



This week's stories from the media

- Federal Budget: \$1 billion back to basics test for schools
- Special Needs training inadequate
- Should we really give a Gonski
- Autism happiness survey
- Quality early years education isn't available to all
- Kids skills increase as teachers train
- Eyes need two hours of sun a day

Special Needs Training Inadequate

Just under three quarters of teachers say their training didn't prepare them adequately for educating children with a disability.

Two-thirds of public school teachers surveyed also said later training they received in teaching children with disabilities was insufficient.

Only a quarter of principals said their school had enough resources for children with disabilities, and only one-third of principals from public specialist schools reported the same.

Nine out of 10 principals from mainstream public schools siphon money from other parts of their budgets to cater for disabled kids in their schools.

"It points to the need for both ongoing professional development in this area and more specialised staff to work alongside teachers in schools."

[Read the full story](#)

Federal Budget: \$1 Billion Back To Basics Test For Schools

Children as young as five will be tested for literacy and numeracy skills on entry to school and teenagers forced to meet minimum standards to pass Year 12 under Budget reforms to pump an extra \$1 billion into public and private schools.

The surprise boost to education spending in Tuesday's federal Budget will outline a "back-to-basics" approach on reading and maths that will require the states to meet basic standards to qualify for new cash.

The reforms include ensuring, within a decade, that students complete an English or humanities subject and a maths or science subject before attaining an ATAR.

Any indexation of future federal funding will also be linked to the states signing onto the reforms - raising the prospect of a funding freeze for schools if states disagree.

While five and six-year-olds are not expected to know how to read and write, the early checks may include children writing their name or finding words that rhyme to help teachers target students who need extra assistance.

The new funding will also be tied to pay rises for teachers based on results, not long service, setting the scene for a battle with education unions.

The Turnbull government will argue "teachers ought not move from one pay level to the next without demonstrating they are high-performing teachers" who deliver results.

Universities will also be required to ensure new teachers are taught literacy and numeracy teaching as a core skill. Specific attendance targets for indigenous students is also an issue the Commonwealth wants to discuss.

[More](#)



“there was no OECD country where large proportions of low-performing students attended schools with better resources than Australia....”

Should We Really Give A Gonski

Kevin Donnelly from ACU writes “school funding will be a significant election issue and that what the Australian Labor Party and the Australian Education Union describe as the ‘Gonski funding model’ will be centre stage.

It shouldn’t surprise that Ken Boston, who was one of the members of the Gonski committee, argues that we now have 27 different interpretations of the original Gonski funding model.

Those supporting Gonski argue that the most significant factor determining educational disadvantage is a student’s home background and that increased funding, especially to government schools serving disadvantaged communities, will lead to higher standards and stronger outcomes.

“PISA has consistently found that the amount of resources spent on education - including financial, human and material resources - is only weakly related to student performance”.

[More](#)

Quality Early Years Education Isn’t Available For All

One-third of children nationwide don’t attend enough preschool, leaving one-fifth of children, many from the poorest backgrounds, developmentally unprepared for school - a new report has identified.

It also warned the children who do get enough preschool – the federal government’s recommended 15 hours a week – are mostly from wealthier backgrounds. These children also get better quality childcare.

The report also identified that one-third of childcare centres are not meeting minimum national quality standards. A quarter are yet to be assessed. The facilities that haven’t met the standards generally cater for the poorer kids, it stated.

The report recommends establishing free, universal access to preschool for 3 and 4-year-olds and setting up targeted federal support for the most disadvantaged children in early learning. Other recommendations include requiring all centres to meet the national standards by mid-2017.

[More](#)

Autism Happiness Survey

Deakin University researchers are examining happiness through the eyes of adolescents with autism.

Researchers said they hoped the results will give voice to those who live on the spectrum.

“Adolescence is marked by looking outwardly from the family of origin, and more towards peers and social interactions, romantic relationships. If you have autism that’s not an easy thing to negotiate. It can be more complex to move through what is already a complex maze for adolescents.”

The researchers will directly ask the adolescents themselves about how happy they are. “The limited research on autism reports that parents view their children with autism are less happy.”

[Full Story](#)

Kids Skills Increase As Teachers Train

Professional learning delivered by academics to teachers in Queensland’s Bowen Basin has improved reading ability in the local schoolchildren.

Academics showed the teachers techniques for reading education, and observed as they used these to educate the children.

The benefits showed in NAPLAN and the Australian Council for Educational Research-developed Tests of Reading Comprehension (TORCH).

“When we compared the NAPLAN and TORCH results against five local non-participating schools, the reading comprehension of students involved in the project had improved.”

[More](#)

Eyes Need Two Hours Of Sun A Day

Children need to spend two hours a day outdoors to combat the increasing risk of short-sightedness, new research has found.

Short-sightedness; otherwise known as myopia or nearsightedness is caused when light received by the eye doesn’t focus directly on the retina, but in front of it. This causes the image one sees when looking at a distant object to be out of focus.

Experts estimate that by 2050, half the world will have myopia.

To address this, the researchers recommended that kids spend at least one hour, preferably two, a day.

[Read more](#)