



Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of New South Wales

e-Bulletin

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THIS WEEK'S THOUGHT – Di Giblin

League tables and the recent legislation

There has been much in the media in regard transparency over school reporting and league tables.

Under the legislation, passed through state parliament last week, common test results including NAPLAN and the HSC will be available on Federal Education Minister Julia Gillard's website. In NSW this data and much more information has been available for many years on each school's website as part of their annual report and will continue to be.

The Greens, with support of the opposition and some independents, were successful in moving an amendment which prevents the compilation and publishing of simplistic league tables from this data. You can view the amendment: <http://www.pandc.org.au/files/uploads/amendment.pdf>

The P&C Federation applauds this amendment. Simplistic league tables that compare schools based on test results mislead parents, undermine quality education and stigmatise schools that serve disadvantaged communities. Parents need open, frank and continual communication with schools on a regular basis to provide them with a clearer picture than a table produced out of one day of testing. To know what's happening in education and to be in touch with your child's progress and school performance you need to be in partnership with your school.

Cyber bullying and sexting

A topic on the forefront of all parents' minds and something we need to inform ourselves about to support our kids and other parents. The Department of Education and Training have on their website some information which may be of support:

<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/news/technology/cybersafety/yr2009/sextingpromo.mp3>

Transcript

http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/news/technology/cybersafety/yr2009/sexting_t.php

Safe Sexting – No such thing

<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/news/technology/cybersafety/yr2009/sextingfacts.pdf>

This is also a valuable publication you should check it regularly:

Click

<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/news/technology/index.php>

AUSTRALIAN TERTIARY ADMISSION RANK (ATAR)

In 2009, the Universities Admissions Index (UAI) for NSW and ACT Year 12 students is changing to the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR).

Students should not be worried about any of the changes as they will have no impact on their current studies or choice of university courses for 2010.

The number given to the maximum rank in NSW and the ACT will now be an ATAR of 99.95, as opposed to a UAI of 100. This means NSW and ACT students will now be in line with their interstate peers, where the top rank is 99.95. Achieving an ATAR of 99.95 is the same as achieving a UAI of 100 – a student receiving 99.95 is in the top ranked group of students.

The ATAR will indicate a student's position in relation to the Year 7 students they began high school with. These changes have been introduced to achieve national consistency in the name and reporting of selection ranks. All states (except Queensland) will be introducing the name ATAR for their selection ranks over the next two years.

For more information please visit: <http://www.uac.edu.au/atar/index.shtml>

EDUCATION TAX REFUND – DON'T FORGET TO CLAIM

How do I claim the Education Tax Refund?

- In your tax return.
- If you don't lodge a tax return, claim on a separate form or over the phone.
- If you use a tax agent, make sure you ask them to claim for you.

The Education Tax Refund lets you claim up to 50% of eligible education expenses for school children. If you are eligible, you can get back up to \$375 for each primary student and up to \$750 for each secondary student.

You can claim things like text books, stationery and even internet costs.

If you receive Family Tax Benefit Part A for a child at primary or secondary school, you will be eligible. Some other people are eligible too, to find out more about this and other information such as what you can and can't claim go to australia.gov.au/educationtaxrefund or call the Tax Office on 13 28 61.

! Remember, you need to keep all receipts for expenses you claim.

In addition, the Tax Office has prepared, specifically for schools, some frequently asked questions and answers. These questions and answers can be found on the Tax Office website by following the link below.

<http://ato.gov.au/individuals/content.asp?doc=/content/00192105.htm>

Annual Conference 2009

The Federation's Annual Conference will be held at Penrith Panthers, Mulgoa Road, Penrith on July 31, August 1 and 2. P&C Associations across the state are encouraged to send up to three delegates to this conference.

Details and Notice of Intention to attend have been mailed to all the P&C Secretaries in NSW. Details are also up on our website: <http://www.pandc.org.au/annual-conference.seo>.

Take care
Di Giblin 2009.

LOCAL NEWS

BAN ON SCHOOLS STATISTICS SLAMMED

Teachers' unions and school principals will be able to line their pockets under new big brother laws in NSW banning the publication of statistics ranking the state's schools, which have been condemned by legal experts and civil libertarians. And in an embarrassing development for NSW Opposition Leader Barry O'Farrell, who supports the ban, the new laws were yesterday denounced as inconsistent with a free society by former federal Liberal leader Brendan Nelson. The Greens and the Coalition joined forces in the upper house last week to ban the publication of "league tables", backed by fines of up to \$5000 for individuals and \$55,000 for organisations, such as newspapers. The Australian has learned that, under existing NSW laws allowing private prosecutions, the proceeds of any fine imposed for compiling and publishing comparisons would be shared by the person or organisation that brought the court action. NSW Education Minister Verity Firth confirmed the amendment introduced by the NSW Greens falls under the ambit of existing laws allowing for private prosecutions, which means the court can award up to half of any fine imposed to the prosecuting party, on top of legal costs. The Greens' amendment was made to a bill introduced by the Labor government to the state's Education Act, to allow the state to pass on student scores to the commonwealth for the national school reporting regime as part of a condition for federal funding. The government has avoided the ranking of schools by test scores in NSW after the publication in Sydney's Daily Telegraph in 1997 of the dismal HSC results of a western Sydney high school. The government was forced to allow the amended bill to pass because the changes are linked to about \$4.8 billion in federal funding for NSW.

