NSWCEG Newsletter

August 2009

The Good Oil...
- from the horses mouth

The Hon Julia Gillard MP Minister for Education. Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Minister for Social Inclusion. Deputy Prime Minister 31 July, 2009 Speech

Introduction to Education Chapter
Two years ago this National Conference debated an Education Revolution.

Kevin Rudd and Stephen Smith laid out what it would mean to value education in this country properly.

- To value it as an engine of economic growth and productivity.
- To value it as a force for inclusion and tolerance.
- To value it as a spark of democratic exchange and social equity.

They promised to overcome a decade of neglect and begin a new chapter, a revolution.

Delegates, today I am proud to stand before you and say that the Education Revolution is being delivered.

A proud history
Delegates, education is in the DNA of the labour movement.

From the earliest days of progressive politics in Australia, self-improvement and solidarity have gone hand-in-hand with extending educational opportunity.

The proud history of education reform in this country is a history of Labor reform.

More than ever, in this new century, education is at the centre of our aspirations.

But for over a decade, education in this country was used as a political football by our opponents.

We had a decade of flagpoles.

A decade where the federal Government cared more about pursuing the history wars through the media than in finding out what children were actually learning in the classroom.

A decade where investment in the early years and in universities was neglected. A decade where school funding was used to stoke..... ideological conflict, not support children's achievement.

Labor does education better.
- Better values
- Better investment
- Better delivery

- We are delivering in the early years.
- We are delivering in schools.
- We are delivering for skills, trades and vocational education.

And after a decade when they went backwards, we are delivering for Australian universities.

The Best Start
Our revolution begins in the early years.

We know that high quality services and support matter most in this time. But in 2006 Australia was last among all OECD countries for investment in the early years.

We are fixing that.

The Rudd Labor Government has agreed a $970 million partnership with the States and Territories to guarantee access for every child to a year of high quality pre-school by 2013.

We have raised the child care tax rebate to 50 per cent.

We are rolling out the Home Interaction Project to 50 communities around the country.

And we are implementing the Australian Early Development Index, providing a comprehensive picture of how young children are faring and the factors that make a difference, so that future reforms and future governments cannot escape the hard evidence.

Smart Schools
We are delivering for Australian schools, beyond any of the expectations that could have been placed two years ago.

We are rolling out computers in schools and Trade Training Centres.

We are implementing Building the Education Revolution: the largest school modernisation program this country has ever seen.

We are successfully developing a world class national curriculum. A reform that governments have discussed and failed to deliver for twenty years.

We have introduced the National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program.

We have ended the historical anomaly whereby Commonwealth Governments provided less funding for government primary students than they did for secondary students.

Over the next four years we will deliver an increase in recurrent and infrastructure spending to schools of more than 85 per cent compared to the four years from 2005 to 2008.

These changes are making a difference – we know that they will, are welcome and necessary.

But Delegates, our goal is to go further.

Our purpose is to ensure a world class education for every Australian child.

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I know the power of education to change lives.

As progressives, as Australians, allowing the disadvantaged to fall behind is not something we can accept for a moment.

Our reforms are building a platform for the long term improvement that can make all Australian schools world class.

Central to this aspiration is the quality of teaching

Delegates, you know the importance of the interaction between teachers and students.

You know that our schools are sustained by the dedication and hard work of committed Australian teachers.

I am confident that we can lift this quality further.

That is why we have agreed a National Partnership for Quality Teaching with every State and Territory.

Better pay, greater recognition for teachers who excel in helping students achieve and choose to teach in the schools where they can make the greatest difference.

New resources and support, combined with high expectations to lift the achievement of indigenous students.

New investment in the skills and capabilities of school principals.

- $1.5 billion for a National Partnership for low SES school communities.
- $540 million for national action on literacy and numeracy.

And yes, a new era of transparency in Australian schooling.

My passionate belief is that the investment to overcome educational disadvantage will flow from greater evidence and understanding that such achievement is possible.

That is why our reforms apply the same standards of transparency and accountability to every school, regardless of what sector or local community it is in.

That is why our proposals for school transparency will compare the performance of like schools, showing what is possible among schools serving students and communities that face similar challenges.

Skills and universities

Delegates, our reforms reach into the vocational and university sector.

The most far-reaching expansion of higher education since the Dawkins reforms.

New funding for teaching and research.

A new goal, with funding attached, to get 20 per cent of students at university from low SES backgrounds by 2020.

More than 700,000 Productivity Places in vocational education and training.

Unprecedented investment in university and TAFE infrastructure.

A youth compact, to help people under 25 to gain the skills they need during a time of economic turbulence.

A national goal to lift year 12 attainment to 90 per cent.

Delegates, this work of reform has only just begun, but already we have recast the landscape of Australian education.

I believe we can bring a permanent change to Australian education.

A change which embeds equity and opportunity irreversibly in our public culture.

A change which puts achievement before ideology and refuses to accept underperformance for any child.

Change which realistically aims for us to be among the smartest, most resourceful and most inclusive nations in the world.

