

INSIDE

Teaching

THE PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL OF THE AUSTRALASIAN TEACHER REGULATORY AUTHORITIES

VOLUME 1 | NUMBER 3 | AUGUST 2010

First year out:
Beyond student
behaviour management

Cyberbullying

Closing the gap

Online professional
learning

**MY BEST
TEACHER**

STEPHANIE
ALEXANDER

PAGE 18



**10 THINGS I'VE
LEARNED...**

FIONA
FARREN

PAGE 20



20 QUESTIONS

WITH CHRIS
SARRA

PAGE 38



INSIDE Teaching

THE PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL OF THE AUSTRALASIAN TEACHER REGULATORY AUTHORITIES

PUBLISHER

Australian Council for Educational Research – ACER Press



For



Australasian Teacher Regulatory Authorities – ATRA

EDITOR

Dr Steve Holden 03 9277 5466 holden@acer.edu.au

NATIONAL ADVERTISING MANAGER

Carolynn Brown 03 9277 5468 brown@acer.edu.au

PRODUCTION

Ralph Schubele schubele@acer.edu.au

REGULAR CONTRIBUTORS

Wendy Harmer
David Rish

Inside Teaching is the professional journal of the Australasian Teacher Regulatory Authorities (ATRA). ATRA facilitates the cooperative and collaborative work of Australian and New Zealand teacher registration and accreditation authorities in meeting the needs of a highly-qualified, proficient and reputable teaching profession.

Inside Teaching, published online by the Australian Council for Educational Research – ACER Press – for ATRA, is funded, through ATRA, by:

The New South Wales Institute of Teachers
The Queensland College of Teachers
The Teacher Registration Board of the Northern Territory
The Teachers Registration Board of South Australia
The Teachers Registration Board of Tasmania
The Victorian Institute of Teaching
The Western Australian College of Teaching

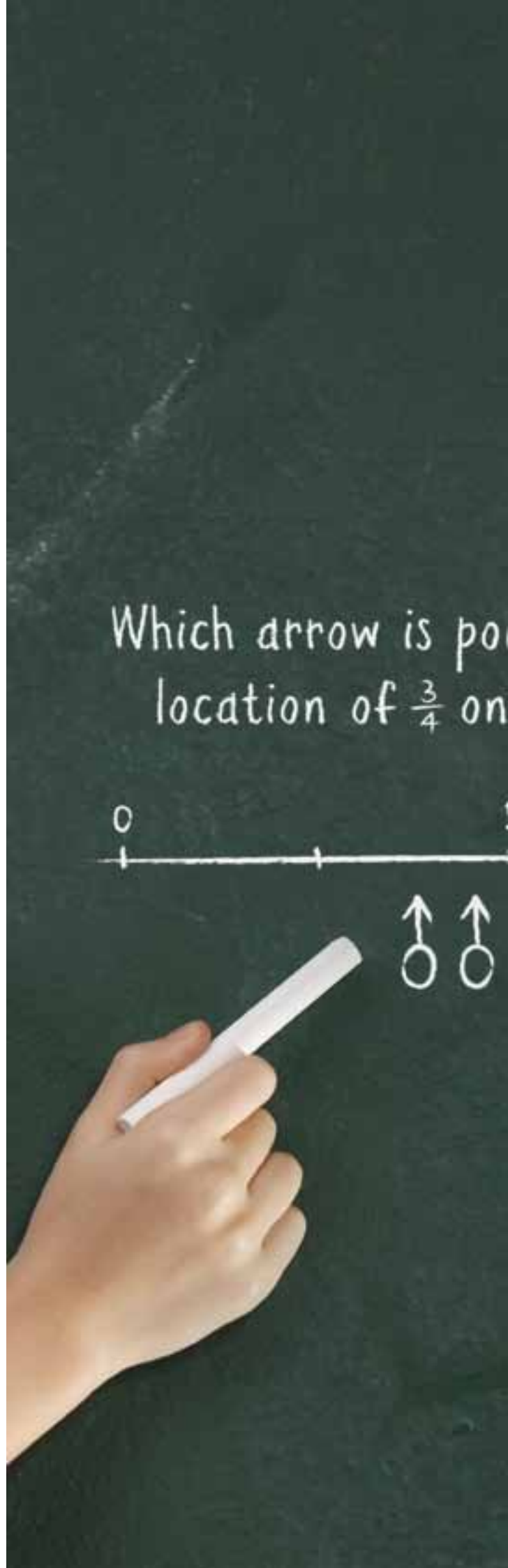
LINKS:

www.atra.edu.au

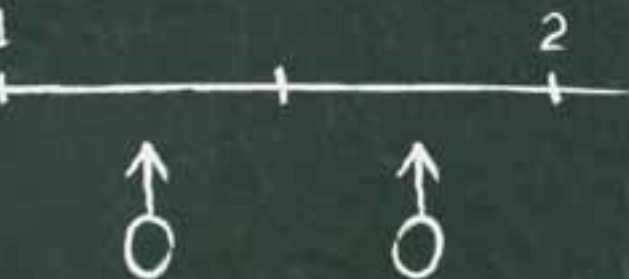
ACER is a member of the Publishers Australia association

Publishers Australia

growing your publishing business



...rounding closest to the
this number line?



CONTENTS

Vol 1, Number 3 August 2010

FEATURE

- The show must go on...
...and the school shall follow 06

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

- Closing the gap 12

THE PROFESSION

- Online professional learning:
Evaluating success 14

MY BEST TEACHER

- Stephanie Alexander 18

10 THINGS I'VE LEARNED ABOUT TEACHING

- Fiona Farren 20

TEACHING TIPS

- First year out: First, connect 24

CURRICULUM & ASSESSMENT

- NAPLAN: More than fractionally useful 30

20 QUESTIONS

- David Rish interviews Chris Sarra 38

RESEARCH

- Cyberbullying: What does the research say? 44

REGULARS

- State of the nation 04
Behind the lines 05
News 52
Reviews 54
Diary 56
See me afterwards 58
The quiz 59

All reasonable attempts have been made to trace copyright holders of material published. Material contained in *Inside Teaching* is protected under the Commonwealth Copyright Act 1968. No material may be reproduced wholly or in part without written consent from the copyright holders. The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Publisher or Editor, nor do they represent the views or policies of ATRA or the teacher registration and accreditation authorities that are party to it. The Editor reserves the right to edit, abridge or otherwise alter articles for publication. All photographs have been published on the understanding that appropriate compliance with privacy legislation has been obtained. The attention of advertisers is drawn to the *Trade Practices Act 1974* and the provisions of the *Act* that apply to advertising. It is not possible for *Inside Teaching* to ensure that advertisements published herein comply in all respects with the *Act* and the responsibility must therefore lie with the person, company or advertising agency submitting the advertisement for publication.

Editorial

Australia votes for the next Commonwealth government a few days from now, with little to separate the education policies of the major parties. Education has played second fiddle to other policy areas in the lead up to the August election, notwithstanding the billions of dollars at stake in the sector. Consider projected schools funding of \$12.6 billion by 2016; a forecast loss of \$4.8 billion this year from international students in a higher education market worth \$18 billion a year; and \$16.4 billion spending on Building the Education Revolution (BER). Labor's strategy has been to ask the electorate to judge its record on education while the Coalition's has been to focus on robbing and a failure to achieve value for money in the BER. Both strategies are risky, since voters in some school communities feel they've been winners even if others feel they've been losers. How will they vote? We'll soon know.

State of the nation

Students in 10 New South Wales primary schools piloted a new ethics course last term. Former Premier Nathan Rees agreed last year to the trial as an alternative to religious scripture lessons. Designed by Associate Professor Philip Cam of the University of NSW, the pilot course was run by parents trained by the St James Ethics Centre with support from the Federation of Parents and Citizens' Association of NSW. According to St James Ethics Centre Executive Director Simon Longstaff, between 50 and 80 per cent of students don't attend scripture lessons. Students in the pilot addressed ethical issues like fairness, honesty, care, and rights and responsibilities. David Hill, writing in the *National Times* in July, praised the pilot as an alternative to watching videos, going to the library or picking up rubbish. Sydney's Anglican Archbishop Peter Jensen in February condemned the pilot as an attempt 'to remove all traces of religion from public life.' Catholic Cardinal George Pell said in May the pilot indicates a 'general hostility towards religion.' According to Bob Dumpling in the now-defunct satirical magazine *New Matilda*, 'Giving our kids the option of thinking about ethics instead of picking up litter is a very slippery slope the NSW Department of Education has decided to throw itself down.' Dr Sue Knight, a lecturer in philosophy for children in the School of Education at the

University of South Australia, has been appointed to evaluate the pilot program.

The Queensland Minister for Education and Training Geoff Wilson in July announced the establishment of an expert panel to provide independent advice to the state government on social and gender equity; research on early years and middle schooling; teacher education; curriculum and assessment; school leadership; poverty and educational disadvantage; school reform; and public sector education policy.

John Smyth, the Secretary of the Tasmanian Department of Education and the man whose task it was to oversee the implementation of the state's failed post-Year 10 'Tasmania Tomorrow' reforms, has been seconded to the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations as the interim Chief Executive Officer of the new National Vocational Education and Training Regulator. Announcing the appointment in July, Commonwealth Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Simon Crean also announced Ian Hawke, Assistant Director-General for Tertiary and Non-State Education in the Queensland Department of Education and Training, would be the interim CEO of the new Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency.



If I sit in the sandpit and share the experience of baking a sand cake, I can expand my students' learning, enter play, extend into their experience, and enrich it.





**THE SHOW MUST GO ON...
...AND THE SCHOOL SHALL FOLLOW**

The men and women of the travelling show travel the length and breadth of the country, so how do their children manage to attend school? SAMANTHA JEFFERSON went on the road to find out.

As the mist rises on a crisp August morning at the Woodford Showgrounds, an hour's drive north west of Brisbane, the final preparations are being made for the commencement of the annual agricultural show.

Emerging from the trailers and caravans surrounding the site, men and women of the travelling show go about their work setting up rides and entertainments, as they do every week in a different location around Australia.

Travelling showmen and women often inherit their business from their forbears and pass it on to their children, but here's the problem: itinerant parents have children to educate, and for as long as travelling shows have been on the road the enduring problem of delivering quality education to the children of show families has been an ongoing concern. Attempts at distance education and homeschooling in the past have been haphazard, providing disjointed educational experiences that have led to long-term disadvantage in the travelling show community.

This morning, though, the 10 children accompanying the Woodford Show have the classroom come to them.

Unique not only in Australia but the world is the Queensland School for Travelling Show Children (QSTSC), which is, today, successfully delivering an education to itinerant and equestrian families travelling with the agricultural show circuits throughout Australia.

From the inside, the classroom is like any other, and on this chilly winter morning, teachers April Maybury and Renée Callaghan are in early to finish off some laminating and lay out resources ready for the children's arrival.

'We only have a small group of kids with us this week because there aren't too many groups around us at the moment,' explains Callaghan, who teaches Years 4 to 7, 'but next week in Redcliffe we'll have upwards of 30 kids in the classroom as it's a pretty big show there.'

'We plan our schedule based on where the most children will be at any time in the show calendar. That way we get to see the most children for the greatest amount of time.'

Callaghan, now in her fourth year with the QSTSC, is always amused by the reaction of friends when she explains to them where she teaches.

'Everyone thinks we're teaching these kids to juggle or tightrope walk. They don't get that it's just a state school like any other Education Queensland (EQ) school. I do my job just like I would if I had a regular class of kids in an ordinary school.'

The QSTSC is, of course, anything but ordinary.

Funded jointly in 1999 by the Commonwealth and Queensland governments, two purpose-built mobile classrooms – essentially semitrailers – were constructed to provide continuing education for the primary school-aged children whose families are occupational travelers. QSTSC began operations in 2001.

The two mobile classrooms work a northern and southern service across Tasmania, Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, the Northern Territory and Queensland, delivering the EQ curriculum to all their students. Each classroom is staffed by two teachers who follow the trailer by four-wheel-drive to a new location every week. An operations manager drives the semi, and sets up the mobile classroom on arrival.

Ideally, the classroom is deployed on the grounds of the nearest local state school in order that the students of the QSTSC can share facilities and interact with other children from the host school. When this is impossible

or impractical, as happens in Woodford, the mobile classroom is parked on the showgrounds in the children's own backyard.

'It's not the sort of job you take on if you like sleeping in your own bed every night,' Callaghan explains, 'and it's not for everyone. We stay in hotels as near to the classroom as we can, and sometimes if the distance isn't too great we'll try to stay somewhere central to our next stop so we don't have to pack up and move on quite as soon.'

'We have a fantastic group of kids and families. Behaviour management is really a non-issue in our classroom as the kids are just so polite and down to earth. Really, they're just so happy to be here and have this opportunity.'

Callaghan, originally from Dirranbandi in Western Queensland, now lives in Tamworth with her husband, but has spent the past four years on the road during school terms with the QSTSC.

'I've absolutely loved it,' she says. 'These kids are great and the experience of being with them and being on the road has been fantastic.'

As co-teachers in a multi-age composite classroom, Callaghan and Maybury have been on the road in the southern trailer as colleagues for two years.

'It's a good thing we get along, because it's just the two of us

out here every day on our own,' says Maybury, who teaches Prep to Year 3.

With classes varying in number from 10 to 36, depending on the location and size of nearby shows, both teachers' planning and preparation skills are challenged every day by the unique nature of the school enrolments.

'Which show a family is going to be working next will determine whether or not the kids can make it to class that week,' Callaghan explains.

'Sometimes they'll be close enough to make it to class, other times they won't, and then there's always a chance that they can attend the northern classroom if they're heading up that way.'

Unlike many schools, attendance isn't a problem at the QSTSC. Families will do all they can to ensure that their children are in class as often as possible when their livelihood allows for it.

'Our families are really committed to getting the best for their kids' education,' says Callaghan.

'There are a lot of misconceptions about this community, like the misconception that they're ignorant gypsy types, which couldn't be further from the truth. Just like anyone else, they want their kids to achieve their potential.'

In fact, the QSTSC emerged from calls by members of the

Showmen's Guild of Australasia to provide a better education alternative for children in show families.

Every effort is made to facilitate the attendance of the greatest number of children in class as often as possible, but itinerant work means that some children will attend class for fewer than 10 weeks of the year, while others can attend for 30 or more weeks of the school year.

To address the specific challenges presented by sporadic attendance, the QSTSC staff plan and collaborate carefully to ensure that the two classrooms, while operating in different parts of Australia, are teaching the same content in the same way at all times. That means that students who attend, say, the northern classroom can switch seamlessly to the southern one, if need be.

QSTSC staff also prepare travel packages for students who are unable to attend class, to facilitate continued progress with only minimal guidance from parents. Teachers and the principal provide support by phone or videoconferencing both inside and outside school hours.

QSTSC uses the Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework to assess the progress of all students, which is particularly important for those who can't attend class

BRINGING HISTORY TO LIFE, ONE GENERATION AT A TIME

Where did our families come from?
Why did they come to Australia?
What was life really like then?

Using My Place in History™ students will explore their own personal family history, creating family trees online. They'll learn about the key drivers of change within society during the lives of their ancestors – wherever they came from – and how these changes impact their own identity, as well as that of their family and society more generally.

My Place in History is fun, engaging and it's completely free!



A free resource for primary teachers and their students

This exciting free resource has been designed by teachers for teachers and is backed by Ancestry.com™, the world's largest family history network. The site has been created to encourage understanding of family and social history from an early age by utilising the very latest in online technology and historical content.

- Designed for Years 5 and 6;
- Tailored to each state's curriculum;
- Easy to incorporate into teaching programs;
- Upload and store personal teaching resources for free.



Register your class today for instant access at www.myplaceinhistory.com and discover how easy it is to bring history to life.

regularly. Student work samples are moderated across the faculty.

Of course, none of this would be possible without a strong working relationship with the community and this is a core factor that has contributed to the school's success so far.

Parent Leann Allen has two girls, Chelsea and Ruby, who were educated at the school. 'While the girls usually only attended the northern classroom for about 10 weeks a year, it took a great deal of pressure off us as parents and the kids were much happier too,' Allen says.