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25704861-601,00.html>

LAPTOP OF LEARNING IN LUXURY

Student absenteeism is to plummet in high schools as wayward pupils are lured back to class by free laptops. The first batch of laptops was delivered to teachers yesterday and will be rolled out to thousands of students across the state from next term.

Principals believe laptops will help teachers boost the performance of slow learners and lift attendance. Education Minister Verity Firth said 9500 wireless laptops were being given to Year 9 teachers in public schools. "By July 6 about one third of all teachers at NSW public high schools will have the device," Ms Firth said. The first 18 laptops were delivered to Sydney Secondary College, Balmain Campus, yesterday. Teachers said the computers - part of the Rudd Government's Education Revolution - were one of the biggest changes in teaching in years. The Balmain Campus English head Cassandra Tyrell said the laptops would change the way teachers delivered information to students. "It does not necessarily mean that we will spend any less time working with textbooks," she said.

"It will change how the students access their work and what they do with the information. They will still have to write with pen and paper - that's important - but they will also be broadening their skill base."

Students see the lightweight portable computers as a seachange.

"There will be more computers than teachers," student Jack Soward said.

Principal Lee Wright said yesterday that students "can even sit outside the classroom at lunchtime and use these laptops because of the wireless facility".

"The machines are helping to engage the students in their learning."

From 2010 to 2012 every Year 9 student starting at a NSW public school will receive a laptop under the \$386 million program.

<http://www.news.com.au/dailytelegraph/story/0,22049,25686611-5001021,00.html>

HOW NATHAN REES RIPPED OFF PRIMARY STUDENTS

Millions of dollars earmarked for primary school students have been seized by the Rees Government to pay for a teachers' pay rise.

Principals were shocked to learn yesterday that funding approved by the Rudd Government for primary students had been hijacked because of a shortfall in covering the pay rise.

In December last year the Commonwealth agreed to boost funding for government primary students to the same level as high school pupils. The decision should have delivered an extra \$100 per student for underfunded primary students.

But the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) has indicated it will only pass on half the money - \$50 per student.

DET general manager Ken Dixon told principals the federal money was needed to cover a shortfall in the salary budget.

"Part of the extra funding is being used towards the cost of the pay rise for primary school teachers which will cost in the order of \$450 million per annum. While almost all of this funding is provided by the budget and by a range of trade-offs, there is a small residue which still needs to be funded," Mr Dixon said in an email.

Primary Principals' Association president Geoff Scott said he was surprised the pay rise had not been fully budgeted.

"We believe the full \$100 was intended (by the Federal Government) to be spent on primary students," Mr Scott said.

For a school such as Blacktown South in Sydney's west the extra \$50 per student represents about \$40,000 for interactive whiteboards and stationery.

<http://www.news.com.au/dailytelegraph/story/0,27574,25686409-5006009,00.html>

ONLINE COURSES FOR SCHOOL DROP OUTS

State education departments are considering moves for a national pilot program of online courses for high-school dropouts, qualifying teenagers for tertiary education and improving their job chances through internet study based on a successful British format.

Jean Johnson, a former high school teacher, developed the notschool.net program, which is in its ninth year in Britain and has versions in Ireland and Detroit. This week, she is meeting with representatives from the education departments of NSW, Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia and the ACT to discuss the possibility of similar online programs to keep dropouts learning. "There are lots and lots of kids out of school who need to do something different," Ms Johnson said. "It might not be face-to-face intervention, but there's a huge amount of intervention from qualified, skilled teachery people, actually making sure the kids do log on and do some work. "They come out with what I would call 'hard currency' for college and employment." Teenagers using the British program are provided with a computer and internet access, funded by the money their local school would have otherwise received for their attendance. They can earn credits towards a matriculation certificate, and keep the computer for further learning.

Greg Black, chief executive of Education.au, an education not-for-profit IT agency, is pushing for a national pilot program. "I think the time is right to seriously consider it here," he said. "I would love to think that we could have something up and going sometime in 2010." Mr Black said the program would have to be designed to complement existing programs targeting high-school dropouts. Ms Johnson said literacy and numeracy were paramount to the courses offered in Britain, but a broad curriculum was offered. "We can map literacy developing pretty quickly once kids start to enjoy what they are doing," she said. "You've got to build a welcoming environment where they want to be and where they've got friends, and then you will keep them. Otherwise, they will vote with their feet and go; they will log off and you won't see them again." Ms Johnson said the program was suitable for any child with enough English to know how to send a text, and raised the possibility of using it to improve Aboriginal education rates. "I wouldn't say it was out of their reach at all," she said.