I am pleased to move Chapter 5 to Conference.

Educators take Web 2.0 to school
by Larry Magid

I spent part of last week in Washington, D.C., at the annual National Educational Computing Conference. The event, which celebrated its 30th anniversary this year, is sponsored by the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE).

As you'd expect, there were plenty of workshops on the nuts and bolts of using technology in the classroom. But as technology evolves, so does the way it's used by some creative educators.

There were several sessions, for example, on how to use cell phones within the classroom. Considering that some school districts still ban students from bringing cell phones to school, it's great to see that there are enlightened teachers who are instead trying to figure out how to actually use them in the classroom.

Speaking of things that are banned in schools, I attended a session called "Classroom 2.0: What Is Web 2.0's Role in Schools?" This was particularly refreshing considering that many schools don't allow any use of social-networking sites and some districts actually employ filters that completely ban student and teacher access to MySpace, Facebook, and similar interactive sites.

Rather than fight the idea of students using the Web to communicate with each other, the presenters at this event were encouraging it. Chris Lehman, the principal of Science Leadership Academy in Philadelphia, talked about the use of interactive technology in schools as part of a "collaborative culture" that he says is likely to be with us for a long time.

"Whether it's a wiki or Twitter, the notion of a participatory culture-- upstream and downstream--is not going away," he told the audience. A wiki is a Web site that can be updated and edited by any of its participants. Unlike traditional publishing tools, it encourages collaboration.

Panel member Vicki Davis, a teacher from Camilla, Ga., demonstrated what could be the ultimate--one could say subversive--tool for changing the nature of participation in the classroom. During the event, she encouraged the audience to sign into what she calls a "back channel,"

which is basically a chat session going on while the panelists were speaking. People both in the room and those not attending NECC were able to comment, in real time, about what the panelists were saying via the free Chatzy service.

I've seen similar technology used at numerous conferences, but Davis says she uses it in her high-school classes. What a change from when I grew up, when it was an infraction to pass notes back and forth during class. Back then, students were punished for trying to collaborate. Of course, the technology has to be used appropriately with students staying on topic. But that should be true for any subject-oriented chat or forum. Even adults sometimes get mad at each other for going "off topic."

Such back channels also make it possible for people to say less-than-kind things about the person speaking, which can be either good or bad, depending upon your perspective. I've been to conferences where lots of people have used Twitter to comment on what was said at the podium. At one event I heard laughter after someone tweeted a funny, but cutting remark about the speaker. It seemed like the only person in the room not in on the joke was the speaker himself.

If this technology is used in school, I would hope that the students feel free to make critical comments about the subject matter but practice good on-line citizenship by refraining from insulting the speaker and each other.

Whether in school, the workplace or personal life, the use of interactive technology can sometimes get a little messy. But the same can be said about almost anything worthwhile. Just as we don't avoid physical education because kids sometimes skin their knees or refrain from art projects because kids can get their hands dirty, we shouldn't let the risks keep us from embracing Web 2.0 technology in school.

This post was adapted from a column in the San Jose Mercury News.

Call to fast-track school computers

Fran Foo | July 07, 2009

AUSTRALIA'S peak computer industry groups are at odds as to when the Federal government should spend the remaining $1billion to equip secondary schools with computers.

The program has already seen one of the largest public sector deployments of Microsoft Windows 7 in the world, with more than 260,000 students and teachers in NSW set to embrace the new operating system.

ICT companies battered by the global recession are eager for the funds to be disbursed sooner than later.

The government hopes to achieve a computer to student ratio of 1:1 by December 31, 2011, with the $2.1bn National Secondary Schools Computer Fund (NSSCF). To date, about 600 new jobs are expected to be created in NSW alone, while Victoria hopes to hire 200 IT workers.

Since NSSCF's inception early last year, three rounds of funding have resulted in about $1.1bn given to more than 2800 government, Catholic and independent schools nationwide.

The amount is set to deliver 291,820 new machines to students in Years 9-12.

In previous rounds, schools had to apply for funding, but in future, monies would be provided on a per capita basis biannually, the Federal Department of Education said.

Australian Information Industry Association chief executive Ian Birks said if the program was fast-tracked, it would increase business and provide better levels of ICT education to students.

"Industry would welcome any kind of additional stimulus that government can provide," Mr Birks said.

The AIIA also views the $3million government grant for new school halls and libraries as a **"missed opportunity"** for the ICT industry. **"These facilities will be built without taking technology into consideration. There could have been provisions for some hi-tech panels or screens so they could be turned into collaborative learning centres,"** Mr Birks said.

He said the AIIA had approached Employment Participation Minister Mark

Arbib's office with the suggestion,but to no avail. **"We were told that the investments for halls and libraries had to happen quickly so there wasn't much time to have an ICT view of things,"** Mr Birks said.

Funding for halls and libraries is part of Kevin Rudd's $14.7bn Building the Education Revolution program.

Unlike the AIIA, the Australian Computer Society believes there is enough money and resources in the economy at the moment to warrant a capital injection for technology firms.