Enrolling in the school in its first year of operation, the girls had, until then, struggled to use distance education programs, attending local state schools for short periods of time, an experience Allen describes as a 'nightmare.'

'There was too much work for us in the distance education program to ever possibly get through or manage on our own, and many of the activities weren't geared towards living

in a caravan at all,' Allen says. 'The local state schools are all teaching something different, so when my kids showed up for a week or two they were never going to be doing the same work or even using the same texts.'

The QSTSC provided the Allen children with a sense of belonging where previously they had none, and offered a program that accommodated their itinerant absences from the classroom. When the Allen children were unable to attend class, their teachers provided travel packages for the girls that were easy to navigate and matched exactly what was going on in the classroom every week.

'When the girls returned to class they would be up to the exact same work as the children who hadn't missed a day,' Allen explains. 'They didn't feel left out or behind the class at all. It offered us, as parents, peace of mind, and the kids experienced a consistency in their education they hadn't previously experienced.'

Both girls were well equipped for entry to secondary study, Allen

says, and are now attending boarding school to continue their high school education.

Travel packages and external learning programs, however, pose unique challenges for the QSTSC, which staff are addressing through professional development and training opportunities for both teachers and parents.

Opportunities for whole-school professional development and parent workshops to target the teaching of literacy and numeracy are prioritised. Increased access to new technologies and new modes of delivering lessons to students in remote areas is always being investigated.

Cathy O'Connor, recently appointed as acting principal, is excited about her involvement with the QSTSC and is leading the charge towards the greater application of new technologies to ensure children have access to learning support networks at all times.

'We're currently seeking to provide access for families to specialist teachers who can help

informit
FROM RMIT PUBLISHING

TVNews
All the news. All in one place.

TVNews makes it easy for teachers and students to search for current and past news stories from all Australian free-to-air channels. Items range from 30 second clips to one-hour documentaries that can be played immediately or saved for later. Read more and request a **free trial** at www.informit.com.au/tvnews

children with specific literacy and numeracy support as well as speech pathology via web conferencing,' O'Connor says. 'We already provide some classes this way, but there's more we could be offering by way of specialisation and learning support too.'

Of course, there are advantages to being a school that travels through four states and two territories by way of opportunities for inquiry-based learning and real-world experiences. The school's mobility offers a unique opportunity to include many rich experiences into the curriculum, particularly when they are in proximity to capital cities and cultural centres in each state.

The QSTSC teachers take every opportunity to incorporate the changing environment and aspects of the varying cultures of Australia into the curriculum as a way of connecting children with their learning.

Logistically and pedagogically, though, there are daily challenges in meeting the needs

of the children enrolled in the QSTSC, and the needs of their families, and as pioneers in this mode of delivery, there are few precedents for the staff to follow aside from their shared experiences.

'We do the same professional development as other Education Queensland teachers,' Callaghan explains, 'but there's nothing specific to our particular field that we can participate in.'

One way the school addresses that is through its strategic plan, which reflects a commitment to providing isolated students with access to as wide a range of teachers, curriculum materials, learning experiences and sources of knowledge as possible. Continued investigation into the special needs of rural and isolated students and into the best ways to support them through further training for staff, parents and caregivers is also planned for.

The mobile classrooms offer a stable learning environment that would be otherwise unknown to the children of the travelling shows and enables these children

to engage in collaborative learning while at the same time enhancing their sense of belonging.

In the classroom this sense of purpose and belonging is tangible. The children arrive, proudly wearing their uniform. They work conscientiously and with self direction, and their genuine respect for their teachers and peers is obvious. From town to town across Australia, our travelling show children are now in school and they continue to live securely in a nurturing family environment in their own travelling community. ■

Samantha Jefferson is a freelance journalist and photographer, as well as a classroom teacher at Silkwood Steiner School on the Gold Coast, Queensland.

Pictured, students from the Queensland School for Travelling Show Children enjoy continuity of schooling wherever they go, in Tasmania, Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, the Northern Territory and Queensland. Photo by Samantha Jefferson.





CLOSING THE GAP

Building respect is the critical first step in closing the gap, explains
JEANNIE HERBERT.
Without that, nothing will change.

Why do we position Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people in Australian society, or in the pecking order if you like, in the way we do?

I think we'd all agree that for the last couple of centuries, most Indigenous Australians have been seen as the lowest of the low, relegated to the bottom of our society. Excluded by distance, poverty and being different, we've conveniently kept Indigenous Australians out

of sight and out of mind, but is that still the case? Let's take a brief look at the stories that are peddled by the media.

Overwhelmingly and, I would argue, increasingly since the intervention in the Northern Territory in 2007 by the Commonwealth government under John Howard, those stories portray Indigenous people as violent, alcoholic, lazy and dumb 'good for nothings.' Of course, there are always a

few alternative stories about Indigenous skill, usually in sport, particularly in the major football codes, but these are the exceptions to the rule.

Alongside the mass of negative media stories and the few positive ones, though, there's now a new one: 'closing the gap.' This latest catchcry, as Kevin Rudd put it in his parliamentary address in February last year, when he was Prime Minister, is about '(closing) the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians...in health, in housing, in educational opportunity and attainment, in employment.'

It's a beautiful rhetorical thing, this 'closing the gap': it keeps things nice and simple, and calls us to action to 'make a difference.' I'm sure we all want to do our bit, but how many of us have actually stopped and asked ourselves what 'closing the gap' means? What are we, as individuals, *actually doing* that will 'make a difference'? What is *actually* changing for Indigenous Australians?

The media provides a brief glimpse into some of the change that is occurring with 'good' news stories about the wonders being wrought by the fortunate few who have been allocated the, usually financial, resources needed to effect change in a very short time. The spread of such resources is, of course, very limited; the pilot initiatives are

few and most are in their infancy. We have no way of knowing yet, whether they'll work. Meanwhile, what happens to the great majority of Indigenous Australians? Has their position at the bottom of the nation's socioeconomic ladder changed? Not according to the statistics.

We educators want to 'make a difference,' but do we really comprehend the enormity of the task? What is being done to ensure that we have the skills, the knowledge and understanding to rise to the challenge of addressing the utter neglect of the past two centuries, the persistent exclusion of Indigenous students from our learning environments and, consequently, from the fruits of education?

The truth is that, for the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people, regardless of where they live, some things have never changed and they have no expectations that they will. I'm not suggesting they resist change; indeed, they long for it. What oppressed people would not? The reality, though, is that Indigenous Australians understand that 'closing the gap,' in our education system or anywhere, is just talk unless it includes an honest recognition of our colonial history, rather than a denial of it or – the more popular current form – the pretence that two centuries of oppression 'wasn't so bad.'

As my own research reveals, the attitude betrayed by this last view typifies the racism that runs deep in Australia. My research also demonstrates that across all levels of education delivery, in all types of settings, racism is alive and well.

So is the future bleak? Well, no. A steady stream of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples is standing up to speak out about what has been, and in many places still is, going on.

Timana Tahu, for example, walked out of the New South Wales rugby league training camp in June, foregoing his opportunity to represent the Blues in the state-of-origin team, because he'd had enough of racist comments by assistant coach Andrew Johns. 'To sacrifice my NSW origin jumper and to give up the chance of bringing the trophy back to NSW is obviously something I gave a lot of thought to,' Tahu said, 'but I felt I had to make a statement that this sort of behaviour in any environment is unacceptable and, as a senior player, I had to show that.'

Johns later stood down, after admitting he made another racial comment, this time about Queensland state-of-origin player Greg Inglis. 'I should have thought more (about) what I was saying about a player whom I have always admired and respected and I hope to speak with Greg (Inglis) soon to explain

what happened,' Johns said in a statement. 'I only hope that by stepping aside I can show others how seriously I am taking this issue and hopefully others may learn from it as well.'

The fact that Indigenous Australians are taking on their own oppression, that others are also seriously taking it on and that still others are hopefully learning from it as well is a good thing. If it's happening in rugby league, it's fair to assume it's happening in education as well, but there's more we need to do in education if we're to deliver on our promise of education for *all* Australians.

Every person who engages with students in a learning environment 'makes a difference.' What you do in your classroom? Do you demonstrate that you do want to make a difference? How do you deal with comments that imply inferiority is somehow connected to the colour of a person's skin? How do you deal with a racist joke that some kid heard from his dad? It's a bit like swearing being permitted because it's the way people talk these days. Do you permit such lack of respect to be shown to you in your learning environment?

Building respect is the critical first step in closing the gap. Without that, nothing will change. ■

Professor Jeannie Herbert
holds the Chair of Indigenous Studies at Charles Sturt University, New South Wales.

Online professional learning

EVALUATING

SUCCESS

FIONA GORDON reports on her collaborative school-based action research investigating the efficacy of online professional learning.

Developing action research to measure the effectiveness of online professional learning is a challenge. It's a challenge at Huntingtower, a coeducational independent school in Melbourne's eastern suburbs; mind you, it's also been a challenge for the team at Harvard's Graduate School of Education.

In 2007, Huntingtower became a Teaching for Understanding School. Our aim in introducing inquiry learning from Prep to Year 12 through Teaching for Understanding was to focus on improving teaching and learning by providing educational approaches that increase our students' depth of understanding.

To support that focus on improving teaching and learning, we've undertaken professional development modules provided through Harvard's Graduate School of Education's Wide-scale Interactive Development for Educators (WIDE World) program to help us to integrate research-based strategies in our workplace.

Having completed a number of WIDE World courses – Teaching for Understanding 1 and 2, Action Research for Educators,

Differentiating Instruction, Coach Development and Leading for Understanding – I began working with school leaders from the United States, China, Jordan, Singapore and other Australian schools to analyse the efficacy of the Teaching for Understanding Framework to meet our 21st-century learning vision.

Whole-school pedagogy

There are four main elements of a Teaching for Understanding unit that planning teams address.

First, planning teams design generative topics to open up connections to prior and future learning.

Second, teachers share understanding goals with students, typically as questions that frame their inquiry. Teachers also provide more formal written statements to delineate for students the scope of the goals.

Third, teachers identify and introduce particular performances of understanding. These are designed to be active assessments, since students demonstrate their understanding in a variety of ways. There are three stages in the assessment

sequence: initial performances which link to prior knowledge and connect to other learning; guided performances which systematically cover each of the understanding goals; and culminating performances which ask students to apply their knowledge in a new or novel situation.

Fourth, since this assessment program is formative, teachers plan ongoing assessment that incorporates self, peer and teacher assessment based on clear criteria.

Whole-school professional learning

By using the Teaching for Understanding Framework we're able to promote and maintain purposeful professional conversations in a way that will be sustainable over a number of years and that gives teachers permission to innovate.

Up to this year, 93 per cent of our 60 teachers have taken a Teaching for Understanding course, with 44 having completed Teaching for Understanding 1, and a further 12 having completed Teaching for Understanding 2, which offers reinforcement of

essential components of the framework. Four teachers have also trialled Differentiating Instruction, while four of the school's leaders have completed Leading for Understanding, an action-research-based program

We've augmented online Teaching for Understanding courses with face-to-face professional learning and one-on-one coaching. To model what's expected in a Teaching for Understanding classroom, teachers have been involved in mini-conferences that have mirrored our developing understanding of Teaching for Understanding, over the past four years. In 2007, for example, teachers presented one element of a Teaching for Understanding unit; in 2008, teachers presented units that made a difference in the classroom to their colleagues; in 2009, we undertook a whole-school curriculum mapping of understanding goals; and this year we undertook a whole-school assessment.

In addition, we published a professional reading magazine in 2009, which prompted a huge amount of discussion by teachers at a café session at the beginning of this year. The whole-school approach I've described here has been a significant investment in focused professional learning for the school.

Measuring improvement

Has it been worth it? Put otherwise, has there been

any measurable impact on teaching practice or student learning? To find out, we participated in Harvard's WIDE World International Case Study on Systemic Educational Improvement in 2008 and 2009, an action-research documentation and evaluation project undertaken by 19 schools, including Barker College on Sydney's North Shore and AB Patterson College on Queensland's Gold Coast.

The goals of the research were:

- to assess the impact of Teaching for Understanding on student engagement and understanding in our classrooms
- to gauge the efficacy of the Harvard Online Professional Development model to provide the learning that we need to succeed in our vision, and
- to engage with and learn from other Teaching for Understanding schools in terms of their approaches to implementation and progress.

The International Case Study evaluation relied on focus group interviews with teachers, teacher and student surveys, teacher portfolios and field observations.

At Huntingtower, students in classes where lessons have been redesigned using Teaching for Understanding reported greater engagement, typically saying they understood the goals of the lesson, believed they could be successful and thought about

the ideas they learned even after class, significantly more than students in classes where lessons had not been redesigned using Teaching for Understanding.

In focus group interviews, our first cohort of teachers said Teaching for Understanding allowed access to 'cutting edge pedagogy' based on rigorous research that was grounded in practice.

Focus group interviews also revealed that professional learning online caused anxiety. Focus groups from both the first and second cohort, however, indicated that this anxiety was effectively addressed by taking a team approach in WIDE World courses. Both cohorts reported that sharing was a vital aspect of successful professional learning, and that reflective practice moved from the domain of the individual to the group. Teachers also reported the value of being connected to like-minded colleagues and colearners around the world.

More broadly, focus group interviews also revealed that the school's style of leadership has changed profoundly. Teachers say leadership has become more collaborative and that the leadership style is one in which teacher teams are expected to have autonomy, scaffolded through purposeful conversations with school leaders.

A student impact questionnaire was completed by 170 students from Year 5 to Year 10 in classes

where lessons have been redesigned by teachers who have completed Teaching for Understanding 1, or 1 and 2, and 93 students from Year 5 to Year 10 in classes where lessons have not been so redesigned. In subjects including Maths, Integrated Studies, History, Geography and Business Studies, 72 per cent of students in Teaching for Understanding classes knew the understanding goals relating to their study, compared with 20 per cent in the non-Teaching for Understanding classes.

The benefits of a strong connection between learning goals and assessment was also evident, with 72 per cent of students in Teaching for Understanding classes stating that they could see how the learning activities in which they engaged were achieving the understanding goals, compared to 40 per cent of students in the non-Teaching for Understanding classes.

Students in Teaching for Understanding classes also reported that they often thought about the ideas they were learning outside of class, with 62 per cent reporting that they reflected on their learning and 84 per cent reporting that they could explain what they were learning to others. As one teacher put it in a focus group interview, 'Our students are now knowledge creating rather than knowledge consuming.'

Broadly speaking, Teaching for Understanding has transformed professional learning at Huntingtower. As teachers in focus group interviews see it, professional learning in the form of one-off workshops by charismatic speakers off-campus typically led to disparate gains in professional knowledge and skills. In contrast, they report, onsite participation in team-based online courses has led to more even professional learning, and to a usefully collaborative professional learning culture, particularly because teachers are easily and safely able to discuss the implementation and effects of the Teaching for Understanding approach using the action-research model comparing Teaching for Understanding classes and non-Teaching for Understanding classes.

Once Teaching for Understanding units were developed for classroom use, teachers reported that they didn't require curriculum development as a further layer on top of their professional learning. They also reported that documentation was simpler since they were using a common language, and that the Teaching for Understanding framework enabled them to develop richer learning activities through better linking in terms of interdisciplinary skills and knowledge. Our meetings became generative as ideas and innovations were clearly valued.

Whole-school change occurs slowly and entails significant investment. By participating in online Teaching for Understanding courses, augmented by face-to-face professional learning and one-on-one coaching, our teachers are building their understanding about how learners engage and learn in a supportive way and, as one teacher put it in a focus group interview, they're doing it 'without being told to throw out all I've done, but rather being asked to build on it.' ■

Fiona Gordon is Head of Teaching and Learning at Huntingtower School, Melbourne, where she has been leading the school's implementation of the Teaching for Understanding Framework. She has been a teacher for 20 years and has held leadership positions in various Catholic and independent schools in Melbourne. In 2008, she was invited to join the Harvard International Case Study on Systemic Educational Improvement, and presented her findings from the study in Singapore in July 2009. In January 2010, she consulted to schools in New York and Missouri. She presented her most recent paper, 'Global networked learning: A new form of collaborative action research,' at American Educational Research Association 2010 Conference, held in Denver, Colorado, from 30 April to 4 May.