<http://www.australianit.news.com.au/story/0,24897,25653991-15306,00.html>

FUN AND SAFETY MESSAGE MIXED FOR STUDENTS BENEFIT

Sallywag the Scarecrow and Country Women's Association of NSW teamed up to deliver a special message to the children of Canowindra Preschool and St Edwards school recently.

Sallywag is part of a touring educational show about farm safety specifically aimed at preschool and early primary aged children.

The Safety Around Farms Education program was developed by two preschool teachers from North East Victoria, Vicki Connell and Treena Costin who plays Sallywag Scarecrow. The show incorporates role play, music, puppetry, movement and humour to reach children with messages about farm safety. "The family farm is both a home and a hazard, especially for children," Vicki said. "One child dies on average every 15 days in Australia through a farm related incident. One third of these are visitors to farms with dams and ATV's accounting for the majority of the fatalities.

"Safety messages need to be in a different 'language' for children because they see the world differently to adults, and most certainly from a different height," Vicki said.

This year John Deere became a major partner and sponsor so that Vicki and Treena could expand their program into NSW. John Deere have provided the funds for 10 Farm Safety Resource kits to be distributed throughout NSW for preschool and early childhood teachers to use in teaching children about farm safety. The NSW Country Women's Association very kindly donated funds toward the cost of the show.

"Most of the children who attend Preschool live on or visit farms on a regular basis. We hope the messages learnt by the children at the Farm Safety Show help to keep them safe and help curb accidents on farms. We also thank CWA for proving funding to such an important area of education for rural children." stated Lana Brown the Pre-school Director.

<http://www.canowindranews.com.au/news/local/news/general/fun-and-safety-message-mixed-for-students-benefit/1549356.aspx>

SCHOOLS FORCED TO SPEND MORE: PRINCIPALS

Hundreds of complaints have been made by public school principals about the way the New South Wales Government requires schools to order products and services.

The Public Schools Principals Forum says more than 500 principals responded to its survey about the Education Department's centralisation of the procurement process.

It says 85 per cent of principals expressed "extreme concern" about the process.

The Forum's deputy chairman Brian Chudleigh says schools can often buy items cheaply locally - but are forced purchase elsewhere.

"One from the Griffith area I think, they were ordering from some school activity, they needed cheese, they needed ice creams," he said.

"They came in from three different sources, one by truck, another by train - ludicrous."

The Education Department says the process is designed to provide discounted goods and services to schools, and has saved some \$ 31 million this financial year.

The department's Director-General Michael Coutts-Trotter admits there have been "hiccups" with the process. But schools are not forced to use the system.

"I'm interested to get a copy of the survey, because our simple rule of thumb is that if you pay more using one of our contracts, then you don't have to use our contracts," he said.

"They need to just demonstrate to us that they can get a better price locally."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/06/22/2604562.htm>

UPCOMING EVENTS

AWARD NOMINATIONS

Principal Award - Applications must be received at Locked Bag 40, Granville, 2142 BY 1 JULY 2009 please visit our website for nomination forms and more information:

<http://www.pandc.org.au/annual-conference.seo>

Environment Award – recognizing an outstanding project that has achieved an improvement or enhancement to a local school environment. The project must demonstrate a sustained cultural change within the school community and enhance the teaching of environmental issues as part of the current school curriculum.

Technology Award – recognizing an outstanding project that incorporates and promotes the use of technology within schools. The project must support increased student access to technology and promote improvements in student technological literacy.

Community Achievement Award – recognizing the achievements of an individual or group of individuals that have enhanced the standing of the P&C Association within their community. These achievements can be demonstrated through the development of the capacity of the P&C Association and enhanced the operational capacity of the P&C to serve its local school community.

P&C Member of the Year – recognizing the achievements of an individual who has a proven commitment to the aims and objectives of their P&C Association and who reflects the values embedded within the Public Education system. This award will recognize an individual from both a Secondary and Primary school setting.

PLEASE NOTE THAT NOMINATIONS CLOSE ON 17 JULY 2009. Please visit our website for nomination forms and more information: <http://www.pandc.org.au/annual-conference.seo>

ANTI-POVERTY WEEK – HELP FIGHT POVERTY AND HARDSHIP 11 – 17 OCTOBER 2009

Poverty and severe hardship affect more than a million Australians. Around the world more than a billion people are desperately poor. Participate by:

- Organising a display, stall or award
- A workshop, lecture or forum
- A fundraiser, fact sheet or petition.

