

ET highlights

Roadshow highlights free teaching technologies

A key initiative between the Northern Territory (NT) and Australian Governments is providing all schools across the Territory with free access to high quality interactive vocational education and training resources.

This initiative provides all NT schools with access to 24 high quality, interactive e-learning and assessment resources, free of charge.

The 24 Flexible Learning Toolboxes (visit <http://toolboxes.flexiblelearning.net.au>) feature scenarios, images and activities that simulate real-life work environments. All Toolboxes support the delivery of nationally endorsed training packages in a number of industry areas. The Toolboxes usually retail for approximately \$400.00 each.

Teaching professions move forward on standards

Teaching Australia Network met in Adelaide on 9th October to take the next steps in the development of national professional standards for advanced teaching and for principals.

The network draws on overseas experience in recognising accomplished teaching, particularly that of the National Board for Professional Standards in Washington DC.

Dr Joseph Aguerrebere, President and CEO of the National Board visited Australia from 6th–16th October.

The National Board in Washington has been offering advanced level certification for teachers in the USA since 1994. A recent congressionally appointed evaluation of the impact of the National Board's work found that "advanced certification through the National Board is an effective way to identify highly skilled teachers", and "students taught by teachers who are Board certified make larger gains on achievement test scores."

Are Australian children active and eating well?

The most comprehensive survey ever taken of Australian children's diet and activity habits has revealed a picture of a generation where some children are eating a variety of healthy foods and are generally lean and active, while others are filling up on the wrong types of food and spending too long in front of the television.

To determine the links between diet, activity and excess weight gain, the 2007 Australian Children's Nutrition and Physical Activity survey – led by a team of CSIRO Preventative Health

Flagship researchers and University of South Australia (UniSA) researchers – monitored children's body weight, activity levels and the type and volume of foods they eat.

UniSA Prof Tim Olds says about one quarter of the children surveyed were overweight or obese.

"This number hasn't increased over the last decade or so, and that's encouraging but it's still far too high," Professor Olds says.

World Teachers' Day 2008

Governments the world over must address the dramatic shortage of qualified teachers if they are to meet the social and economic challenges of the knowledge society, according to Education International, the global union federation representing 30 million teachers around the world.

In advance of World Teachers' Day, EI is appealing to the international community to heed the warnings and take urgent action. UNESCO calculates that 18 million additional teachers will be needed worldwide if the goal of universal primary education is to be achieved by 2015. Many more teachers will be required to meet the needs for secondary, higher, technical and vocational education.

NAB launches \$5 million education awards program

The National Australia Bank has announced an education awards program open to every primary and secondary school in Australia, with \$5 million available in awards funding every year, beginning in 2009.

The program has been developed by NAB in partnership with Australia Cares, the Foundation for Young Australians and the Australian Council for Educational Research.

Schools First aims to promote excellence in the area by providing significant incentives for schools to build and strengthen partnerships with their communities.

The initiative provides:

- Financial recognition of success in establishing effective school-community partnerships; and
- Financial support to build stronger school-community partnerships.

Students struggling with social and emotional skills

More than 40 per cent of Australian primary and secondary school students have poor social and emotional skills, according to a study of 11,000

students that were enrolled in the study.

Symptoms of poor social and emotional skills include low self-esteem, stress, anxiety, feelings of loneliness, anger, anti-social behaviour and under-achievement at school.

Study author from the University of Melbourne, Prof Michael Bernard, said poor social and emotional skills can have a significant impact on student motivation and engagement in the classroom.

"Our research found two-thirds of students say they are not doing their best in their schoolwork. Most of these students are lacking the confidence, persistence, organisational and teamwork skills to help them perform at the best of their ability," said Prof Bernard.

Government push for open access to research

The Cutler Report on the National Innovation System contains several recommendations to make public information including the fruits of publicly funded research more accessible.

It urges all Australian governments to adopt open publishing standards and creative commons licences. It says we should ensure that "the scientific knowledge produced in Australia is placed in machine searchable repositories".

It argues that to "the maximum extent practicable, research funded by Australian governments should be made freely available over the internet as part of the global public commons".

The Government is weighing these recommendations and will respond to them in an Innovation Policy White Paper. If adopted, the review panel's recommendations will require a rethink of the push in recent years to have researchers commercialise their own discoveries.

