra giving him a nod at its National Academy awards for science teachers in May along with six other top Australian science teachers.

A stringent selection process means that the Fellowship of the Academy is made up of just under 450 of Australia’s top scientists, distinguished in the physical and biological sciences and their applications. Election is subject to a searching appraisal of the candidate’s published works, including reference to leading scientific researchers around the world.

No more than two Fellows may be elected every three years on the basis of distinguished contributions to science by means other than personal research. A small number of distinguished foreign scientists with substantial connections to Australian science are elected as Corresponding Members.

“We know from previous years that the teachers enthusiastically share their new skills and knowledge with colleagues upon their return home,” Academy President Prof Susanne Cory says.

Liam Kirwan, Gungahlin College ACT
Mr Kirwan won his award for facilitating links between students and scientists in the CSIRO and the Australian National University by organising excursions and guest lectures. Kirwan is the Coordinator of the Science Honours Program at the college and facilitates extending high-achieving science students through extracurricular activities.

Jaqueline Cleary, Balgowlah Heights Public School NSW
Chair of the Science Committee, Ms Cleary organised a whole school science day where all classes participated in new and innovative science activities.

Andrea Collins, St Philips College NT
Head of science, Ms Collins incorporates recent developments into the classroom, including Pluto’s downgrading to a dwarf planet, the official naming of the 112th element Copernicium in 2010, debate on stem cell research, the greenhouse effect and global warming.

Meg Saunderson, Darra State School Qld
Vice President of the Science Teachers’ Association of Queensland and a Primary Connections Professional Learning Facilitator, Ms Saunderson has specialised in inquiry-based teaching and learning.

Stuart Sluggett, Scotch College Junior School SA
Mr Sluggett coordinated the delivery of the Australian Curriculum: Science Through the use of Primary Connections Resources and coordinated a science fair with the focus on chemistry in 2011.

Helen Silvester, Mentone Girls’ Grammar Vic
Head of Science, Ms Silvester has incorporated electronic media into the science curriculum by using NatureApp on the iPad for biology. She also organised external research opportunities at the Genetic Technology Access Centre and invited guests to the school.

Lisa Nelson, East Narrogin Primary School WA
Ms Nelson is a Science Leader employing hands-on philosophy to science learning and implementing the Primary Connections resources for teaching and learning.
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CHERI 17th Annual Conference

This year’s conference of the Children’s Hospital Education Research Institute will be held on 6th–7th September at the Sebel Parramatta, NSW. The theme is Promoting Resilience: Stacking the Odds in Kids’ Favour and the conference will focus on how to build resilience in children and adolescents. It aims to provide evidence based information as well as practical strategies.

The conference will be of interest to psychologists, school counsellors, guidance officers, school executives, teachers, support and special education teachers, allied health and medical professionals.

Keynote Speakers are Dr Sam Goldstein, Assistant Clinical Instructor, School of Medicine, University of Utah and Dr Erica Frydenberg, Associate Professor in Psychology, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne.

For information about the conference and to register on-line visit the CHERI website.


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$3m available in NAB Schools First partnerships

NAB Schools First recognises and rewards outstanding school-community partnerships. This year the program is offering a total of 130 awards worth over $3 million. Applications are open at www.schoolsfirst.edu.au and close at 5.00 pm (AEST) on Friday, 29th June 2012.

Last year, Tyrrell College, in Sea Lake, North East Victoria, national winner of last year’s Schools First Award received $500,000 in recognition of its Dynamic Agriculture Partnership. The college formed its award winning partnership with local agricultural businesses AWB Grainflow and Agrivision after local farmers identified the need to encourage students to get into the main industry that keeps their town afloat. The partnership promotes agriculture as a viable career path and supports the local economy, it has also helped to address student disengagement, absenteeism and improve student connection to the school.

John Wright, Dynamic Agriculture Program Coordinator at Tyrrell College, has seen a huge amount of support since their NAB Schools First Award win.

“We have been overwhelmed by the encouragement received from the wider agricultural industry, they’ve donated equipment, time and resources to ensuring students get involved.”

The Tyrell College partnership involves partners Agrivision and AWB Grainflow running various activities with students, from sewing, cropping, harvesting and sorting, through to marketing and distribution.

“Without NAB Schools First we wouldn’t have been able to fast track this program to the stage that we’re at now; several senior students are involved and we can now purchase our own equipment – the funding has made a huge difference,” Wright said.

www.schoolsfirst.edu.au

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Martin Johnson provides video production and communications services to a range of clients, including non-profit organisations, small businesses and increasingly, the education sector.

He has recently produced three promotional videos for schools in Sydney and project managed the production of a school prospectus, including multi-language translation.

He has over 20 years experience in scripting, directing, filming and editing video, ranging from two minute web video to national TV programs and long form documentaries. Based in Sydney’s south, he uses state-of-the-art digital video cameras and editing systems to ensure an efficient workflow and quick turn around.

He has travelled extensively, filming aid projects in Africa and Asia and recently filmed students from a Victorian private school on a discover trip to Cambodia – his fifth visit to the country.

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Helping hands for schools with literacy issues

Love it or loathe it, NAPLAN, now in its fifth year, has become a fixture in the education calendar. More than 1 million school students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 sat the test in May, accompanied by the usual media noise as supporters and detractors put their arguments.