**Salary Package your next vehicle with a
Novated Lease and leave your tax in the dust.**



Why fleetcare?

- ✓ Unlike other providers we pay ALL your vehicle bills straight up – no waiting around for reimbursement
- ✓ Any unused portion of your account is fully reimbursed to you at the end of your lease
- ✓ Fleet purchasing power to get you the best vehicle price around
- ✓ Dedicated personal account manager to provide you optimum support

Call now and be rewarded!

Call today and we'll give you a **\$500 Fuel** or **Myer voucher** when you novate your vehicle with us **PLUS** we'll waive the establishment fee!*



Driving Australian Fleet Since 1989

We offer discounts on fuel & maintenance and provide you with FREE roadside assistance.

To discover all the benefits of a Fleetcare Novated Lease call our expert consultants now on 1300 655 170 and dial ahead 859 to talk to Adam or 867 to talk to Dean. Visit fleetcare.com.au/novated for more information.

*Offer available until September 30th 2010

Stephanie Alexander *My best teacher*



STEVE HOLDEN asks *Stephanie Alexander* about her best teachers, and discovers plenty about the best teaching.

Quiz Stephanie Alexander – restaurateur, prolific book writer, founder of the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation program and this year’s Victorian of the Year – about her best teachers and the answers come thick and fast, not just about the best teachers but about the best *teaching*.

‘Two of my best teachers,’ Alexander says, ‘were my parents. My mother was a fantastic cook, but she was also interested in the culture and traditions of food. When I was eight or nine, I knew how people from different cultures used ingredients in different ways. My mother and my grandfather also kept a kitchen garden, and I was always aware that the food on the table had come from there.’

And her father? ‘He always wanted us to find things out for ourselves,’ Alexander says. ‘He was a book man. “Go and look it up in the encyclopedia index,” he’d say – this was in the days before Google. He wanted us to learn how to learn. He had broad interests in politics and social issues, and his actions were informed by his belief that we should always give back to our community.’

Connectedness and giving back is something that runs through our conversation, and Alexander’s life. A case in point involves one of her best teachers in senior high school, Mary Turner.

‘There were six of us students in our final year at school, so I became pretty close with my teachers. Mary went out of her

way to connect with people, and she became a very good friend.’

The friendship, Alexander explains, evolved in a way you often see in small communities. ‘My father was on the school council, and he ran a classical music group and an amateur drama group, and Mary was involved in those too and naturally became a family friend. Her daughter was also friends with my sister, so there was that connection, as well.’

‘She taught me maths, which I admit didn’t come easily for me. She helped me on statistics when I was at university, struggling in psychology. She drilled me, basically, and got me through. She was a very strong person.’

Another influential teacher in her senior year was Jack Prowse. ‘He was a very good teacher,’ says Alexander, ‘charismatic and charming. He connected with us and connected us with bigger things. It was Jack Prowse who encouraged me to enter university.’

By the late 1960s, Alexander was working as a teacher-librarian at Princes Hill High School in Melbourne after she’d closed her first restaurant, Jamaica House. ‘To become a teacher-librarian in the ‘60s, you did a preliminary certificate through the State Library of Victoria, then you were expected to complete a registration certificate by correspondence while you were

working. Luckily for me, changes to higher education introduced by the Whitlam Government in the early 1970s meant I was able to do a Diploma of Education. I eventually tutored in librarianship at what was then Melbourne State College at the University of Melbourne.'

Two landmarks for Alexander were the opening of Stephanie's Restaurant in 1976 – she left Princes Hill HS in 1974 – and the publication of her hugely successful *The Cook's Companion* in 1996. Perhaps coincidentally, she closed Stephanie's in 1997. 'Giving up restaurants,' she says, 'is to do with age. It's a physically demanding job where you work 12- to 14-hour days. I don't love restaurants any the less, but I have absolutely no desire to run one.'

What drives Alexander today is the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation program, which she began in 2001. 'For 10 years before that I kept hearing and reading about childhood obesity and health problems to do with diet, and it left me feeling frustrated and then angry. The message was always what children shouldn't eat, what a healthy food pyramid looked like, but never about the enjoyment of food. I knew this approach just wouldn't work.

'I wanted to see what would happen in at least one school where we could grow, harvest, prepare and share fresh, yummy

food. Luckily, I met the then principal at Collingwood College, in Melbourne's inner north, who was very supportive and innovative, and most of all committed.'

Commitment, Alexander explains, is essential for the success of what she calls a deep intervention. To become involved in the program, a school has to have a garden, but it also needs a space for a permanent teaching kitchen and a dining space for every student – and that, she says, takes money. 'Nibbling a leaf of silverbeet in the kitchen garden is of absolutely no benefit to a child,' Alexander says. 'The benefits come when children grow the silverbeet, harvest it, use it in, say, a cannelloni stuffing and then share it with others.'

The benefits, mind you, go beyond food. 'We've developed curriculum links, units and activities that address the new national curriculum, and we have lots of examples of ways schools integrate the program with literacy and numeracy units.'

According to the findings of an evaluation led by Lisa Gibbs and colleagues from the McCaughey Centre at the University of Melbourne, the program also leads to increased child engagement in learning, an improved school social environment and increased school-community connections. The research also found evidence that the program appears to be

of greatest benefit to the most disadvantaged students.

The research findings, says Alexander, confirm what she's long known. 'It's in your face,' she says. 'You can see the growth in the self-esteem of students with learning difficulties or special needs. You can see how they love the program. You see people in the community who otherwise have no connection to a school become involved because, they say, they're learning a lot. You especially see the amazing power of the program in the infrastructure development stage. You see tradies in the community who come to help; you see donors; you see a grandfather who single-handedly builds a deck. It brings out all this connectedness in spades – that's quite good actually, because spades are one of the most common things people donate.

'I knew what the findings of the evaluation would be,' Alexander says, 'but I also knew we needed the evidence in order to make sure governments stay committed.'

Alexander's goal is to have the program assisting with teaching and learning in every school. 'If we really want to influence whole generations of children,' she says, 'we need governments to see beyond the short-term electoral cycle. They have to commit to things that won't necessarily bear fruit instantly.' ■

Photo by Simon Griffiths.



10 things I've learned about teaching

*Award-winning teacher **FIONA FARREN** has learned plenty of things about teaching, not least that teaching and learning happens everywhere from the classroom to the sandpit.*

1 LISTEN WELL
The Japanese character for listening has symbols for the eyes, ears, heart and the mind. For me this means that good communication is about using all my senses, with empathy and sensitivity. The capacity to listen is a critical part of communication and a skill which needs to be constantly practised. I've found that listening attentively and reflectively without interrupting or interjecting is the foundation of developing respectful reciprocal relationships.

2 BUILD BRIDGES, DON'T BURN THEM
The capacity to be flexible, creative and able to change, while keeping the integrity of my core beliefs as an educator, is a challenge I've faced many times. Consider, for example, the current changes in curriculum and regulatory frameworks in early childhood which require educators to think creatively in order to expand on the traditional view of the role of the community and school in a child's education and development.

This is a challenge, but also an opportunity for early childhood educators to develop new pathways between the community and the school.

3 HAVE A GO Providing a safe environment for learning challenges is an essential part of my responsibility as an educator. That sense of safety helps to build persistence, confidence, resilience and determination in my students, which are all important components of success.

I've learned that when faced with difficulty, I can choose to be part of the solution or part of the problem. If I look back at how I've grown as an educator, the one thing that I keep identifying, whatever the situation, is that the growth came from seeking solutions to issues and working with others to share knowledge and resources.

I've also learnt through my mistakes and discovered that mastery comes from practise and friendly support.

4 BE A MAGPIE I've enjoyed collegial associations throughout my career, which is just as well, because teaching is far too large a job to do alone.

As an early childhood teacher, I constantly collect and share activities, strategies and professional knowledge.

Staying alert for new ideas and continually updating and modifying my planning and activities each year keeps my classroom – and my mind – fresh and open.

I've met many talented educational innovators who have been willing to share ideas which have revitalised and expanded my practice.

5 BE A CONSIDERATE PARTNER

It would be impossible for us as teachers not to work closely with other people throughout our careers. The capacity to develop partnerships with students, their families, colleagues and people within the community enriches my work.

There's more to partnership, though, than getting people to help you. It's easy to expect other people to help me reach the outcomes I believe are important; the challenge is to understand their needs and give them equal weight and control in the relationship – that's when partnerships really start working.

I've found that my partnerships with health and other community professionals have been especially important because they've resulted in both of us meeting outcomes that benefit children and make our work more effective.

6 CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT WHICH ENCOURAGES BELONGING AND ACCEPTANCE

Every child and adult has a basic desire to feel they belong and are accepted. As a teacher, I do my best to take the time to make students and families feel comfortable in the environment of the classroom.

At the beginning of each year I make a 30 minute visit to each kindergarten student's house. This begins a crucial initial connection, planting the seed which can grow into a happy and healthy relationship that every family should have with their school.

Through home visits, I've had the privilege and opportunity to hear many family stories as we've chatted. In doing that, I'm also building a bridge for developing effective home-school partnerships and facilitating access to community networks and resources.

7 TEACH HOW TO LEARN

The capacity to be a life learner requires a degree of humility and the knowledge that learning is an endless quest. As a teacher, I can model this to my students and let them know I haven't stopped learning – and neither should they.

The capacity to wonder and question is the window to real learning and the catalyst for innovation and invention.

8 BE INVOLVED IN BOTH SIDES OF THE MENTORING PROCESS

We've all been mentored formally and informally by colleagues and supervisors. I enjoy having student teachers in my classroom and believe we have a professional responsibility to share and collaborate with the next generation of educators.

The gift of fresh energy and enthusiasm is more than enough payment for my time and resources.

As well as mentoring, I look for people who have knowledge in areas I can develop within myself and seek them out for their ideas and wisdom.

9 CHOOSE HUMOUR

I've found that a light touch can often be an effective learning tool in the classroom.

Small children have a wonderful sense of the ridiculous, and my students and I spend many hours giggling about humorous stories, jokes and songs. Working with adults can also be sweetened by humour and a sense of the hilarious.

As a young teacher, I was very self-conscious when other adults were in my classroom. One day, I was with the children on the floor exploring the movement of caterpillars and 'humping along' singing 'Fuzzy Wuzzy Caterpillar.'

I looked up and saw some early arriving parents doubled over laughing. I figured it was unlikely I'd ever look sillier, and haven't been concerned since then.

10 SIT IN THE SANDPIT

Children learn through play: it's their business and anything that is fun is also play. If I sit in the sandpit and share the experience of baking a sand cake I can expand my young cooking companion's learning through thoughtful conversation.

These learning conversations are vital tools for the development of new ideas and concepts. As an adult working with young children, I enter into their play experience in order to extend and enrich it. Small children delight in sharing their play world with adults.

My teaching is effective when it makes sense to them and can become embedded in their thinking processes and their personal story.

Fiona Farren teaches Kindergarten at South Bunbury Primary School, Western Australia, and facilitates the Linking Education and Families (LEAF) program, which she developed to build and maintain pathways and partnerships between the school and the community. In 2009, she received the WA Department for Communities Children's Week Outstanding Individual Award. Her LEAF program partners

Investing in Our Youth and the WA Department of Education received the 2009 Rural and Remote Partnership Community Award. She also received a 2009 National Excellence in Teaching Award for Community Engagement.

In June 2010 Fiona received a grant from Royalties for Regions funding to create a multimedia package for schools outlining exemplary ideas for the development of effective school and community partnerships in the early years.

Pictured, Fiona Farren and South Bunbury Primary School Kindergarten children and parents. Photo courtesy of Henderson Photographics.

LINKS

To find out more about LEAF, visit www.investinginouryouth.com.au/Updates



PROFESSOR GUY CLAXTON

Professor of Learning Sciences, University of
Winchester UK

PROFESSOR HOWARD GARDNER

Hobbs Professor of Cognition and Education at the
Harvard Graduate School of Education and Senior
Director of Harvard Project Zero

Building Learning Power:

Schools that Teach Confidence, Curiosity and Creativity

Learn how to build a powerful learning culture in your school.

Guy Claxton's presentation offers a state-of-the-art briefing, the chance for deep reflection, and a host of practical ideas to take back to your school.

In this one-day seminar participants will:

- Explore the latest research on 'the science of learnable intelligence';
- Review what works (and what doesn't) in building students' learning power;
- Discover some of the smart things that schools are doing around the world; and
- Take away a dozen practical ideas for building powerful learning cultures in schools.

DATES

Tuesday 15 March 2011	Brisbane
Wednesday 16 March 2011	Sydney
Wednesday 23 March 2011	Melbourne
Friday 25 March 2011	Adelaide



Guy Claxton is Professor of Learning Sciences and Co-Director of the Centre for Real-World Learning at the U.K.'s University of Winchester. His *Building Learning Power* programme has boosted young people's learning confidence and capacity in hundreds of schools across the UK, Australia and New Zealand. Guy has worked directly with teachers and policymakers in every state of

Australia. *What's the Point of School?*, his 2008 book, is highly praised by Howard Gardner, David Perkins, Susan Greenfield and Sir Ken Robinson.

*For more information visit
www.acerinstitute.edu.au
or phone (03) 9277 5403*

Australian Council for Educational Research

The Disciplined Mind:

Educational Visions for the Future

Session 1: Five Minds for the Future

In this seminar Gardner will discuss the developmental sequence of the five kinds of minds (disciplined; synthesizing; creating; respectful; and ethical). He will address the ways in which they may conflict with or complement one another and why they are important to the educational development of our students.

Session 2: Teaching for Understanding

In *The Disciplined Mind*, Gardner argues that K-12 education should strive for deep understanding of three classical realms: truth, beauty and goodness. Through powerful examples of his approach, Gardner describes an education that preserves the strengths of traditional humane education while preparing younger generations for the challenges of the future and the steps educators should take to preserve the vital core of these classical virtues.

DATES

Monday 16 May 2011	Brisbane
Tuesday 17 May 2011	Sydney
Thursday 19 May 2011	Melbourne
Friday 20 May 2011	Adelaide
Monday 23 May 2011	Perth
Tuesday 24 May 2011	Singapore



The author of twenty-five books translated into twenty-nine languages, and several hundred articles, Howard Gardner is best known in educational circles for his theory of multiple intelligences, a critique of the notion that there exists but a single human intelligence that can be assessed by standard psychometric instruments. His latest book *Five Minds for the Future* was published in

April 2007. His latest co-authored book *Multiple Intelligences Around the World* was published mid 2009.



FIRST, CONNECT

*A major concern of teachers is student behaviour management, which is why they need to focus on effective teaching. Good teachers, as **ROBYN BARRATT** explains, understand themselves as learners and connect with their students in order to understand how they learn so they can create the conditions for further learning.*

How we connect with each other is hugely important if we are to understand the complex undertaking we call learning and teaching.

Mindful of the fact that there are many other connections in the complex practice of teaching, I'd like to focus here on the connection between one's knowledge of pedagogy and curriculum, and student behaviour management.

Talk with emerging middle schooling teachers and you'll soon find that one of the things they're most concerned about, typically, is student behaviour management.

One of the challenges for emerging teachers is to develop their own mature and complex pedagogy while managing an energetic group of students.

As it happens, we're currently seeing a shift in Australian school reform to a focus on pedagogy, with pedagogical frameworks emerging in most states and territories. How might we characterise how this looks in the classroom? According to the South Australian *Teaching for Effective Learning Framework Guide*, the balancing act at the heart of teachers' professional lives is to 'work with the students to determine readiness, and design

challenging but achievable tasks, (and to) convey high expectations and provide explicit teaching and scaffolding as necessary.'

Concerns of the emerging teacher

What does it mean to be an effective teacher or an engaged learner in the 21st century? All teachers, but especially middle years teachers, must grapple with this question in order to provide an appropriate learning environment for young adolescents.

In the development of their teaching identity, one of the main concerns of emerging teachers



is the management of a class. For most, the first panic-button impulse, straight away, is to focus on the management of poor or disruptive behaviour. Instead, early career teachers should try to look beyond the panic and focus on their pedagogies, and this is one focus of the Middle Schooling for the Middle Years course offered at the University of South Australia.