Magical teachers announced

NEiTA (National Excellence In Teaching Awards) and the Australian Scholarships Group (ASG) has announce the finalists of the inaugural 2008 ASG Inspirational Teacher Awards – 318 teachers have been named as finalists in the awards from 289 early childhood centres and schools across Australia from the full range of education systems.

A list of the finalist teachers recognised through NEiTA's 2008 ASG Inspirational Teacher Awards can be found at www.neita.com.au/finalists.htm

The ASG Inspirational Teacher State and Territory Awards will be presented to 60 teachers during November.

Improving literacy and numeracy in country Victoria

Independent schools in the Mallee, Gippsland, Goulburn and Western District of Victoria will be able to take part in a pilot project to improve the standard of literacy and numeracy in

low socioeconomic school communities.

The Association of Independent Schools of Victoria (AISV) has won a competitive Australian Government contract to run a two-year pilot in 30 Victorian regional independent schools.

AISV Chief Executive, Ms Michelle Green, welcomed the Federal Government's national investment to support trials of innovative ways to improve educational outcomes.

Primary students will take part in four regional clusters of schools that will work together to enable teachers to study ways of improving their school's literacy and numeracy.

Cyber safety with SuperClubsPLUS

Keeping children safe online is a concern for all parents, but with SuperClubsPLUS Australia, we now have, for the first time in Australia, a positive and practical solution to help.

SuperClubsPLUS Australia is a social network, similar to Facebook, My Space and Bebo – except that it is completely safe, it is for children six to 12 years of age and it is fun as well as educational.

Access to SuperClubsPLUS Australia is required through primary schools. Parents are encouraged to ask their children's school if they have registered for SuperClubsPLUS Australia or are planning to.

The project has been funded by the Telstra Foundation.

More information is available at www.superclubsplus.com.au

Strong postgraduate earnings for first jobs

Some new Australian postgraduates in their first full-time employment are starting work on salaries in excess of \$60,000, according to a new report released by Graduate Careers Australia.

Postgraduates with a research master's degree or PhD in their first full-time employment in 2007 started work on a median annual salary of \$60,000 (up from \$56,000 in 2006). Graduates with a master's coursework degree began their full-time careers on \$50,000 (also \$50,000 in 2006) and those with a postgraduate diploma or certificate started on \$49,100 in their first full-time job (up from \$47,000 in 2006).

Mobile phone recycling push

MobileMuster, the official recycling program of the mobile phone industry, is calling schools to register by 17th October 2008 for its National Schools Recycling Challenge. In return schools and students will receive various rewards including native Australian tube stock to plant in the school grounds or local area.

Rose Read, Manager of Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association's

(AMTA) official recycling program, MobileMuster, says the Schools Recycling

Challenge is a great way for students to learn about the importance of recycling mobile phones, while also making a positive environmental impact.

Email the Schools Challenge Coordinator on schools@amta.org.au.

ANU in top 20 of world's top universities

The Australian National University, in Canberra has been listed amongst the top 20 universities in the world.

Placed at number 16 the ANU was ahead of the University of Sydney in 37th place, the University of Melbourne in 38th place, the University of Queensland placed 43rd, the University of NSW placed 45th and Monash University in Melbourne placed 47th.

The top three universities were Harvard, Yale, and Cambridge.

Every day counts

Queensland's Education and Training Minister Rod Welford has launched a statewide campaign to reduce student absenteeism and to drive home the message that every day counts at school.

Mr Welford said the 'Every Day Counts' campaign was aimed at changing parent, community and student attitudes to school attendance and ensuring every child attended school every school day.

"Parents need to be aware that students need a legitimate reason to be away from school because if they're not at school they are missing out on vital parts of their education," he said.

New York City Chancellor of Education to visit

THE Minister for Education, Julia Gillard has confirmed that the Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education, Mr Joel Klein, will visit Australia in November to share his experience on transforming the New York City school system.

Ms Gillard met Chancellor Klein during her recent visit to the USA and was impressed by the remarkable progress he has driven in lifting student achievement, especially in disadvantaged areas. UBS, a leading financial firm offered to sponsor Mr Klein's visit, Building strong connections between businesses and schools is essential to building a thriving and productive education community, according to Ms Gillard

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