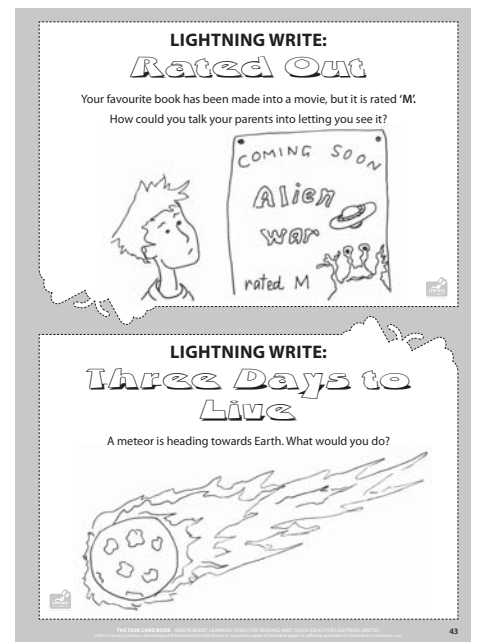


Helping hands for schools with literacy issues



Angela Ehmer and Black line masters from Literacy Solutions' new *The Task Card Book*



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

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."

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 with the final date and time to be announced soon. "We anticipate our online courses will be popular with teachers working in rural schools who can't easily get to one of our open workshops," Ehmer says.

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.

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