For more information please visit www.antipovertyweek.org.au

POSITIVE PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM

The *Positive Partnerships* program is a series of free workshops which build partnerships between families living with autism and their school so these students' school years are as productive as possible. Teachers too – in all states - are invited to attend professional development programs as part of the Federal Government's *Helping children with autism* initiative. The program is being run nationally by a consortium - Australian Autism Education & Training Consortium (AAETC) – which competitively won the \$11.3 million contract last year. The workshops began in February and will continue until November. We have had some amazing feedback from the workshops so far. Many parents saying they now feel less isolated and more equipped to cope with the challenges autism presents. There was a lovely story in Melbourne where three parents met each other at the workshop and discovered that their children were at the same school! Since the workshop they have formed their own support group which has made a tremendous impact on their lives.

For information, dates, venues and to register a few weeks ahead of dates, see www.autismtraining.com.au Please call 1300 881 971 with other queries.

HELP CANCER COUNCIL AND YOUR FAMILY, ALL AT NO COST!

Cancer Council NSW would like to extend the invitation to more parents and carers of primary school children in the Hunter region to participate in a groundbreaking new trial aimed at

increasing consumption of fruit and vegetables. Free 'Fruit 'n' Veg \$ense' sessions will continue to be offered in the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie areas during School Term 3, 2009, addressing issues such as fussy eaters, stretching your food dollar further, menu modification and planning. Sessions are free to attend but you must enrol by July 10th to be included. You will receive handy resources and new recipe ideas to use at home. The trial requires you to complete two short questionnaires and attend one session. To enrol and participate, contact the Cancer Council (Hunter) Research Hotline on: 4923 0710 leaving your name, postcode & best contact phone number. Alternatively send an email to: eatittobeatit@nswcc.org.au. We will call you back to confirm your place in the session.

YOUTH ROAD AND TRAUMA FORUM

Youth and Road Trauma Forum Westmead Hospital and NRMA Motoring & Services holds a Youth & Road Trauma Forum for students in Years 10 to 12, to reduce the risk of severe injury and death as a result of potentially preventable road crashes. The event will be held at Acer Arena in Homebush Olympic Park on 18th 19th and 20th August 2009. For bookings or more information on the forum can be found on our website www.australiayouthandroadtraumaforum.org.

SCHOOLS FIRST

Schools First is a fantastic new initiative that is about improving outcomes for young people. At its heart, Schools First is about bringing together students, teachers, parents and community members, to support each other and help improve student outcomes.

With a prize pool of \$5 million every year for three years, Schools First is a national awards program that provides:

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

In support of the awards and their objective, Schools First will also:

- Provide regional workshops to support schools and communities to form or strengthen partnerships and prepare submissions for an award;
- Showcase successful partnerships as a means of inspiring other school communities; and
- Assist in developing a "knowledge bank" of resources on which school communities can draw.

And it's open to all Australian primary and secondary schools, whether they're public or private, special needs, religious or independent. There are over 60 regional awards, eight State/Territory awards, and one national winner. Register for workshops across the country at <http://www.schoolsfirst.edu.au/>

MS READATHON CLICK, FLICK & COLLECT

The 2009 MS Readathon will be celebrating 30 years of encouraging children to have fun reading to change the lives of Australians living with multiple sclerosis (MS). Each year the MS Readathon inspires children to help people living with MS by collecting sponsorship from family and friends for the books they read for 30 days in the month of Jun, July or August. It's free for

children to register online at www.msreadathon.org.au. Schools, volunteers and participants are needed NOW! For more information, contact the NSW on 02) 9468 8302.

FAQS: School Maintenance and approved Contractors

Q: Can P&C Associations provide funding for schools maintenance?

A: P&C Associations often provide funding for the installation of covered outdoor learning areas (COLA) etc and maintenance and/or upgrade of school canteens. P&C Associations and Principals may think they can get work done more cheaply and save the school some hard earned fund by engaging a local handyman or local contractor rather than using those approved by the Department of Education and Training.

Q: What are some issues that can arise when engaging an unapproved contractor?

While the motivation may be good, using an unapproved contractor is extremely risky – both for the Principal personally and for the Department. Contractors approved by DET have been checked for:

- Child protection
- Safe working methods
- Worker's compensation insurance coverage
- Public Risk Liability insurance coverage
- Appropriate License and/or qualification to undertake the work

Q: What is the role of the principal when engaging in school maintenance and approved contractors?

School Principals take on specific responsibilities under legislation when they engage a contractor outside of the Asset Maintenance Contractor. For example, they would be regarded as the 'site controller' under OH&S legislations, and so would be personally responsible for safe working practices on site.

The Federation of Parents and Citizens Association would like to thank the following sponsors for their ongoing support of Parents and citizens and public education in NSW.

