

Call To Give More Power To Schools

A new book due for release this month, 'Our School Our Future', by Professor Brian Caldwell and David Loader, explains that state school leaders and staff are the ones responsible for school success – but warn it cannot be achieved without the freedom to explore new ideas.

Professor Caldwell says strategic planning and budget management in schools is held back by a centralised bureaucracy.

He declared "the best schools are those that are able to do some longer term planning and show innovation", but this was only successful when school communities dictated their direction and resources instead of handing the decisions over to the department.

Professor Caldwell claimed the current system was a mismanagement of resources and "any additional funds available through GST growth should have gone directly to schools and education programs."

Opposition education spokesman David Pisoni believes there have been some absolute failures of the centralised system in SA.

"In Government schools principals are bogged down with reporting to the head office, so it is important that the reporting process is simplified or localised so principals can concentrate on educational outcomes."

Details

Pressure For Road Safety Lessons

After a horrific year so far on SA roads, there is mounting pressure on the State Government to make road safety education compulsory.

As reported in the Term 2 edition of 'School Post', the Motor Accident Commission (MAC) has commissioned the University of Adelaide's Centre for Automotive Safety Research to investigate how schools across the country and worldwide conduct road safety education.

Although in its early stages, the research, a first for SA, will determine whether the MAC develops its own road safety curriculum for the state's students.

Despite the State Government committing to expanding the road awareness and accident program to 90% of schools, a specific time frame has not been set.

Road safety education may also be considered as part of the new national curriculum.

A spokesman for ACARA has said "consideration of safe behaviour on roads and elsewhere may be considered as part of the health and physical education curriculum."

Full Story

I-Pad Could Save Parents Money

Tax time is soon upon us, and last year saw the introduction of the Government's education tax refund – entitling parents to a 50% refund on a range of expenses for their child's education.

The ATO has revealed the newly released iPad, and equivalent e-readers, or tablets, are deemed to be equivalent to a laptop, and will attract a 50% education rebate.

Details

Children's Data To Be Tracked From Birth

Education Minister Jay Weatherill has presented a new data-sharing system to the nation's education ministers in the hope it will be picked up nationally.

The new system will track every SA child from birth to 8 years old to help measure their health and education progress. Information will be collated from peri-natal statistics, emergency department records, school census data, and health and dental records.

Mr Weatherill said "SA's new system of data linkage will track individual children over time to get a more complete picture of all children and which ones need particular support for their future education".

Children will not be named but instead be known by a 'unique identifier'.

To develop more targeted policies and programs to support children in need, only public policy makers and researchers will have access to the data.

More

Changes To NAPLAN

From next year, the writing module of the NAPLAN tests will change.

Under new test guidelines, students will need to form and write an argument/persuasive piece instead of a straight-forward story or narrative.

For example: a student may be asked whether reading books or watching television is better and then be required to present their opinion on the topic.

Full Story

Principals Call For NAPLAN Guidelines

The Australian Primary Principals Association has called for strict guidelines for the preparation and conduct of NAPLAN tests – stating this year's controversy and pressure has led to 'unethical' and 'perverse' effects in the classrooms.

The Association has presented a report to the Federal Government on the use and reporting of NAPLAN, which included a bid for an independent ombudsman.

The report listed 10 examples of negative effects such as:

- Principals' feeling their job was threatened.
- Schools focusing attention on students expected to show the most improvement if given extra assistance.
- Teachers requesting a change of class next year to avoid teaching students who would be sitting the tests.

Read the report



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The Reporting and Use of NAPLAN

APPA supports the use of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) because the test results provide schools with standardised diagnostic information about the performance of students. However, problems can arise from using national tests when the stakes are high, that is, where serious consequences for system officials, principals and teachers hinge on the results.

APPA has developed the following principles to ensure that the reporting and use of NAPLAN has a beneficial impact on primary education and that the potential negative effects are nullified.