'Pedagogy' means everything we bring to the classroom, including our assumptions about students and their backgrounds and families, as well as our beliefs about how people learn, and therefore the strategies we

choose to create the conditions for learning. When we shift our focus to pedagogy, we start to see a richer set of strategies from our emerging teachers, beyond 'solutions' to student behaviour management 'problems,' and we see the emergence of more effective teachers.

The general aim of the Middle Schooling for the Middle Years course, in the words of the course booklet, is 'To develop educators who are familiar with, and able to demonstrate and apply, the principles and practices of middle schooling for the middle years.'

During the course we also encourage emerging teachers to reflect on the developmental phase the students are experiencing, as well as students' home lives and values, and how they intersect with those of the school community.

Another important connection is that between generations. Emerging teachers will find themselves in the profession with more experienced and often older colleagues – as well, they will be in the company of a group of much younger learners. It is important to help them clarify their own motivation and then navigate these waters in their

THERE'S A STRONG CONNECTION BETWEEN STUDENT ENGAGEMENT, BEHAVIOUR AND ACHIEVEMENT ON THE ONE HAND, AND A TEACHER'S PEDAGOGICAL STANCE AND APPROACH TO THE CURRICULUM ON THE OTHER.

practicum and first appointments. One of the ways we encourage that reflection is by asking emerging teachers some questions. Besides stimulating their reflections and finding out about them, we are, of course, practising what we preach: to do with where emerging teachers are coming from and where they're heading. Here are some of the responses of the emerging teachers with whom we work to our 2010 survey.

What brought you to teaching as a career?

'Making a difference to young students' lives. A teacher had a massive effect on my life by showing me he thought I was a person, building a relationship with me.'

'I don't have any great memories of teachers, so I wanted to create some of these good memories for others.'

What will keep you in the teaching profession?

'Making a difference – a sense of reward.'

'Feeling a sense of respect from your students – that you're making a relationship that is working.'

'Things are always changing, so it's a cutting-edge job, working towards the future. I don't want to be teaching in 10 years time, and doing stuff from the '90s.'

'The challenge to understand what individual students need, want and believe about reaching their full potential in life.'

Quite clearly evident in these responses is a strong sense of social agency, and an understanding of the importance of teachers in students' lives. It's also clearly evident that emerging teachers expect, and welcome, change and challenge in life – and especially in their work.

Preparing for the middle

Learning is a constant in human development, and teaching and learning arguably begin before birth. Engagement with school-based learning shifts in focus and intensity from the early years through to the post-compulsory phase. Our focus in the middle



5th International
Middle Years
of Schooling *Conference*

6 September 2010
Adelaide
Convention Centre

In a connected world, what does the student want to learn, and need to learn about? How is current data

relates to a group of learners who have been documented at risk of becoming disengaged and disconnected from formal education, and the resultant impact on their success and achievement can be life-changing.

In our course work at the University of SA the content and methodology are closely connected and inform each other. As the course booklet puts it, 'As a result of (recent middle schooling organisational and methodological) initiatives, there is an identified need for teachers who can proficiently implement such middle schooling approaches, which schools view as critical strategies for addressing key educational issues related to pre-adolescent and adolescent learning needs; social inclusion; relevance of curriculum to counteract student alienation to post-compulsory years of schooling; and student retention rates.'

The course addresses 12 topics:

- understanding the nature of adolescence
- the learning and social needs of the adolescent

- philosophies of middle schooling
- middle schooling pedagogies
- relationship building
- managing the learning environment
- working in teams
- negotiation
- integration
- collaborative learning
- behaviour management, and
- authentic assessment.

We address these 12 topics through five interrelated themes: relationship building; the history and philosophy of middle schooling; managing the learning environment; negotiation and authentic assessment 'as,' 'of' and 'for' learning; and middle schooling pedagogies. We currently study the SA Teaching for Effective Learning Framework, the Victorian e5 Instructional Model, Queensland's Productive Pedagogies and the New South Wales Quality Teaching Framework.

The main concern of the emerging teachers with whom we work is their preparation for

the school experience, which is why we focus where it counts – learning and teaching in the classroom. In all workshops in the course we use processes and learning opportunities that reflect how experienced teachers might construct learning conditions for their students.

Continuous metacognition is also a foundation of the course. For example, formative assessment and aspects of summative assessment are negotiated with students. Exploration of collaborative projects and analysis of group dynamics and roles are conducted through regular learning team meetings throughout the course.

Student behaviour management and effective teaching in the middle years: what's the difference?

In order to develop the intrinsic motivation and self-regulation of any teacher, and especially emerging teachers, the focus needs to be on them as learners, rather than as controllers of learning in their own classrooms.

Key Speakers

Prof. Paul Deering (Hawaii)
Dr. Gary Stager (USA)
Prof. Erica McWilliam (QLD)
Dr. Thelma Perso (NT)
Ms. Robyn Barratt (SA)
Ms. Margot Foster (SA)

CONTACT

Conference Secretariat
SAPMEA Meetings Management
Post: 200 Greenhill Road,
Eastwood SA, 5063
Phone: +61 8 8274 6048
Fax: +61 8 8274 6000
Email: middleschool2010@sapmea.asn.au
Web: www.middleyears.sa.edu.au

*Our Worlds
Connecting in the Middle*

www.middleyears.sa.edu.au



Government of South Australia
Department of Education and
Children's Services

and pedagogical research challenging us? What does it mean to be an educator in the 21st century?

There's a strong connection between student engagement, behaviour and achievement on the one hand, and a teacher's pedagogical stance and approach to the curriculum on the other.

Pedagogy needs to be understood and used on a conscious level by teachers in the classroom environment, since the beliefs and values that inform their pedagogy guide all their actions related to the classroom. It's better to know why you're doing what you're doing when you're doing it in a classroom than not. From here there are strong connections to student engagement and behaviour.

In order that emerging teachers are able to learn about teaching, and in order that their students will be able to learn, they need to be connected to the curriculum.

The construction of the Middle Schooling for the Middle Years course reflects the construction of classroom learning in terms of a negotiated curriculum, student-centred pedagogies, student voice and acknowledgement of prior learning, rather than on managing poor performance of students.

This doesn't mean behaviour management strategies are ignored. In fact, one of the key phrases we use, adapting Peter Hook and Andy Vass's conception of influence, is 'influence, not control.' The only person we can *control* in the classroom is ourselves, but we can learn strategies to *influence* others. This being

so, we need to be very clear about our beliefs about effective teaching and learning, and thus where we want to put our energy.

When the starting point in our teaching is student behaviour management, the risk – and a risk that's often realised in a teacher's first years – is a heavy reliance on school-based student behaviour management procedures. A better starting point is to understand ourselves – understand our pedagogy, the beliefs and values that guide what we do in a classroom, and understand our curriculum in terms of our learners. ■

Robyn Barratt is a Lecturer with Bill Lucas in the Middle Schooling for the Middle Years course of the Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences of the School of Education at the University of South Australia. She has worked in SA schools and on state and national projects for more than 30 years.

She will be speaking at the 5th International Middle Years of Schooling Conference, 'Our worlds: Connecting in the middle,' hosted by the South Australian Postgraduate Medical Education Association at the Adelaide Convention Centre on 6 September.

LINKS

<http://sapmea.asn.au/conventions/middleschool2010/>

REFERENCES

Hook, P. & Vass, A. (2002). *Teaching with Influence*. London: David Fulton.

UniSA Course Booklet. (2010). *Middle Schooling for the Middle Years*. Adelaide: UniSA.

FURTHER READING

Groundwater-Smith, S, Mitchell, J. & Mockler, N. (2007). *Learning in The Middle Years: More than a transition*. Melbourne: Thomson.

Huber, M. (2004). *Balancing Acts: The scholarship of teaching and learning in academic careers*. Washington, DC: Carnegie.

AUSTRALIAN PEDAGOGY FRAMEWORKS

The South Australian Teaching for Effective Learning Framework Guide is available at www.learningtolearn.sa.edu.au/core_learning/files/links/TfEL_Framework_handout_4_p.pdf

The Victorian e5 Instructional Model is available at www.education.vic.gov.au/proflearning/e5/

The Queensland Productive Pedagogies model is available at http://education.qld.gov.au/public_media/reports/curriculum-framework/productive-pedagogies/html/about.html

The New South Wales Quality Teacher Framework's three dimensions of teaching practice model is available at www.det.nsw.edu.au/proflearn/areas/qt/index.htm

PEARSON goes further for the Australian Curriculum

It's an exciting time to be in education. We are embarking on a journey that unites two significant educational initiatives: the implementation of the Australian Curriculum and the ever-increasing use of technology in our students' educational experience.

Pearson would like to take this journey with you. We have been preparing for the Australian Curriculum since the inception of the Phase 1 shape papers early in 2009. Next year will see some of you implementing the new curriculum, and Pearson is ready to provide you with the resources you need.



Built from the ground up

In the spirit of the curriculum, Pearson has developed its AC solution from the ground up. New content for a new era of education; no new editions. Written by authors you know, and from a publisher you trust, this content has been developed specifically for the Australian Curriculum and will continue to be revised as we move through to the final curriculum.

Developed by a national team

One curriculum for all States made it essential that a truly national team of authors, reviewers and consultants was developed. Pearson has been working with key people from around the country to ensure that each State's individuality is captured within the new Australian Curriculum solution. In addition, regular conversations with ACARA have ensured we stayed on track and had the latest information to hand as we developed our AC solutions.

Teachers have their say

From May 2009, when the 'Shape of the Australian Curriculum' paper was released, Pearson began working with national focus groups to test its

new material. Teachers from every State have had continuous input into the features, design, readability, content and construction of both the student book and the whole AC solution.

Pearson is ready when you are

There are four learning areas in Phase 1: English, History, Mathematics and Science. Pearson has developed a solution for all four learning areas, and all four will be ready for use at Years 7 and 8 in 2011. So, if you are ready to make the move to AC, you can choose to implement all four learning areas simultaneously.

Over 30 000 digital assets online

It's not all about the Australian Curriculum; many of you are moving quickly towards a digital education revolution of your own. Pearson has been working to develop a strong content solution for those of you wanting either a blended offer or a truly digital pathway. With over 30 000 interactive digital assets available online at Pearson Places and the development of Pearson Reader—truly interactive online web-books for use on the portable device of your choice—Pearson has a digital solution to suit your needs.

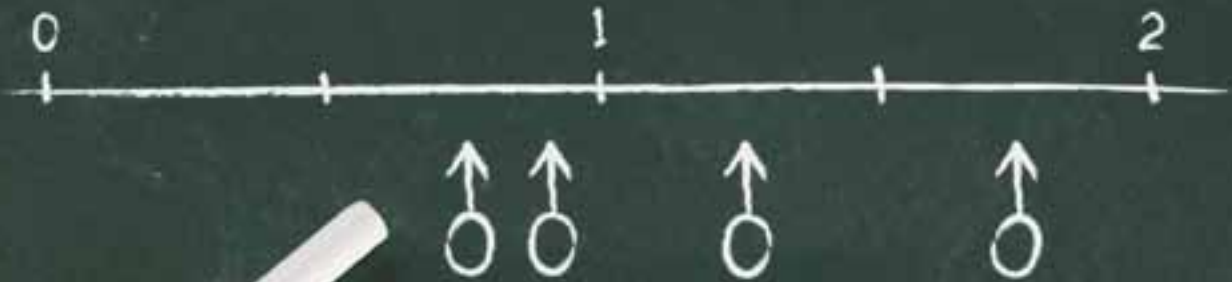
We hope you enjoy the journey you are about to take as much as we have enjoyed preparing for it. We look forward to working with you to implement the Australian Curriculum, and to helping you manage your digital aspirations.

Find out more for yourself

1. Visit the Australian Curriculum Place at www.pearsonplaces.com.au.
2. Call Pearson's Customer Care on **FREE call 1800 656 685** to find out how you can talk to a Pearson Sales Consultant, review page proofs or trial content during 2010 and 2011.



Which arrow is pointing closest to the location of $\frac{3}{4}$ on this number line?



NAPLAN

More than
fractionally useful

*Information from NAPLAN tests can support teachers and school leaders in planning for the learning of individual students and for improvement across the whole school. **THELMA PERSO** explains how to do exactly that in numeracy.*

The National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests, which have now been administered by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) in 2008, 2009 and this year, provide information on student performance across language conventions, writing, reading and numeracy.

One of the effects of assessments like NAPLAN is that they prompt teachers to reflect on what is being tested and consider what their students are doing, and the thinking behind their actions, and that can be a powerful tool to guide teaching.

I'm going to concentrate here on the uses of NAPLAN to guide the teaching of mathematics for numeracy attainment by students, but what follows would also apply to literacy, and reading and writing in particular.

According to the report of the National Numeracy Review, commissioned by the Human Capital Working Group of the Council of Australian Governments, there are three dimensions of numeracy that need to be explicitly taught through relevant experiences in

schools: mathematical, strategic and contextual.

Mathematical numeracy is about mathematical content; having number, measurement and spatial sense that derives from deeply understanding mathematical ideas and concepts, and knowing procedures and skills needed to apply these. For example, students know that the average – or mean – of 16, 18 and 24 cannot possibly be 17 because they deeply understand that average is a measure of the 'centredness' of a set of numbers; they know that $36 \div 0.3$ can't possibly be a number less than 36 but must be approximately 3 lots of 36; they know that a whole number minus $\frac{1}{2}$ and then $\frac{1}{3}$ will leave a small fraction remaining because they can visualise the amounts involved.

Strategic numeracy and contextual numeracy are about using mathematical sense to decide whether mathematics will assist in a situation and whether results obtained through subsequently applying mathematics make sense in a particular context. It includes having a disposition and attitude

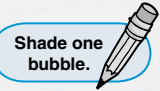
of confidence, to choose and use mathematics when and where it's helpful to do so and to reason about those choices.

Strategic and contextual numeracy would appear to be dependent on mathematical numeracy, since you first need to have some deep knowledge about mathematics in order to be able to apply it strategically to a range of contexts.

Clearly, you need to learn the tools of mathematics before you can apply them. Consequently, in the early years of schooling the learning will focus on the tools, for example, understanding numbers and how they work, understanding operations and calculation. As students move through the early years into the middle years the curriculum emphasis will increasingly focus on application; independent choices about which tools to apply, how to apply them and how to critique their effectiveness.

As students move through the year levels, numeracy lessons change from being lessons *about* mathematics to being lessons *enabled through* mathematics. As teachers, we need to be aware of the numeracy 'toolkits'

Year 7 Question 14 2009

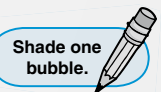


Helen has 24 red apples and 12 green apples.
 What fraction of the apples are green?

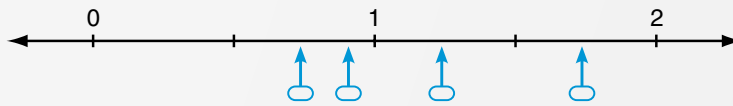
- $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{3}$ $\frac{1}{4}$ $\frac{1}{12}$

State results: 26% 51% 9% 13%

Year 7 Question 25 2009



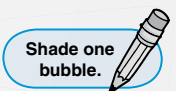
Which arrow is pointing closest to the location of $\frac{3}{4}$ on this number line?



State results: 37% 9% 16% 35%

Year 7 Question 4 2008

This table summarises the time Mick spent walking his dog over five days.



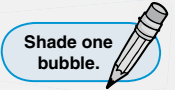
TIME SPENT WALKING THE DOG	
Day	Time
Monday	45 minutes
Tuesday	50 minutes
Wednesday	1 hour
Thursday	62 minutes
Friday	43 minutes

What was the average (mean) time for these walks?

- 40 minutes 52 minutes 65 minutes 260 minutes

State results: 11% 59% 10% 19%

Year 7 Question 25 2008



A garden centre sells a potting mix made up of soil, compost and sand.
 Soil makes up $\frac{2}{3}$ of the mix and compost makes up $\frac{1}{4}$ of the mix.

What fraction of the potting mix is sand?

