



This week's stories from the media

- Strategy to improve autistic students' learning outcomes
- Social media boundaries improve teen sleep
- Creative kids are confident kids
- Should schools be put into families
- AI child exploitation images
- Inquiry into civics and citizenship education

Social Media Rules Improve Sleep

Queensland uni research shows intense & problematic social media use is linked to sleep difficulties in teens.

Researchers from UQ's School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences analysed the data from 212,613 teenagers from 40 European and North American countries.

"We looked at the relationship between intense and problematic social media use and the sleep difficulties of boys and girls aged 11 to 15".

"Intense or frequent social media use can delay bedtimes, lead to shorter sleep duration and poor sleep quality."

"Some of these impacts are due to the exposure to bright screens, which disrupts melatonin secretion and hinders the body's ability to initiate sleep."

Data suggests girls may be more vulnerable to sleep difficulties from social media exposure.

"It highlights the importance of considering gender as a relevant factor when designing interventions."

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Strategy To Improve Autistic Students' Learning Outcomes

More attention and resources will be given to students living with autism, who experience poorer education outcomes than the general population, according to the draft National Autism Strategy.

It says at least 3.2% of school-aged students are autistic, and 77% of autistic five to 20 year olds have experienced difficulty at their place of learning.

The strategy seeks to address major gaps in health, education and social outcomes between autistic Australians and the general population.

Early screening and diagnosis are considered key to ensuring appropriate supports are provided from an early age.

Approximately 8% of autistic people have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with 31.2% of non-autistic people, and autistic people are eight times more likely to be unemployed.

A 2023 National Parent Autism Education Survey found one in three families were either refused entry or discouraged from enrolling their autistic child in a school because of a lack of "accommodations".

Half of those families wanted to enter the public school system.

The strategy recommends more autism training for teachers and schools, improving pathways from secondary schooling to further education and work, and investing in more supports; such as low-sensory spaces.

Efforts towards diagnosing autism in children earlier, including making autism assessments more accessible, would help school-aged students manage their symptoms in school settings, the report also said.

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“...at least 3.2% of school-aged students are autistic....”

Creative Kids Are Confident Kids

“Students who have arts-rich experiences are much more likely to do better academically, to be more confident about who they are and to be able to understand the perspectives of others.”

Professor Ewing of Sydney Uni says, “In my view, that’s because having quality arts experiences helps our social and emotional wellbeing.”

“If we get our social and emotional wellbeing right, we’re more likely to be more engaged and motivated and therefore more likely to do better academically.”

Professor Ewing points to three decades of academic research showing the need for “rich, quality creative experiences” across the curriculum”.

“There must be an opportunity for children to engage in creative play and to learn from teachers and teaching artists who have the confidence to provide art-rich experiences,” she notes.

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Should Schools Be Put Into Families

A new report says current school-improvement models aren’t capable of tackling the immense challenges our education system is currently facing; including increasing teacher recruitment and retention, and improving student learning.

A “goldilocks” solution – stemming not from a single, isolated school, nor from a big government department – is needed, according to new research.

The report says the government should set up Multi-school organisation (MSO) trials in each state.

A multi-school organisation (MSO) is a network of from 10 to 100 schools that align their behaviour policies, curricula and other operational strategies so they can share with each other what works, and what doesn’t.

“We are relying on superhero principals to improve schools one by one, which is an improvement model that just puts an incredibly heavy burden on principals to be those superheroes.”

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AI Child Exploitation Images

Big tech warned to step up on safety amid rampant AI child exploitation images.

Australian child safety advocates have called out tech for failing to stamp out a concerning trend where fake images of young children in suggestive poses, wearing minimal “fetish” clothing and appearing to be covered in body oil are hosted on social media accounts that adult men then like and post inappropriate comments on.

eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant said it was time for big tech to “stop with the platitudes” and take “decisive, co-ordinated action” to stem the tide of harmful material on their platforms.

[Full Story](#)

April 7 - World Health Day

My Health, My Right.



Inquiry Into Civics Education

A parliamentary committee has announced an inquiry into civics education, participation and engagement in Australia.

The Committee will investigate how effective education about government operations and policymaking currently is, what approaches schools and other institutions take to deliver that education, and what accessibility gaps exist.

The Committee wants to especially hear from people with direct civics education knowledge, including students, teachers, young people, First Nations peoples, people from diverse backgrounds, civic and educational organisations, and people living in regional and remote areas.

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