ACS chairman Kumar Parakala said there was no need to speed up the program as a good number of government programs, such as the $43bn national broadband network and $504m Super Science: Future Industries program, already existed.

He said the programs should be given adequate time to be implemented. **"(After that) we can properly make a judgment as to whether funding should be fast-tracked on the basis of whether they have made a positive impact on the industry and economy,"** Mr Parakala said.

Meanwhile, the NSW Department of Education and Training would install Microsoft's newest operating system, Windows 7, on all netbooks acquired through the NSSCF, a department spokesman said.

Lenovo Australia won a $150m deal to supply up to 267,000 netbooks to NSW government schools, while IBM Australia secured a $70m contract to build the wireless network.

The DET spokesman said IBM had installed wireless networks at 100 schools as part of phase one, in time for the arrival of the first batch of netbooks early next month.

*All the "Blind Freddies" are on long service leave...
Editor*

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Tips for Leveraging Web 2.0 in the Classroom

From educating parents to practicing trial and error, there are sure ways to make the Web 2.0 learning experience productive and meaningful.

Educate Parents
There are sometimes negative connotations associated with using the Internet in the classroom and concerns can arise over posing risks to students. However when appropriate tools are used in a supervised environment, the Internet can enhance learning and remain safe. To help foster safety, share projects and approved sites with parents and encourage students to work on sites with parents at home if possible.

Ask for Help
Many sites are happy to provide technical support to users. Oftentimes there are even blog or forum postings of users ready to answer functionality questions. Delving into the blogosphere will open a whole new door to a community of educators using technology in the classroom who are ready to share their ideas and experiences on what works and what doesn't work.

Be Engaging
Use tools that appeal to your students' interests, tastes and styles - there are many tools out there that mirror the way teens interact on the web but also provide great functionality for the classroom. Integrate Web tools Across Subjects don't just use interesting web tools with students during computer class; use the tools for a science project, to create a book report or to look at Math in a whole new way. Today there are tools out there for every subject and full classroom integration is the best way to fully take advantage of the power of the web. Encourage Community Building in the true spirit of Web 2.0. Build your technology uses around community building in the classroom. Encourage students to share and comment on each other's web-created content, to post and comment on classroom websites and to help each other. This will reinforce classroom unity and foster excitement over the projects at hand.

Share and Open the Conversation
Be sure to share all new knowledge gained through your internet explorations with your colleagues. The more you share, the more engaged the community will be and then the conversation will truly open up and even more discoveries will be made.

Practice Trial and Error
Make sure that you have used the tools and fully understand their nuances before presenting them for student use. This will ensure a successful classroom experience and best capitalize on the time invested in web projects.

About Glogster/edu
Glogster/edu is the education platform from Glogster.com. On Glogster/edu, students and educators can access free, dynamic web-building tools to create virtual posters using text, images, voice, video, special effects, links, sounds, designs and more. Glogster.com's education platform presents these tools in a private web environment specifically geared toward education and presents educators with the opportunity for discussion and feedback to create a productive and collaborative environment. For more information on Glogster/edu, visit www.glogster.com/edu.

> **Rule 11**
> **Be nice to nerds. Chances are you'll end up working for one.**
> Guess who?

Bill Gates Stresses the Importance of Good Teachers

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — The U.S. must improve its educational standing in the world by rewarding effective teaching and by developing better, universal measures of performance for students and teachers. Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates said that "Federal stimulus money should be used to spark educational innovation, spread best practices and improve accountability. "We don't know the answers because we're not even asking the right questions and making the right measurements," Gates said. Teachers, too, should be rewarded for effectiveness and not just for seniority and master's degrees".

No escape from cyber-bullies

Stephen Lunn, Social affairs writer | August 03, 2009

CYBER-BULLYING follows kids home, leaving those on the receiving end with no place to escape, Education Minister Julia Gillard said yesterday in launching a program to combat the growing social problem. Ms Gillard said the government would spend $3 million examining the safety of children in e-communications, including cyber-bullying, and study whether existing cyber-safety programs in schools work.

The announcement comes only a few weeks after the death of Geelong schoolgirl Chanelle Rae, 14, whose mother Karen said took her own life after reading something posted about her on the internet.

"There have been some very tragic examples here in Victoria and it's a problem right around the nation," Ms Gillard told ABC's The Insiders program yesterday.

"It's a new problem. Bullying has always been with us in the playground. The thing about cyber-bullying of course is it follows you home.

"So for kids it feels like there's no safe space."

She said two recent government research studies into covert bullying revealed the problem was under-reported. Further, there had been a disturbing increase in incidents of cyber-bullying (threats and intimidation in emails and on social networking sites) in recent times, she said.

Adelaide psychologist Rita Princi said cyber-bullying had become an increasingly prevalent issue in her practice. "I've seen quite a few students recently from all-girl schools. They might have drunk too much and a photo of them might have gone up on the internet. They don't want to go to school," she said.

The government's anti-cyber-bullying pilot, which will roll out in 150 schools across the country, will report its findings by June next year.

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