- $\frac{1}{12}$ $\frac{3}{7}$ $\frac{5}{12}$ $\frac{4}{7}$

State results: 19.1% 48.7% 13.4% 17.2%

that our individual students bring with them to other lessons, about science, say, or health, technology and so on, and we need to be flexible enough to focus on teaching and learning the numeracy tools, should that be necessary, as well as covering the content of our learning area.

If students don't have the numeracy tools that enable access to the content of all subjects and learning areas, they'll struggle with schooling. The aim is for students to have these tools by the end of about Year 6, so that in subsequent years they can apply them in an increasingly broader range of contexts.

Mathematical numeracy dominates the NAPLAN numeracy

tests. In the first place, this is because it's seen to be the most important of the three numeracy dimensions, but secondly it's because the nature of the test itself isn't conducive to students writing and justifying choices of strategy or approach determined by context. Ideally, a pen and paper numeracy test would be one with situations drawn from other learning areas where students are asked:

- (1) Do you think some maths would help here? Why?
- (2) Which maths would you use and why?
- (3) Apply the maths you've chosen. Do you think it helped in this context or might some other maths have been better? Why or why not?

What does this mean for testing?

Okay, it's difficult to assess or determine numerate capabilities through a pen and paper test, especially one titled 'numeracy test.' The writers of the NAPLAN numeracy tests attempt to do this for some questions by describing hypothetical contexts, and while these contexts demand some higher-order skills and a certain level of literacy, they are limited in their capacity to assess the reasoning that is part of strategic and contextual numeracy, since students are required primarily to tick the box containing the correct answer. They are at no time required to indicate the reasoning they used in obtaining a solution. I'm hoping that ACARA will use short-answer questions – or even

CUSTOM PRINTED *Certificates*

FREE CALL: 1800 628 428
click below to email us
sales@edwardbrooks.com.au



- Give your students fresh incentive to achieve
- Enhance your school's image
- Genuine **foil** stamping and **embossing**
- **School colours**
- High quality **parchment & specialty papers**
- Australia's No. 1 supplier of Testamurs® to school's and universities
- Standard stock certificates also available

Click below to visit our website
www.edwardbrooks.com.au

CERTIFICATES • PRESENTATION FOLDERS • CORPORATE STATIONERY • REPORT COVERS

THE PRESENTATION SPECIALISTS



long-answer questions – in the future to address this issue.

The limitations of multi-choice questions include their inability to ascertain the meta cognitive analysis underpinning student choices of options, which is essential if we're to reliably test the student's confidence and disposition to use mathematics. It's impossible to know whether students have used the reasoning strategies that we want students who are numerate to have, or if they've merely guessed, even if they select the correct option. We can only assume they've reasoned and that their choices are underpinned by numerate dispositions.

If, though, students are being taught deep understandings of concepts – as distinct from mathematics methods, procedures and algorithms that tend to dominate many mathematics lessons – they'll have the confidence and ability to apply their mathematical understandings to a range of situations and contexts, resulting in numerate behaviours. A not inconsiderable spin-off is that they'll be able to successfully complete NAPLAN numeracy questions.

What does this mean for teaching?

The depth of knowledge needed for mathematical numeracy as I've described above is based on informed reasoning that enables students to select correct

responses for NAPLAN questions without undertaking specific computation in most cases.

Students are best prepared to be successful with the NAPLAN numeracy tests by being taught to draw on the numeracy skills that best serve them in meeting the numeracy demands of life: to do with estimation, based on deep understandings of mathematical concepts; visualisation and 'imaging' of context; and common sense.

Some might argue that computational skills and routines are just as appropriate as these skills, but for this particular test genre and under these test conditions, students will be more efficient if they use estimation skills, since the questions rarely demand, or indeed require, computational skill beyond mental computation needed for estimation.

This has profound implications for the teaching and learning of mathematics in our schools. Our primary aim is to teach the deep understandings that result in numerate behaviours; the direct spin-off from this is improvement in NAPLAN numeracy results.

Let's look at the following questions, first from the 2009 NAPLAN numeracy test, then from the 2008 test, with results from one state which seem to indicate a lack of deep understanding of numbers and how they work.

Consider Year 7 Question 14, on the previous page, and it's clear

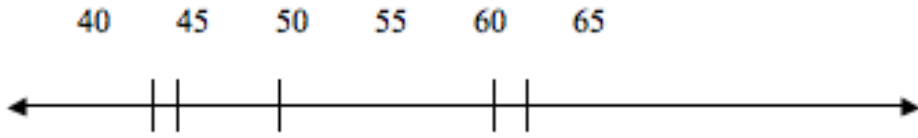
that while we need to account for literacy skills, which are part of numeracy, large proportions of Year 7 students don't understand fractional numbers.

Question 25 on the same test validates this conclusion.

Considering the curriculum content of mathematics and other subject areas that builds on the understanding of fraction – for example, percentage, scale, rates and proportion – in subsequent years, this is alarming to say the least. Do we understand what the misunderstandings are that these students have? Are these misunderstandings being corrected through targeted teaching following the release of this data? Do we know how to do this?

The results from Question 4 of the 2008 Year 7 NAPLAN numeracy test reveal a great deal about the degree of student understanding of the concept of average. Clearly, the students who selected 40, 65 or 260 minutes don't understand the concept of average or they would have known at a glance that these three responses couldn't possibly be correct.

Students who selected these three responses are likely to have attempted to calculate the correct solution using an algorithm rather than using some visualisation of the five daily times and their position on a number line with respect to each other – the most appropriate



method if mathematical numeracy is being used.

By visualising these numbers on an unmarked number line, as above, and knowing that the correct response must be a number that can be representative of the five numbers, students would be able to estimate the correct

response is between 50 and 55. Since there's only one option, 52, alongside the three distracters, 52 must be correct.

Significantly, because the students are given four numbers to choose from, an estimation is all that's required. Unfortunately, though, we're unable to determine whether the 59 per

cent of students who selected the correct response did so as a result of this deep understanding and visualisation or by using an algorithm. I suspect that most of the 59 per cent used a standard algorithm, but the NAPLAN numeracy test simply doesn't tell us. Using NAPLAN data, we simply don't know the numerate capabilities of Australia's students regarding their choices of method and the appropriateness of the choices for the context.

2011 *Study Series* STUDENT DIARIES

STUDY ZONE

Reading Tree
HOME READER DIARY 2011

Study Quest

Study Trek
Homework & Reading

STUDY TIP
Efficient learners work hard at different times of the day. Figuring out when you get things done most efficiently and organising your routine around that will help you make the best use of your time.

THURSDAY 10

Createl Publishing

Call us on 03 9338 5662 for a free sample, quote and catalogue

School diaries from \$3.75 GST inc.

View online
www.createl.com.au/student-diaries.html

IT'S CLEAR FROM THESE RESULTS THAT FRACTIONS ARE STILL BEING TAUGHT IN MANY CLASSROOMS AS ALGORITHMS AND PROCEDURES, RARELY WITH DISCUSSION OR VISUALISATION AND RARELY EMBEDDED IN REAL-WORLD CONTEXTS THAT SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEEP UNDERSTANDINGS OF MATHEMATICAL CONCEPTS.

Now, you might accuse me of basing my argument merely on one example, so let's look at another one, Question 25 from the same 2008 Year 7 NAPLAN numeracy test paper.

It's clear that large proportions of Year 7 students don't understand the concept of fraction, or at the very least are unable to visualise fractional amounts, leaving aside the literacy level required in order to understand the context and syntax of this question.

The fact that 48 per cent of students selected $\frac{3}{7}$ indicates that they merely added the two numerators and the two denominators, and that's a great concern. The 17.2 per cent who selected $\frac{4}{7}$ did know to subsequently subtract their result from 1 – correctly determining that two steps were needed – but they still do not understand the relationship between the numerator and denominator of a fraction. Neither do they understand the concept of fraction since they were unable to visualise the quantities they were dealing with. If they were, they would have known that if they added $\frac{2}{3}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$ of the same total quantity they would be left with a very small quantity from the whole amount. In other words, if they deeply understood that fraction is about quantities of a whole and used that information to visualise the situation, they would *know* that of the four options, the solution could only possibly be a

small fraction and since only one of the four options, $\frac{1}{12}$, is small, then this must be the correct one.

It's clear from these results that fractions are still being taught in many classrooms as algorithms and procedures, rarely with discussion or visualisation and rarely embedded in real-world contexts that support the development of deep understandings of mathematical concepts. For students to get these questions correct on NAPLAN tests these approaches are essential.

What next?

Every teacher of mathematics might profitably undertake an analysis similar to the one I've undertaken here using their own data, and might profitably share it with colleagues. It's worth looking at the results of individual students, variations in results between student sub-groups in your classes and student responses to questions from different strands.

It's also worth reflecting on your current teaching of mathematics for numeracy attainment and discussing that with your colleagues. A key focus of that reflection and discussion should be to question whether your students are being taught a deep understanding of mathematics concepts and the capacity, confidence and disposition to use them, or merely a set of methods and procedures.

If the latter, teachers and school leaders need to be aware that they are seriously at risk of not giving their students access to numeracy attainment. We can't assume that students will make the connections between methods and procedures and the conceptual understandings needed for deep learning just because that they've been taught the methods and procedures for finding answers.

Your individual reflection and collaborative discussion is very useful in helping you to understand where your students are going wrong. The most challenging thing, of course, is how to help your students to catch up, especially since many of them got left behind in these understandings many years ago.

As a secondary teacher with 20 years' experience, I've learned that you can't simply re-teach these concepts using methods that worked in primary school. What's needed are approaches that:

- use students who already have these understandings as peer tutors for those who don't
- re-teach these understandings in contexts that are meaningful and relevant, such as sport, social justice and hands-on training contexts, and
- work with teachers of other subject areas to use their contexts for purposeful re-teaching at need-to-know points.

If targeted re-teaching and remediation doesn't occur, the risks are that students simply get further behind, disengage and leave school with insufficient qualifications.

It's the work of all primary years teachers, middle years teachers and senior years teachers to be teachers of numeracy. ■

Dr Thelma Perso is Executive Director Literacy and Numeracy in the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training.

She will be speaking at the 5th International Middle Years of Schooling Conference, 'Our worlds: Connecting in the middle,' hosted by the South

Australian Postgraduate Medical Education Association at the Adelaide Convention Centre on 6 September.

LINKS

<http://sapmea.asn.au/conventions/middleschool2010/>
National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy tests for 2008, 2009 and 2010 are available at www.naplan.edu.au/tests/tests_landing_page.html

REFERENCES

Council of Australian Governments (COAG). (2008). *National Numeracy Review Report*. Available at www.coag.gov.au/reports/docs/national_numeracy_review.pdf

Universal Italian Restaurant

School Group Dining

- **Pizza**
- **Pasta**
- **Drinks**
- **Ice Cream**

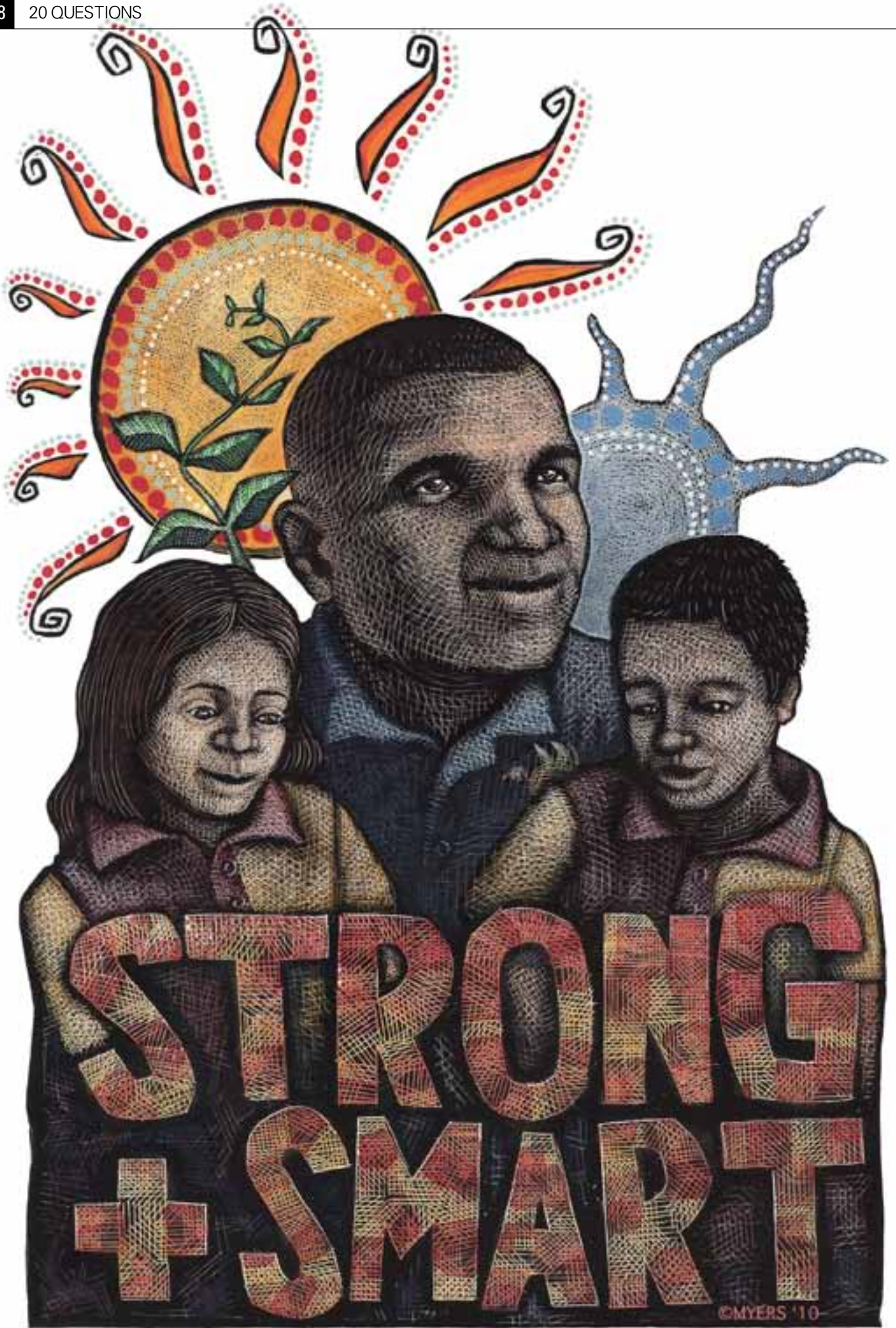
Years 1-9 only \$10
Years 10-12 only \$12

Located on Lygon Street, Carlton VIC.

Walking distance to IMAX Theater, Piazza Italia, Sky Deck, Melbourne Museum, Old Melbourne Gaol & Public Transport.

Serving school groups for over 30 years.

www.universalrestaurant.com.au



20 questions*

with Chris Sarra

DAVID RISH talks with Dr Chris Sarra, and discovers plenty about the man behind the Stronger Smarter Institute at the Queensland University of Technology.

As we speak, you're in your office at the Stronger Smarter Institute at the Queensland University of Technology, having swapped from a principal's desk at Cherbourg State School. Who is more exhausted on a Friday afternoon, teachers in the staffroom or academics in the uni common room?

Flat out, teachers. Infinitely stretched teachers are going to be more exhausted. Most academics would agree that teachers in schools are at the front-line, staring children in the face.

You rewarded good attendance by students at Cherbourg with iceblocks; how did you reward your staff?

Teaching is like being the coach of a football team. It's crucial to keep up the team morale. Rewards are

fundamental whether they be performance-based incentives such as allocating dollars for professional development if they hit the targets, or a note in the pigeonhole to say, 'You're doing a good job.'

Who tells better war stories, teachers or academics?

Without question teachers have much better stories to tell – teachers are the ones who sweat blood. Personal stories? I've got too many to tell just one.

What's the best bit of advice a fellow teacher has ever given you?

Be firm, fair and fun. This was from Terry Doherty during my prac teaching period.

You grew up the youngest in a family of 10 children; did being the baby of the family help form

your character? Can you recall a moment that you thought you'd been treated unfairly just because you were smallest?

It certainly shaped my character. I had to be tenacious and have quick reactions when the call went out that it was dinner time. I did okay. It helped me develop resilience and tenacity. It shaped me in other ways, similar to the way it shaped all the members of the family. The unfair bit? Well, every time I see Mum she says, 'This is my baby,' and I'm 42 with grey hairs everywhere.