And there will be more media attention when the results are announced towards the end of the year – top-scoring schools will make sure to tell everyone about how good their results are… and schools that didn't do too well will try to explain why.

For Angela Ehmer, director of Queensland-based Literacy Solutions, NAPLAN isn't 'the be all and end all' of literacy but she welcomes the sense of accountability that the annual tests have brought to schools.

“The demands of NAPLAN and the National Curriculum are driving the need for continuing professional development,” she says. “Expertise in the teaching of literacy varies greatly within and across schools. Consistent, high quality practice across a school is paramount if longer-term positive outcomes are to be achieved.”

Literacy Solutions assists schools to enhance classroom and whole school literacy through short- and long-term consultancy and workshops. Schools may book standard workshops or request tailored on-site workshops to meet the particular needs of staff and students.

For schools and individuals teachers who prefer off-site training, open workshops are a cost effective and stimulating day or half day away from the classroom.

Ehmer cites Reading Stamina as a valuable classroom practice which supports independent learning, develops automaticity of reading skills and improves classroom management. This practice is outlined in detail in some of the full day workshops offered by Literacy Solutions this year and examined as part of a balanced literacy program.

“Stamina is easy to build, develops confidence and independence, increases the volume of text read by students and improves general learning habits,” she says.

“To match the increasing demands of texts from year level to year level, it is important that explicit teaching, coaching and the development of independence occurs at all year levels.”

Literacy Solutions, which is expanding interstate, has scheduled workshops in Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne and Hobart in October, in addition to workshops in 10 Queensland towns through the second half of the year.

The first in a series of online courses has been pencilled in for June 2012. Curriculum are driving the need for continuing professional development,” she says. “Expertise in the teaching of literacy varies greatly within and across schools. Consistent, high quality practice across a school is paramount if longer-term positive outcomes are to be achieved.”

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The company’s website is a useful resource for educators and offers a generous selection of black line masters’ publications that can be downloaded.

Ethics classes to continue in NSW

The Australian Council of State School Organisations has welcomed the report handed down on 30th May, which recommends that the NSW government should not revert to the discriminatory policy of prohibiting young people a meaningful activity should they or their parents choose for them to opt out of Special Religious Education (SRE).

Speaking following hearing of the report findings, ACSSO President Peter Garrigan said “It is great to hear that the committee took on board the overwhelming parent, community and public support for ethics classes in NSW.”

“As the classes have rolled out over NSW, church groups, such as the Catholic and Anglicans have moved position in support of the classes; they have had little to no effect on current SRE classes.”

A recommendation of the report states that both ethics and SRE classes be reviewed in 2014–15.

Peter Garrigan 0419 986 547
www.acsso.org.au
School groups will enter a dark and dangerous world of giant sea creatures and bizarre fish at Deep Oceans, a new joint exhibition from the Australian Museum and Questacon — The National Science and Technology Centre, which opens on 16th June.

The hands-on exhibition will showcase weird and wonderful animals that make their homes 4000 metres below the sea, including the Vampire Squid, Dragonfish, Sea Mouse, Fangtooth and Squat Lobster.

Exhibition Project Officer, Em Blamey, said Deep Oceans will unravel the mysteries that have fascinated people for generations.

The student-friendly exhibition features interactive exhibits, multimedia and genuine specimens collected by Australian Museum scientists. Highlights include:

- Glow in the dark sea creatures from the depths of the abyss;
- Deep ocean sponges that contain cancer-fighting compounds;
- The museum's famous Mr Blobby, a fathead found more than 1000 metres deep in the Tasman Sea;
- Escape the jaws of an Anglerfish;
- Hop aboard a replica of the Bathysphere, the first submersible to descend beyond light, and experience a dive to the depths;
- Come face to face with a five-metre model of a Giant Squid — the biggest invertebrate on earth.

Deep Oceans will run from 16th June to 14th October at the Museum and at the Questacon in early December 2012.

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Debra Cochrane, Eagle Junction State School

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**REGISTER NOW:** www.literacysolutions.com.au/et
Mobile phone recycling challenge

MobileMuster’s 2012 Schools Recycling Challenge is on again. The free schools program, offered by the telecommunications industry, is designed to educate and engage students in learning about product stewardship and the importance of keeping old mobiles and their accessories out of landfill.

This year’s challenge has 10 new learning modules and two new online interactive classroom activities to help students learn about mobile phones, recycling and how they can be part of the solution to this environmental challenge.

Learning modules include: how mobile phones are made, resources inside phones and resource recovery, end products made from mobiles, product stewardship, running a mobile phone muster and an online resource recovery calculator.

Since its inception, more than 1500 schools and over one million students have been involved in the program and more than 6000 handsets and 8000 batteries have been recycled.

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Energy savers website


Designed to motivate primary school students to think about saving energy, Energy Savers is an interactive curriculum-based program for the classroom or home.

In-class activities are designed to culminate during Energy Savers Week from 13th-17th August. This coincides with National Science Week, which has Energy Evolution as its theme.

Schools can now register to participate in the energy savers program. The first 3000 teachers to register in Vic, NSW, SA and Qld will receive a resource kit that includes a classroom poster, an eight-page education brochure, a class set of stickers and a desktop calendar.

Teachers can also apply to receive a school visit from the Energy Savers team headlined by mascot Energy Bob.


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