

New centre for Chinese language teacher education

A new national centre aims to boost the number of students studying Chinese language and culture. The Chinese Teacher Training Centre, based at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education in the University of Melbourne, will develop Australian expertise in the unique aspects of teaching Chinese and enhance the delivery of the teaching of Chinese in schools.

Just 3% of Year 12 students currently take Chinese, 94% of whom speak the language at home.

The centre is the outcome of a partnership between Hanban (the executive body of the

Chinese Language Council International) and the Victorian Government. It is the first of three international centres planned by the Hanban, with one in the US and one in Europe also in the pipeline.

Dr Jane Orton of the Melbourne Graduate School of Education has been nominated as Director of the Centre. She believes Australia must increase the number of young people taking Chinese to Year 12 as a matter of urgency.

"Fewer than 20 per cent of Australians now working in China can speak the language, and only 10 per cent have studied a China-related subject," she said.

New sex education toolkit

Marie Stopes International has launched Lessons in Love – All you need to know about STIs and contraception, following research which found that one in ten teens say they have not been taught sex education at school and, of those that have, seven out of ten teens rate the quality of that education as 'average' or lower.

Developed by a curriculum content specialist and reviewed by La Trobe University's Faculty of Education, the resource is aimed at Years 9 to 12 and features interactive class presentations on sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and contraception along with lesson plans and discussion guides for teachers.

The Love Bugs package aims to educate teens on how to recognise the symptoms of common STIs and how to protect themselves from contracting one. The Contraception and Contraception Methods package teaches teens the various contraceptive methods available and how to choose the best method for them.

Research that Marie Stopes International commissioned last year on teens nationally found that, although more than half rated their knowledge of sexual health issues as good/excellent, just under half of teens were not aware that they could be infected with Chlamydia but have no symptoms. In addition, three in 10 teens were unaware if they could contract an STI from oral sex, and over half thought that by using a condom, they wouldn't contract herpes.

The kit is available for free download from www.mariestopes.com.au/resources

ACT parents want NAPLAN score explanation

The ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Association has called on Minister for Education Julia Gillard to make available information on how students' NAPLAN scores are calculated.

From the beginning of this school term, parents have been told by school principals the percentage score by which the school's NAPLAN test results must improve. But the group says that it has been unable to advise parents, or reduce their concerns, about how many more questions students will need to correctly answer to meet the percentage improvement target.

"In 2009-10 NAPLAN targets have shifted from percentages of students achieving benchmarks to mean achievement reaching a target value", said Ms Elizabeth Singer, Council President. However with the new system of mean scores there is no context to the actual score; it isn't a percentage out of 100, and it seems way too large to be the number of correct answers in a NAPLAN test.

"In the ACT budget papers NAPLAN targets range from 355 to 590 across age groups and different types of skills being measured. You can see why parents are having difficulty getting their heads around this; for example the ACT target means for Year 9 (non-indigenous) are 590, 557 and 583 for reading, writing and numeracy, respectively.

"How will parents' understand the targets this literacy and numeracy program is aiming at and whether it has been effective?"

"Stars helps us make really good, informed decisions about what our students' needs are and how to support them."

J.E. (Principal)

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