Was there a particular place to which you liked to retreat?

The Burnett River where I'd sit and think and fish. It didn't matter if I caught anything. I'm writing my autobiography at the moment, and part of that process is wondering



what made people tick, their psychology. It was like what I did at the river, alone.

Did you ever feel bored as a child? Is it important for children to suffer boredom some of the time?

I've felt bored on occasions. I think it's important for kids to do so, so they can look inside themselves and be content. I worry about kids who are in constant search for stimulation through Nintendo, TV, computers.

Did you have a book that was really meaningful in childhood?

I really enjoyed George Orwell's *Animal Farm*; it really fascinated me. It was about people and society, how we can have high aspirations but they can be contaminated by wealth and greed, so you become what you initially despised. It happens today with some of our leaders, Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

You had an Aboriginal mother and an Italian father; what's better, bush tucker or a good plate of spaghetti?

I like spaghetti and like it well, but bush tucker I like too, especially fresh guava off the tree, as long as I'm not getting stung by wasps.

Despite your Italian heritage, you reckon rugby league is the

greatest sport, not football, aka 'soccer.' Why is that?

It's played in heaven. What you see is what you get: rough play, tackles; you're seeing the truth.

If the call had come to play professional league, would you have ditched teaching as a career?

I'm still waiting for the call – the Cowboys or for New South Wales. In retrospect, if the call had come, absolutely. I'd have put teaching on hold for a couple of years. At the time it was important for me to focus on a teaching career and be a role model for others. Rugby league became second fiddle.

Were you a good student?

Yeah, I was an excellent student but I didn't realise it 'til two years after I left school. I was probably going through the motions, as were a lot of people around me. I had a teacher in Year 9 History, Mr Rimmer, who saw something in me and tried to push me harder, but I thought he was a bit strange for doing that. He was only one voice and I needed more.

Did you ever bunk off from school?

Famous for it. When I was in Year 7 we had a teaching principal and he set up partitions in the classroom and he couldn't see me so I'd jump out the window and run round to the

staffroom and ring 199, which causes the phone to ring after you hang up, and he'd have to leave us and go and answer so we'd get a break.

How important were your parents in encouraging you to go on with your education?

Absolutely, fundamentally important, for my success and the success of my siblings too. My parents never had an opportunity to get formal education. They knew that it was the ticket forward.

Why did you become a teacher?

I stumbled into it. I think in a broader sense I was interested in what made people tick and what made them do the best they could.

How do you encourage bright Aboriginal students to consider teaching as a profession?

In the same way I encourage other people – talk about the importance of them being Aboriginal role models, and the magic of the profession. Well into adult life, people into their 70s, 80s, 90s will remember something a teacher said that made them feel good or not good. No salary can ever pay what it's worth to see the light going on in a child's head when they learn something, or, say, when they first learn to swim.

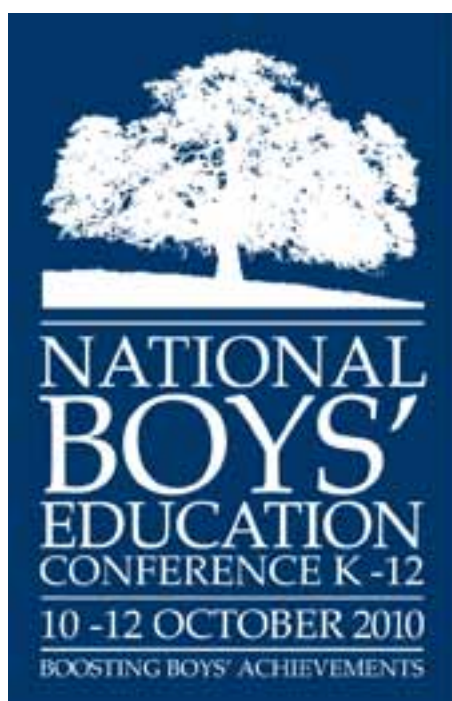
What strategies should teachers adopt for teaching Indigenous students, the same as with non-

Indigenous students, or is there a better approach?

It doesn't hurt to be firm, fair and fun. A quality teacher finds a way to get personal about what they're doing. They need to think, 'What would I want if this child in front of me was my child?' Do that and then the cultural background just doesn't matter.

How, in a crowded syllabus, do you ensure that traditional learning isn't neglected?

It doesn't matter what kind of teaching occurs as long as it is quality for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. They should all feel proud and competent culturally.



Over three days, a stellar cast of speakers will be presenting papers and workshops on current research, strategies, and innovations in the quest to boost boys' achievements.

- ✓ boosting boys' motivation to learn
- ✓ unleashing boys' creativity
- ✓ neuroscience and boys' engagement in learning
- ✓ innovative use of social media in boys' learning

PLATINUM SPONSORS: SOMERVILLE FOR FURTHER DETAILS & REGISTRATION VISIT: WWW.KINGS.EDU.AU/BOYSED

A chess lesson a week, to further over-crowd the syllabus: is that a good idea?

Interesting idea; I've got a better one. Every lesson should start with three minutes of meditation, an affirmation, to separate formal learning from playtime and outside life. This enables kids to engage more deeply in formal learning.

When you were principal of Cherbourg State School, at your final, final assembly, and you looked at the graduating Year 7s, what qualities made you most proud?

That they were strong, smart and proud of where they came from, able to stand confidently alongside others and demand a place in the world.

If you could have ever had your choice of anyone to be a guest teacher for a week at Cherbourg, who would it have been?

Halle Berry or Serena Williams (laughs). Nelson Mandela, because he models a whole range of things, not only resilience and intellect but also the ability to forgive and to not let his identity be defined by how he was treated. He was strong enough to see his identity was defined on his terms, and he refused to become a victim.

Did you have an Indigenous hero as a boy?

My mum; my oldest brother, Cameron, who took us to the beach; and Pat Dodson for his statesman-like demeanour.

You get to spend a week at the poshest school in Australia, future leaders in every row: what would you most like them to take away from the experience?

Future leaders don't come out of posh schools, but if they did, I'd tell them to be decent, to lead without feeding their own egos, for the good of all humanity.

You're pictured on the Stronger Smarter Institute website in front of an amazing and obviously cold landscape. Can you tell me about it?

The landscape is a signal that the stronger smarter philosophy can exist any place. It's as important for kids in downtown Melbourne or Brisbane as it is for remote kids in any part of the country.

Your wife, Grace, is a fellow teacher; how important was she in the development of the stronger smarter philosophy?

When I was at Cherbourg as principal I had come from a secondary phys-ed and English teaching background. My knowledge about causing cultural shift was guided by her.

What do you think of tying welfare payments to school attendance?

I think it's a despicable idea in which nobody wins. It creates tension between the community and school, and between teachers and students. It was an idea from people with no clue about the reality of quality schooling.

What can be done with schools that don't deliver desirable outcomes for their students?

With the strong smarter approach, we accept that some places will struggle. Hard work is needed. We need to support and develop capacity to improve, and if it doesn't work with that approach, challenge and intervene. Some teachers need to be told that if this is your best then it's not good enough.

What makes a good teacher?

They're firm, fun, fair, passionate about their subject and genuinely interested in kids. They have to be willing not to hide behind the role. They should be decent human beings.

How can teachers be encouraged to stay for extended periods in isolated schools so there's some sort of continuity?

Quality leadership, quality teaching, quality relations with the community. If we get that right,

staying becomes desirable. We don't need extrinsic incentives.

If a teacher can't come to the Stronger Smarter Institute, what's something that they can do to encourage their Indigenous students to succeed? What's most likely to encourage failure?

It's extremely simple. We believe that an Aboriginal child can feel smarter and stronger or not. Basically, there's no reason to collude with the view that

Aboriginal children can't learn and succeed.

Is the future brighter for Indigenous children at school today than in, say, 2000?

The tide of low expectations has turned. In some areas the results are yet to flow, but in others they're flowing, but we need to work at it everywhere.

Do you get enough time nowadays to have a kick-around with your own kids?

Yeah, one has to be disciplined about these things. I have to work hard at it, and make sure that I make time.

Thank you, Dr Chris Sarra.

David Rish is an award-winning writer for children and a regular contributor to *Inside Teaching*.

** Okay, okay, if you counted the questions you'd know there are more than 20.*

Image by Gregory Myer.

DRAWING THE LINES

A political cartooning competition for Australian school students

FREE ENTRY

Australian school students from years 4–12 are invited to enter the National Museum's 2010 political cartooning competition.

Entries are due by Friday 22 October

For more information, details of our fab prizes and how to enter, see nma.gov.au/education

Education
at the
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA
CANBERRA

Free general admission. Open 9 am – 5 pm daily (closed Christmas Day). Lawson Crescent, Acton Peninsula, Canberra
 Freecall 1800 026 132. The National Museum of Australia is an Australian Government Agency
 Illustration: Hudson Meads, Year 7, Two Mile State School, Gympie, Queensland (2009 participant)



Cyberbullying

What does the research say?

The negative impact of bullying and cyberbullying on schooling, relationships and the emotional and psychological health of young people who are its victims can be long term. As research by Justin Patchin and Sameer Hinduja indicates, in some cases, the impact continues into early adulthood.

There are also long-term implications for bullies. Research by Patchin and Hinduja, and by Judith Kulig, Barry Hall and Ruth

Grant Kalischuk suggests that bullies typically exhibit higher levels of antisocial, violent and criminal behaviour in adulthood.

Some background

Like bullying, cyberbullying typically involves a power imbalance between an aggressor and victim, where the aggressor uses the internet, mobile phones or the like to aggressively and intentionally harm the victim. It extends beyond sending hurtful

emails or text messages to include forms such as threats, social exclusion tactics, spreading rumours and circulating defamatory images of the victim.

One of the key attractions of cyberbullying is the purported anonymity that the internet and other communication technologies can provide. Researchers including Adam Joinson, Susan Keith and Michelle Martin, and Polly Sparling suggest that the virtual



*New research by **MEGAN PRICE** and **JOHN DALGLEISH** indicates that cyberbullying occurs most often at the end of primary school and the beginning of secondary school, and that more than a quarter of victims don't seek support.*

environment allows cyberbullies to feel less inhibited and less accountable for their actions.

The results of research on the prevalence of cyberbullying among young people vary considerably.

As Jaana Juvonen and Elisheva Gross of the University of California at Los Angeles note in their study of online and in-school bullying among internet-using adolescents, reports of prevalence in the literature

range from nine per cent to 49 per cent within a school year. Juvonen and Gross attribute the wide variance to differences in research design and the types of technology examined. As they note, while rates are not as high as for traditional bullying, where prevalence is up to 70 per cent, the spread of technology-mediated communication in recent years suggests an increased potential for this form of bullying in the future.

The short-term impact of traditional bullying has been widely documented, and includes problems with emotional adjustment, school adjustment and relationships. Some research, such as that by Peter Smith and colleagues, suggests that the impact of cyberbullying to be comparable, while other research, such as that by Marilyn Campbell, suggests the impact may be more severe. There are two reasons for this: the

wider audience in which public humiliation or embarrassment can occur, and the increased level of invasiveness that is possible, in particular the ability to virtually penetrate a victim's home.

Data from Kids Helpline, a counselling service operated by BoysTown, suggest that young people affected by cyberbullying may be more likely to experience suicide ideation as a reaction to cyberbullying than those who experience traditional bullying.

Much of the research literature, particularly overseas, focuses on strategies to address cyberbullying. As Campbell notes in 'Cyberbullying: An old problem in a new guise?' these include, for example, individual strategies to block or avoid cyberbullying messages; school strategies to restrict the use of technologies; community strategies to support service delivery; and legislative strategies to address program funding. One concerning finding from the literature is that young people who have been cyberbullied rarely inform adults. Indeed, Juvonen and Gross found that as many as 90 per cent of victims claimed not to have told an adult. Other studies by Campbell in 2007, Debra Rickwood and colleagues, and Smith and colleagues have yielded similar findings. Campbell, Rickwood and co, and Smith and co attribute the inhibition to fears of humiliation and embarrassment; not being

Table 1 Participants' use of coping strategies

Type of strategy	Total who used		Frequency by gender		Frequency by age of bullying experience*			
	n	%	M	F	5-9yr	10-12yr	13-14yr	15+ yr
Offline								
Confronted bully	242	44.2	40.6	46.0	36.7	46.1	36.0	39.6
Told a friend	216	39.4	31.7	41.2	40.0	39.8	36.0	39.6
Stayed offline	177	32.3	24.8	34.0	16.7	29.7	32.0	33.3
Stopped looking	163	29.7	29.7	29.8	10.0	35.2†	23.0	25.0
Told parent / carer	161	29.4	29.7	29.5	40.0	25.0	30.0	26.0
Did nothing	148	27.0	27.7	26.8	33.3	18.8	27.0	29.2
Told teacher / principal	135	24.6‡	18.8	26.4	30.0	21.1	24.0	22.9
Retaliated	88	16.1	21.8	14.8	10.0	18.0	16.0	20.8
Told a sibling	64	11.7	12.9	11.4	10.0	10.2	10.0	12.5
Told Kids Helpline	50	9.1	6.9	9.8	10.0	9.4	4.0	6.3
Told another adult	33	6.0‡	1.0	3.2	6.7	2.3	7.0	6.3
Online								
Blocked bully	185	71.4	65.2	72.6	11.1	36.9	22.3	77.8†
Removed from friend list	119	45.9	58.5	53.5	2.9	23.0	20.2	63.0†
Changed own avatar / mobile number	60	23.2	19.6	23.9	2.9	7.9	7.0	18.5
None of the above	64	24.7	30.4	23.5	19.4	7.6	13.8	18.5

* Analysis includes only those participants who reported experiences during one age group (n=301; offline; n=147; online).
 ** The different sample size (n=250) refers to the total number of participants asked these questions.
 † Value is significantly higher than for those aged 5-9 (p<0.05).
 ‡ Value is significantly higher among females (p<0.05).

believed; having their concerns trivialised; and having access to technology devices restricted.

Not surprisingly, as Campbell, and Juvonen and Gross found, young people, particularly adolescent girls, are more likely to disclose their bullying concerns and seek support from a peer rather than a parent or another adult.

One acknowledged benefit of cyberspace is that it provides potential cyberbullying victims with a wide suite of coping tools

that are not available offline. As Juvonen and Gross point out, victims can, for example, attempt to avoid receiving messages from suspected bullies by blocking their screen names from their computer, restricting buddy lists or changing their own avatar. Research by Qing Li suggests that most young people appear to be familiar with such strategies, but whether they use them or not varies greatly, ranging up to 67 per cent depending on the particular strategy, according to Juvonen

ACER PRESS ASSESSMENTS



ACER Press assessments are designed for use in Australian schools to provide objective, norm-referenced information to teachers about the achievement attained by their students in reading, mathematics and science; as well as students' learning potential and aptitude.

The **benefits** of ACER Press assessments include:

- Identify students who could be selected for extension programs
- Identify students who may need special diagnostic assessment
- Compare results with curriculum-based assessment
- Provide information that may be used in setting realistic goals and planning effective programs of work
- Locate areas of weakness and strength for individuals or within a class
- Monitor the development of a range of students' achievement over time
- Provide an indication of learning potential.

Each of the assessments can be administered individually or to a group and should be completed within 40–45 minutes, plus administration time.

ACER now gives schools the **choice** of using paper-and-pen, online, or a combination of both formats for **AGAT** and **PATMaths Plus**.

The benefits of **online** testing include:

- No need to order test booklets or answer sheets – simply apply for a school code and purchase tests online
- Save valuable time: students' results are scored instantly
- Receive automatically generated individual and group reports
- Allows for increased flexibility in timing of your assessment schedule.

Assessments available include:

- ACER General Ability Tests (AGAT)
- Middle Years Ability Tests (MYAT)
- Progressive Achievement Tests in Mathematics (PATMaths)
- Progressive Achievement Tests in Mathematics Plus (PATMaths Plus)
- Progressive Achievement Tests in Reading (PATReading)
- Progressive Achievement Tests in Science (PATScience)
- Tests of Reading Comprehension (TORCH)
- Tests of Reading Comprehension Plus (TORCH Plus).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

<https://shop.acer.edu.au>
<https://iachieve.acer.edu.au>

Scanning, scoring, reporting your school assessments

Improving teaching and learning

ACER
Test Scoring Services

Save time and let **ACER Test Scoring Services** score and provide quality reports for your assessments. Assessments include those listed above and many more.

ACER TSS offers schools:

- quick and efficient scoring of tests;
- easy to read reports;
- group diagnostic reports;
- detailed individual reports;
- reports in Excel format that allow data manipulation;
- a choice of writing prompts; and
- independent marking of students' responses.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
www.acer.edu.au/tss



and Gross. Clearly, further evidence is required as to the methods young people rely on most, and the extent to which they have been effective.

Although the amount of published data from Australia has increased since we began our BoysTown study, it's still somewhat limited. For this reason, our study aims to extend knowledge, particularly about the use and perceived effectiveness of coping strategies, as defined by young people themselves. Additionally, BoysTown wanted to better understand the prevalence and impact of cyberbullying in Australia, and the extent to which it occurs simultaneously with traditional bullying.

Initially designed to inform the service response of Kids Helpline counsellors, BoysTown also wanted to provide evidence to inform young people, parents, schools and government about the nature of cyberbullying in Australia and the type of strategies that could be developed to effectively address this issue.

The study

Our sample consisted of 548 self-identified cyberbully victims aged under 25 years, sourced primarily from the Kids Helpline website and email counselling service. Of those 548 cyberbully victims, 447 were female, a female bias that's typical of Kids Helpline help-seeking trends but representative of national help-

Table 2 Extent to which offline strategies were considered helpful by participants

	Effectiveness rating			Proportion of those rating some degree of helpfulness
	Not helpful	Sort of helpful	Very helpful	
Offline	%	%	%	%
Told a friend	31.5	35.5	33.0	68.5
Told parent/ carer	32.5	28.9	38.6	67.5
Stayed offline	37.1	33.9	29.0	62.9
Told teacher /principal	38.1	30.5	31.5	61.9
Told Kids Helpline	39.7	28.4	31.9	60.3
Stopped looking	40.7	38.3	21.0	59.3
Told another adult	45.2	22.2	32.6	54.8
Retaliated	48.3	24.4	27.3	51.7
Told a sibling	52.6	25.3	22.1	47.4
Did nothing	64.5	22.9	12.5	35.5
Confronted bully	68.2	22.1	9.7	31.8

seeking trends. The majority were aged 10 to 14 years – 50 per cent – or 15 to 18 years – 42 per cent – again, typical of Kids Helpline help-seeking trends.

The majority of participants reported victimisation during the period associated with the transition from primary school to high school. Of the 548 young people surveyed, 49 per cent experienced cyberbullying when aged 10 to 12 years, 52 per cent when aged 13 to 14 years, and 29 per cent when aged 15 to 16 years. Interestingly, the majority of older cyberbullying victims also reported being cyberbullied when aged 13 to 14 years.

Across the sample, the most common ways in which cyberbullying occurred were by

email – 21 per cent; through online chatrooms – 20 per cent; on social networking sites – 20 per cent; and with mobile phones – 19 per cent. Other websites – eight per cent – and other forms of texting, such as Twitter – six per cent, were also reported.

In our BoysTown study we also found that social networking sites became the dominant form of cyberbullying in victims aged 13 and older, increasing in prevalence from 41 per cent in 13- to 14-year olds to 53 per cent among 15- to 16-year olds, with that prevalence highest – 57 per cent – among 17- to 18-year-olds. For 10- to 12-year olds, the most common methods for cyberbullying were chatrooms – 48 per cent – and

email – 41 per cent. The study found chatrooms to be the most common method reported by male participants – 52 per cent – whereas for females cyberbullying was more evenly distributed across emails – 47 per cent, mobile phones – 43 per cent, social networking sites – 46 per cent, and chatrooms – 42 per cent.

Across the sample, the most prevalent forms of cyberbullying were name-calling – 80 per

cent, abusive comments – 67 per cent, and spreading rumours – 66 per cent. The least common was circulating embarrassing or defamatory images of the victim – 19 per cent. While name-calling showed little difference by age or gender, the study found abusive comments to be significantly more common among victims aged 15 to 16 years, and among females. Females also reported

significantly higher levels of being the victims of rumours and having their opinions 'slammed' online.

What about the relationship between cyberbullying and traditional bullying, and victims as bullies? The study found that 51 per cent had also been bullied face-to-face by their cyberbully. The majority – 71 per cent – claimed to know who their bully was, with a further 14 per cent unsure. The study also



DAVELL **LOCKERS**

BUILT TOUGH FOR AUSSIE SCHOOLS

Now Available
clinkill
Anti-Bacterial
Powder Coat
Technology

All Davell lockers are manufactured in Australia so you can be assured of their quality and reliability.

As further testament to the quality all Davell's products are backed by a Lifetime Warranty.

Take your choice from a large colour range including standard, ripple, texture and pearl finishes or to really stand out why not two-tone lockers in your school colours.

If required, and the quantity permits, we can custom make a locker to suit your particular requirements.

DAVELL

For more information visit our website today and download a PDF locker brochure or call our office for further assistance.
Freecall: 1800 069105 | Phone: 02) 9521 4333 | Fax: 02) 9521 6191
Email: davell@davell.com.au | Website: www.davell.com.au

Australian Made - Australian Owned - Australian Proud

Table 3 Extent to which online strategies were considered helpful by participants

	Effectiveness rating				Proportion of those rating some degree of helpfulness
	Unable to get to function	Not helpful	Sort of helpful	Very helpful	
Online		%	%		%
Blocked bully	5.1	18.5	36.9	39.5	76.4
Removed as a 'friend'	10.0	23.7	29.5	36.5	66.0
Changed own avatar /number	2.0	47.5	24.2	26.3	50.5

found that 27 per cent of victims had bullied others, including nine per cent who had used both online and traditional methods, with no significant differences found between genders.

Findings relating to the use of coping strategies and their reported effectiveness are detailed in Tables 1 to 3. Results show that across their lifetime most participants had tried a number of strategies. Table percentages total more than 100 per cent due to multiple responses per question.

The key coping strategies, in order of prevalence, are speaking out; ignoring; avoiding; being positive; and retaliating.

The impact of cyberbullying

Of the 86 per cent who reported some effect, the most common areas of adverse impact include a drop in self-confidence – 78 per cent, reduced self-esteem – 70 per cent, and broken

friendships – 42 per cent. Notably, 35 per cent reported a negative effect on their school grades, 28 per cent on their school attendance and 19 per cent on their family relationships.

Many participants also reported multiple emotional impacts, with 75 per cent reporting feeling sad, including 54 per cent reporting extreme sadness; 72 per cent reporting annoyance, including 52 per cent reporting anger; and 48 per cent reporting feeling afraid, including 29 per cent who reported feeling terrified. Three per cent also reported having suicidal thoughts, while two per cent claimed they engaged in self-harming behaviour as a result of cyberbullying.

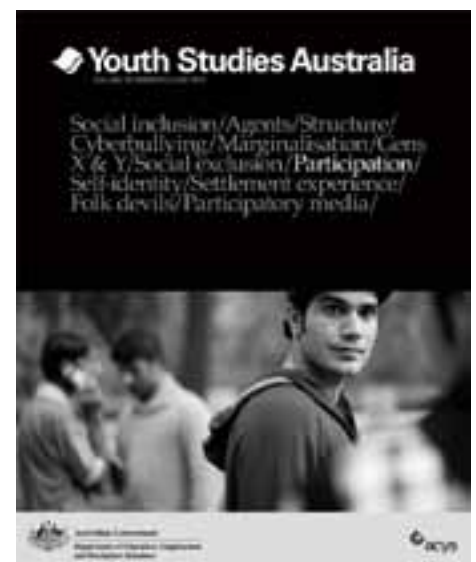
Some conclusions

The finding that cyberbullying most commonly occurs within the transitional years between primary and secondary school is

interesting. While the majority of the sample came from the 10- to 14-years age band, reports from older participants still support this claim. It's a finding that educators in schools would do well to recognise in order to provide support and guidance during these critical years.

Our research further confirms that young people are often not exclusively classifiable as bully or victim. Rather, at various times they may be bullied, be the bully or act as a bystander to bullying. Given such strong inter-relatedness between the various forms of bullying and also the dynamics between the role of bully and victim, school and government interventions need to focus not only on cybersafety but also on the quality of peer relationships.

One of the challenges in providing support is the fact that only a minority of victims



are choosing to speak out to either adults or peers about their experience. This is in spite of the reportedly high efficacy of this strategy and the fact that many claim it is the advice they would give others.

Most young people are familiar with, and active users of, online intervention and blocking tools, and these may offer a fruitful strategy for schools to pursue. Given the importance that social networking sites play in the lives of teenagers, it may be of value for schools to teach specific strategies to help those in this age group to protect themselves when using this medium. ■

Megan Price is a senior researcher at BoysTown. Her research involves issues impacting young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. She is currently involved in a research project regarding help-seeking behaviour among young Indigenous Australians.

John Dalgleish manages the Strategy and Research Team at BoysTown. He is currently the principal investigator in a research project being funded by the Australian Research Council on effective strategies to re-engage marginalised youth with education and employment.

This is a revised version of an article that first appeared in 2010 as 'Cyberbullying: Experiences,

impacts and coping strategies as described by Australian young people' in Youth Studies Australia volume 29, number 1. Reproduced with kind permission.

LINKS

www.acys.info/journal

REFERENCES

BoysTown. (2009). *Inquiry into bullying and young people: submission to the General Purpose Standing Committee No.2*. Available at <http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Prod/parlment/committee.nsf/0/56F6E18CEFA7C854CA2575840017A729>

Campbell, M. (2005). *Cyber bullying: An old problem in a new guise?* *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling*. 15(1): 68-76.

Campbell, M. (2007). *Cyberbullying and young people: Treatment principles not simplistic advice*. QUT Digital Repository. Available at <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/14903>

Joinson, A.N. (2006). *Disinhibition and the internet*. In J. Gackenbach (Ed.), *Psychology and the Internet*. Burlington, MA: Academic Press.

Juvonen, J. & Gross, E. (2008). *Extending the school grounds? Bullying experiences in cyberspace*. *The Journal of School Health*. 7(9): 496-505.

Keith, S. & Martin, M. (2005). *Cyberbullying: Creating a culture of respect in a cyber world*.

Reclaiming Children and Youth. 13(4): 224-28.

Kulig, J., Hall, B. & Grant Kalischuk, R. (2008). *Bullying perspectives among rural youth: Mixed methods approach*. *International Electronic Journal of Rural and Remote Health Research, Education, Practice & Policy*. 8: 1-11.

Li, Q. (2007). *New bottle but old wine: A research of cyberbullying in schools*. *Computers in Human Behavior*. 23(4): 1,777-791.

Patchin, J. & Hinduja, S. (2006). *Bullies move beyond the schoolyard: A preliminary look at cyberbullying*. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*. 4: 148-69.

Rickwood, D., Deane, F., Wilson, C. & Ciarrochi, J. (2005). *Young people's help-seeking for mental health problems*. *Australian e-Journal for the Advancement of Mental Health*. 4(3): 218-51.

Smith, P.K., Mahdavi, J., Carvalho, M., Fisher, S., Russell, S. & Tippett, N. (2008). *Cyberbullying: Its nature and impact in secondary school pupils*. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*. 49(4): 376-85.

Sparling, P. (2004). *Mean machines: New technologies let the neighbourhood bully taunt you anywhere, anytime. But you can fight back*. *Current Health*. 28(8): 18-20.

News

Election 2010

*Australia votes on 21 August, with little separating the major parties when it comes to education policy. **STEVE HOLDEN** reports.*

Debate over education policy in this month's federal election took a back seat to politics while the major parties made claim and counter claim about the \$16.4 billion Building the Education Revolution (BER) program, and debt.

Opposition Leader Tony Abbott targeted Commonwealth government debt, saying the government was borrowing \$100 million a day. Prime Minister Julia Gillard questioned Abbott's 'lean budget' approach, implying that he would cut BER funding and had a schools hit list. 'What he needs to do is tell the students, parents and teachers in each electorate he visits which school projects are on his hit list,' she said.

The Coalition questioned Gillard's management, as Commonwealth Minister for Education, of the BER program with reference to claims of inflated costings and a failure to achieve value for money. Given that Abbott's emphasis on Commonwealth debt limited any expensive policy initiative, the Coalition opted for a policy to require unspent BER funds to go directly to government schools to manage their own projects, and to allow schools to use any savings to fund other needs.

The PM may have had the question of debt in mind when she rustled up a \$220 million promise to expand the Education Tax Refund (ETR) scheme so that school uniforms can be included in tax refund claims. If the Coalition wanted to attack the policy, they'd have to wait. The \$220 million ETR would only apply to items bought in the 2011-12 financial year, with the tax refund to be paid in the 2012-13 financial year.

Labor and the Coalition otherwise occupied the same middle ground on education policy: they both supported the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy and the national curriculum, both of which can trace their origins to the Coalition government of John Howard.

And school funding? Gillard appeared to neutralise this as an issue when she announced the Commonwealth government's review into school funding in April, saying 'no school will lose a dollar of funding...per student.' The Coalition offered a guarantee of the current level of funding in real terms for every school.

According to the Australian Education Union, analysis of the Coalition's funding guarantee by

Dr Jim McMorrow, an honorary associate professor of education at the University of Sydney, indicates that non-government schools would get a \$2.3 billion increase in Commonwealth general recurrent funding between 2012 and 2016, almost four times higher than the increase for government schools.

In higher education, meanwhile, both major parties supported election policies to cut migration and international student numbers, despite the fact, as Universities Australia chief executive Glenn Withers warned, that student numbers are already falling substantially.

Australia is expecting a 30 per cent drop in study visa applications this year as a result of Commonwealth government policy and visa changes, according to Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) estimates.

The \$18 billion-a-year market was already struggling by January, after a slump in student numbers from India, before news of a further softening in June as students from China shifted to the United States and Britain, the two biggest markets for international students.

Independent reports commissioned by the Australian Council for Private Education and Training, using DIAC's estimates, have forecast a loss to the international education sector of \$4.8 billion this year.

IN BRIEF

Senate inquiry

The Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations is conducting two inquiries, one into the Building the Education Revolution (BER) – Primary Schools for the 21st Century (P21) program, and one into the administration and reporting of testing from the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), and the My School website.

The Liberal-dominated Senate Committee P21 inquiry is investigating 'claims...regarding inflated costings and failure to achieve value for money for P21 projects.' In its interim report, tabled in June, the Senate Committee recommended that:

- all quarterly reports on P21 state spending be made available immediately
- remaining P21 program funds go directly to government schools to manage
- state and territory education authorities and block grant authorities be required to publish breakdowns of all individual P21 project costs
- accountability mechanisms for oversight of state expenditure of Commonwealth money be strengthened, and
- further BER funding be delayed until the BER Implementation Taskforce

reports to the Commonwealth Minister for Education Simon Crean in August.

Crean has agreed to make the report available.

The Senate Committee's NAPLAN inquiry triggered 266 submissions from higher education and research organisations, professional and subject associations, unions, education systems and state departments, but predominantly from teachers and principals.

Most of those submissions by teachers and principals focused on the tension between the diagnostic and accountability purposes of NAPLAN, mostly to do with the uses of NAPLAN data for comparative purposes on the My School website operated by Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

According to the ACARA submission, education ministers are considering My School additions, including: school financial data; nationally comparable senior secondary information; national satisfaction survey data; student population indicators; growth data on literacy and numeracy achievement; teaching staff levels of expertise; and the use of student-level data to compute each school's Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage.

Hands off hands-on courses

The Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) – aka the Faculty of the VCA and Music at the University of Melbourne since 2007 – will not merge with the School of Music and will continue to provide hands-on arts studio practice after the University of Melbourne in July suspended plans to introduce the 'Melbourne Model' of generalist standardised undergraduate degrees at the VCA.

Bilingual education

Northern Territory Labor Senator Trish Crossin criticised the NT government's bilingual education policy at a national Indigenous childcare conference in Alice Springs in July. The policy requires that, 'Teaching and learning programs in Northern Territory schools are to be conducted in English for the first four hours of each school day,' but, 'Indigenous languages and culture may be scheduled during afternoon sessions.'

Mediation for WA student

A 13-year-old student in Western Australia who was filmed assaulting a teacher in his 60s was ordered last month to complete three months of supervised mediation in a pilot court conferencing program by Magistrate Felicity Zempilas in the Kalgoorlie Children's Court. Footage of the assault was uploaded on YouTube and broadcast on television.

Reviews



Wolfram Alpha

www.wolframalpha.com
Reviewed by Steve Holden

Wolfram Alpha is a 'computational knowledge engine' that aims, according to the website, 'to make all systematic knowledge immediately computable and accessible to everyone' online.

Unlike, say, Google, where the aim is to provide the broadest, albeit prioritised, possible list to an online search, Wolfram Alpha computes the narrowest possible answer or answers.

The brainchild of Stephen Wolfram, and driven by Wolfram's Mathematica software, Wolfram Alpha draws on 10 trillion or so pieces of data, 50,000 or so algorithms and models, and linguistic capabilities for 1,000 or so domains for the purpose of enabling natural language processing of a query that

might involve even quite vague linguistic input.

According to the website, 'Our goal is to build on the achievements of science and other systematisations of knowledge to provide a single source that can be relied on by everyone for definitive answers to factual queries.'

Start thinking of definitive answers to factual queries and you'll probably think about mathematical procedures and scientific formulae, but Wolfram Alpha also offers definitive answers to factual queries like 'Where is Melbourne?' Did you know there's one in Florida? A Wolfram Alpha search will deliver very basic information – the more basic, the more likely the search will offer links to Wikipedia and the Notable Names Database.

Wolfram Alpha's natural language processing makes sense of a question like 'How old is a dog?' Answer: 15 to 20 years. Ask Google the question and your first page results will offer a dog years calculator, how to love your dog, how old is too old for a dog to be having puppies, and reviews and information about *Old Dogs*, a 2009 movie with Robin Williams and John Travolta. It stinks, apparently.

Will Wolfram Alpha dent Google's 65 per cent share, Yahoo's 14 per cent or Bing's 13 per cent of searches? Probably not.



EDNA Groups

www.groups.edna.edu.au
Reviewed by Steve Holden

Web 2.0 or social networking tools – think Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and, for a while there, MySpace – are hugely useful or dangerous new communication tools, depending on your point of view. We've seen headlines about teachers and students being targeted and possibly bullied by other students, and even headlines about teachers posting 'a series of raunchy photos' on Facebook – because their Facebook 'friends' included journalists.

One of the balancing acts for those who create social networking tools is to ensure security and privacy for their users while also maximising the capacity for the viral, word-of-mouth spread of things.

EDNA Groups is a free service funded by the Commonwealth, state and territory governments

through their education departments, and operated by the Education Network Australia (EDNA) that aims to help Australian educators to communicate, share resources and collaborate. It began life as the Sandpit, which in 2009 was rolled into EDNA Groups.

EDNA includes other services, providing an education news digest with links, email newsletters, e-learning podcasts, searchable conferences and events, links to lots of educational resources online and tech tools, but the real value is in the way EDNA Groups enables forums and chat; group polling; dialogue to enable users to communicate in pairs; quiz, survey and wiki tools; and text and web pages, web links and file sharing.

Educators can use it to create an online group for their own purposes. You might create a group for your school staff, for example, or for your department or learning area in your school, or to collaborate as an existing network of educators addressing, say, inclusive learning, or to generate a new network of educators to address, say, students with maths difficulties.

The pages are secured by a registration process – username and password – with ‘enrolment keys’ for guests, so you’ve got a realistic chance of knowing who your friends really are.



My Place

www.abc.net.au/abc3/myplace
 and www.myplace.edu.au
 Reviewed by Steve Holden

My Place, the children’s picture book written by Nadia Wheatley and illustrated by Donna Rawlins to celebrate Australia’s bicentenary in 1988, presented the stories of 20 children, decade by decade since 1788. You might’ve seen the first series of the television adaptation this year.

The television adaptation was accompanied by a *My Place* website, created and produced by Blue Rocket Productions, which enables students to visit various places to discover things about the central characters from each of the television episodes and the period in which they lived. They can also play games like ‘Mystery object,’ a lot like

the game in ABC television’s *The Collectors*, and ‘Odd item out,’ which reminds me of the round in Ten’s *Talkin’ ‘Bout Your Generation* where team members ransack a period set to identify anachronistic items.

The site design is clean, and I like the way images are layered as you visit the bedroom, kitchen or backyard, but it’s difficult to navigate backwards.

There’s also ‘*My Place for Teachers*,’ produced by the Australian Children’s Television Foundation in partnership with The Le@rning Federation of Education Services Australia.

The formula here is to provide teaching activities related to clips and stills, with activities and activity sheets in Word or PDF that are aligned with the draft national curriculum for English and history.

A search function of tagged content usefully collects possible resources together for easy access and use.

The best part of ‘*My Place for Teachers*,’ though, is the ‘Our Place’ forum, basically an online bulletin board that enables teachers to share how they’ve used *My Place* in their teaching and learning programs, and share resources. A lot of the links redirect through The Le@rning Federation portal. You’ll need to log in.

Steve Holden is Editor-in-Chief – Magazines, at ACER Press.

Diary

20 AUGUST

Children's Book of the Year Awards
Find out the winners and honour books in this year's awards.
website <http://cbca.org.au/awards.htm>

20-22 AUGUST

40 Hour Famine

Raise awareness, and funds, to help tackle the causes of poverty by inviting your students to participate in World Vision's 40 Hour Famine.
website www.worldvision.com.au/40hourfamine

22-24 AUGUST

ELH and SchoolTech Conference

ELH is the premier professional development conference tailored to challenge, inspire and motivate principals, heads of curriculum, teachers and professional development coordinators.
place Mantra Erskine Beach Resort, Lorne, Victoria
phone 1300 36 1988
email conferences@compu-telec.com.au
website www.compu-telec.com.au/elh2010

26-28 AUGUST

Professional Development Network 14th Annual School Leaders' Conference – Lead: Make a Difference

place Conrad Jupiters, Gold Coast
phone 07 3735 5626

email d.clark@griffith.edu.au
website www.griffith.edu.au/conference

29 AUGUST-4 SEPTEMBER

National Literacy & Numeracy Week

website www.deewr.gov.au/nlnw

3-4 SEPTEMBER

Future Directions in Literacy Conference

place University of Sydney
contact Nina Goodwin
email nina.goodwin@sydney.edu.au
phone 02 9351 6329
website http://sydney.edu.au/education_social_work/professional_learning/teachers/2010/future_directions_literacy.shtml

6 SEPTEMBER

The Fifth International Middle Years of Schooling Conference: Our worlds connecting in the middle

Find out what it means to be an effective middle years educator in the 21st century – optional school tours for delegates on 7 September.

place Adelaide Convention Centre
phone 0882746048
email middleschool2010@sapmea.asn.au
website <http://sapmea.asn.au/conventions/middleschool2010>

7-8 & 9-10 SEPTEMBER

Hawker Brownlow Professional Learning Solutions Two-Day Summit on Differentiation

Learn practical strategies for planning and delivering differentiated instruction to meet the individual needs of diverse students.

place 7 & 8 September, Hemisphere Conference Centre, Melbourne; and 9 & 10 September, Diana Plaza Hotel, Brisbane
phone 03 8558 2456
email info@hbpls.com.au
website www.hbpls.com.au

11-12 SEPTEMBER

Queensland Education Resources Expo

The event will showcase the latest resources so that all education professionals from all levels and institutions can test and purchase resources and services, and discover innovative ideas.

place Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre, South Bank
contact Hedy van Hofwegen
phone 07 5535 2022
email interchange@onthenet.com.au
website www.edresourcesexpo.com.au

Global Emerging Educational Leaders Summit 27th – 28th of September 2010

Do you have an outstanding emerging leader in your school? Are you mentoring an aspiring principal? Now is your opportunity to invest in their development. ACEL will host the first Global Emerging Educational Leaders Summit.

The Emerging Leaders Summit is an investment in the future of educational change. **Who will you send?**

For further information, please visit www.acel.org.au/conference

13 SEPTEMBER-12 NOVEMBER

Rock and Water

The University of Newcastle Family Action Centre and Gadaku Institute offer Rock and Water three-day workshops presented by Freerk Ykema and master instructors in all states and New Zealand. All workshop dates and locations are on the website.

[website](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/rockandwater) www.newcastle.edu.au/rockandwater

21-24 SEPTEMBER

Australian Primary Principals Association National Conference: Balancing Primary Leadership

This year's conference focuses on balancing the roles of management, leadership and health, and wellbeing.

[place](#) Burswood Entertainment Complex, Perth

[website](http://www.appa.asn.au/index.php/conferences/2010-perth) www.appa.asn.au/index.php/conferences/2010-perth

27-28 SEPTEMBER

Curriculum Symposium: The new Australian Curriculum – the profession prepares

Hosted by the Australian Curriculum Studies Association, the symposium will address the national curriculum in terms of conceptual frameworks, curriculum design, implementation and challenges. Places are limited to 150 delegates.

[place](#) Sydney Hilton
[website](https://membership.acsa.edu.au/events/pages/registration.asp) https://membership.acsa.edu.au/events/pages/registration.asp

29 SEPTEMBER-1 OCTOBER

Australian Council for Educational Leaders 2010 International Conference: Hosting and Harvesting

[place](#) Sydney Convention Centre
[phone](tel:1800680559) 1800 680 559

[email](mailto:conference@acel.org.au) conference@acel.org.au

[website](http://www.acel.org.au/conference) www.acel.org.au/conference

10-12 OCTOBER

National Boys' Education Conference: Boosting boys' achievements

Drs Michael Gurian, Michael Carr-Gregg, Adam Cox and Prof Jeffrey Wilhelm as well as Kevin Sheedy and Tim Hawkes kick off this K-12 conference with a focus on boosting boys' motivation to learn, the implications of neuroscience on boys' engagement in learning, innovative uses of social media in boys' learning, best-practice demonstration lessons and more.

[place](#) The King's School, Parramatta
[website](http://www.kings.edu.au/boysed) www.kings.edu.au/boysed

12-28 OCTOBER

DRUMBEAT national workshop tours

Throughout October, the University of Newcastle Family Action Centre and Holyoake

Institute, WA, offer DRUMBEAT (Discovering Relationships Using Music Beliefs Emotions Attitudes Thoughts) workshops in QLD and NSW. All workshop dates and locations are on the website.

[website](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/drumbeat) www.newcastle.edu.au/drumbeat

22 OCTOBER

Drawing the Lines

The National Museum of Australia invites students from Years 4 through 12 to enter its 'Drawing the Lines' political cartooning competition for students in Years 4 to 6; Years 7 to 9; and Years 10 to 12. Enter online or by mail. Entries close 22 October.

[website](http://nma.gov.au/education/events_and_activities/drawing_the_lines_2010) http://nma.gov.au/education/events_and_activities/drawing_the_lines_2010

29 OCTOBER

World Teachers' Day

Inaugurated in 1994 by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, World Teachers' Day is as good a day as any to acknowledge the efforts of your colleagues.

[websites](#)

www.qct.edu.au/wtd/

<http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/wtd10/>

2010 Conference

HOSTING AND HARVESTING

Creating the change we wish to see in the world

Sydney Convention Centre

29th - 30th September, 1st October 2010

COMMONWEALTH COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT AND THE AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

www.acel.org.au/conference

LOUSY STUDENTS

*We all know kids take things to school and lose them, but it's the things they bring home that can be the real worry, as **WENDY HARMER** explains.*

I'll admit to being mortified when the first note came home from Kindy: 'We have noticed that a child in this class has head lice – *Pediculus humanus capitis*.'

Obviously the scientific name had been included in the note to make me see that this was a serious medical problem. Instead, because the name was written in Latin, I realised that nits must have infested Kindy way back in Roman times and I didn't feel so bad.

(In fact, head lice were infesting *Homo erectus* 1.8 million years ago. I wonder if teachers back then sent notes home chiselled into a woolly mammoth bone with a simple stone tool?)

Anyway, we've only been battling our head lice for about six years. I'm positive the kids have lice that can trace their family tree to that first day the youngest went off to school. And given that we've never been entirely nit-free, that means ours are about 115th generation.

The lice at our place are more resilient than the Taliban in Afghanistan. They've had more chemicals dumped on them than the Viet Cong. They're harder to get out than Ricky Ponting when he's snicked it.

It seems to me that unless every child rids themselves of nits at precisely the same time,

these notes are utterly futile. We parents can't be expected to manage that unless we all volunteer to meet at some pre-arranged destination for a mass hair conditioner and comb-in.

Perhaps it could be done on school concert night just before we sing the national anthem.

'Our school is girt by nits...'

Has anyone investigated the idea of a lice-dip at the school gates? Sending the kids down a chute into a vat of chemicals, just like they do with sheep at the farm? Just thinking.

In the meantime, I like to trawl the websites for the latest cures:

- Wash the hair with vinegar. Of course this doesn't kill the nits, it just reeks and keeps all the other kids with even more nits away from your kids. You can also get the same effect with using 'Fantasy,' the latest perfume from Britney Spears.
- Listerine mouthwash. This sounds good, and if the family is running late for the school run, you can get Dad just to gargle and spit on the kids' heads.
- Then there are the natural remedies: mayonnaise, orange juice, coconut oil, lemon juice and butter – all rubbed into the

head. There's also a rumour that you can use the blow dryer to kill them with heat. In fact if you do all that, and throw in a cup of sugar and two eggs, you can make a head lice soufflé. Sounds like something Jamie Oliver would serve on that school dinners program – 'and just 93p a serve. Wicked!'

My favourite method is to take off the top layers of the kid's scalps with a sharp metal comb while swearing at them. Again, it doesn't get rid of the nits, but it serves the kids right for having them and makes me feel better – because, let me tell you, there are fewer things more embarrassing than a professional hair and makeup lady finding nits in your hair on a *Women's Weekly* photo shoot.

Don't ask me how I know that. I just do. ■

Wendy Harmer is one of Australia's best known humourists and authors, and a regular columnist for *Inside Teaching*.



- 1 What skills can children as young as six months be taught using Japanese teaching methods, according to the Shichida centre in Melbourne?
- 2 Approximately what percentage of children from non-English-speaking backgrounds who sat selective high school entry tests in New South Wales this year was successful?
- 3 Approximately what percentage of students from families that speak English at home was successful?
- 4 What is it that social demographer Mark McCrindle says would 'cause some pain' to the multi-billion dollar international education sector?
- 5 What should be compulsory in school curriculum for children as young as 12?
- 6 What should be embedded in all subjects as well as taught as a stand-alone subject in the new national curriculum, according to Primary Industries Education Foundation Chair Cameron Archer?
- 7 According to Archer, the curriculum has been hijacked by an emphasis on what?
- 8 A new strategy to improve student literacy and numeracy in the Northern Territory offers what to students who complete Year 12?
- 9 Year 10 students at Lucas Heights Community School in Sydney's Sutherland Shire are



being offered work experience doing what and where?

10 A shock-style advertising campaign with the tagline, 'If you don't go to school you will be poor and die early' has been proposed in which Australian state or territory?

11 Other than shock-style ad campaigns, some young people are more than four times more

anxious and depressed than others their age, according to a study published in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*: why?

12 Teenagers' moods, energy levels and health would improve if school classes started at what time, according to University of South Australia Professor Timothy Olds?

ANSWERS: 1. Photographic recall, speed reading, high-speed computation, perfect musical pitch, language acquisition, intuition and empathy; 2. 40, according to the *Sydney Morning Herald*; 3. 20; 4. Tony Abbott's proposal to reduce net overseas migration to Australia from 300,000 to 170,000 people per year; 5. driver education, according to four-time Bathurst winner Allan Moffat; 6. agricultural studies; 7. literacy and numeracy; 8. a guaranteed job in the local area; 9. construction work on a Building the Education Revolution project in their own school; 10. NT, according to a report from the NT Coordinator General for Remote Services Bob Beadman; 11. they're studying at university; 12. 10am.