

# Values Education

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Read this on the web at <http://www.valuesineducation.org.au/valnews0809.pdf>

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## TEACHING CRITICAL THINKING

### Just think: it's important

*Laura Parker, Sydney Morning Herald, 25 August 2008*

For Said Bouziane, a year 11 student, using deductive logic is as easy as stacking chairs. "One day after class I noticed a student pick up a pile of five chairs and place them on a pile of two. I wondered how many times this student chose the bigger, heavier, more troublesome pile of chairs," he said.

Pondering reason and logic is a normal part of Said's day at Calamvale Community College in Brisbane, where he studies philosophy under the guidance of teacher Peter Ellerton.

A former physics teacher, Mr. Ellerton introduced the philosophy and critical thinking program to Calamvale after joining a network of Queensland teachers which promotes and spreads the teaching of philosophy in high schools throughout the state.

"Some people don't understand what we mean by philosophy - they think it's just discussion," Mr. Ellerton said. "The truth is it's a rigorous and analytical subject; you have to do it properly. We don't discuss the meaning of life. As a subject, I think it's more fundamental than maths or English."

The teaching of philosophy in Queensland high schools is not new. The subject has been taught, in one form or another, for 50 years.

Other states have been quick to catch up, with Western Australia introducing a philosophy high-school program in the last year, and Victoria in the past five years. But in NSW the situation remains uncertain. The NSW Board of Studies offers philosophy as a distinction course only to students who have already sat the HSC exams.

The course is delivered through universities, and, although it contributes to the student's UAI, attendance numbers are not high: the Board of Studies data shows only 54 students enrolled in the philosophy distinction course last year. The Board of Studies also endorses school-developed courses in general philosophy, but only a handful of high schools in NSW that have taken up this offer.

Read more at <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/why-is-philosophy-such-a-fizzer-in-schools/2008/08/24/1219516262706.html>

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## Philosophy Teaching Resources

**The Australian Philosophy Teachers' Network** <http://pactiss.org/>  
**Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Associations (FAPSA)** <http://www.fapsa.org.au/>

ACT: **Canberra Society of Philosophy for the Young** <http://www.sophy.org.au/>  
NSW: **Philosophy for Schools Association of NSW** <http://www.campion.edu.au/pins.shtml>  
QLD: **Queensland Association for Philosophy in Schools** <http://www.fapsa.org.au/qaps/about-us>  
VIC: **Victorian Association for Philosophy in Schools** <http://www.vaps.vic.edu.au/>  
WA: **Association for Philosophy in Schools (WA)** <http://www.philosophywa.com/>

## Stephen Law

English philosopher Stephen Law is the editor of the Royal Institute of Philosophy journal THINK. He has published several books and is senior lecturer in philosophy at Heythrop College, University of London.

Law's books emphasise the essential importance of assisting children from early ages to develop the skills of critical thinking. He has developed a range of materials to inform, complement and support the work of schools in building reasoning and thinking skills through exploring some of the big difficult questions - the ones that children always want to ask and the issues they really would like to know about.

While in Australia recently, Stephen Law was interviewed on SBS about the themes and issues raised in his book "The War for Children's Minds." You can access and listen to the podcast of that interview at <http://www20.sbs.com.au/podcasting/index.php?action=feeddetails&feedid=12&id=7380>.

Read more at <http://stephenlaw.blogspot.com/>

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## SOCIAL INCLUSION

### Touching the Future: Education and Social Inclusion

*Hon Julia Gillard MP, ACER Research Conference, 11 August 2008*

It's terrific to be associated once again with the Australian Council of Educational Research, without doubt one of the top sources of fresh thinking about Australia's education and training needs. ACER has built its reputation on the quality of its data, which provides an authoritative guide to what's going on across the system.

This is important, because good evidence is the key to giving us the pre-schools, schools, training organisations and universities we need to in a world where knowledge and skills are crucial to economic success and social equity.

For over a decade, debates about knowledge and skills in Australia have been based on the opposite of evidence - prejudice. As a result:

- Public schools have been pitted against private,
- Parents against teachers,
- Apprenticeships against bachelor's degrees,
- And the humanities against the technical disciplines.

The Rudd Labor Government was elected with a mandate to end that approach, with a new emphasis on evidence-based reform.

This doesn't mean to say we lack philosophical beliefs when it comes to the education debate. Far from it.

In the broadest terms we believe that higher levels of knowledge, education and skills right across our population will lead to higher productivity, prosperity and social progress.

Read more at <http://mediacentre.dewr.gov.au/mediacentre/Gillard/Releases/AcerResearchConference.htm>

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## Teaching citizenship skills may prevent civil conflict

### *Media Release from ACER Research Conference 2008*

Australia must build people's skills for citizenship as well as work, argues Monash University Professor of Education Terri Seddon.

Recent policy reform has emphasised skills for work but forgotten to consider how people develop skills for citizenship, Professor Seddon told the ACER research conference on 11 August.

The primary goal of schooling is to prepare young people for productive and responsible adult lives as workers and citizens, she contends.

Schooling also disciplines individuals in ways of knowing, interacting with others and using power as equal and responsible decision makers in citizen-communities.

Examples of civil conflict in recent years, such as 2005's Cronulla riots, show that some young people are not using this power in a responsible way. This suggests a breakdown in the function of education to teach citizenship skills, yet there has been little action on tackling the development of these skills.

"Violence in Australia despite a booming economy and an assertive government is a stark reminder that nations have to be made and remade culturally, as well as economically," Professor Seddon said.

"An identity as citizen is as important as an identity as worker in forming sustainable communities that transcend social and cultural divisions and conflicts."

According to Professor Seddon, young people must learn citizenship skills if they are to exercise power responsibly. The way citizenship skills are taught and learned, and the way citizen action is endorsed and authorised, influences the construction of individual and community identities.

Read more at [http://www.acer.edu.au/research\\_conferences/index.html#Seddon](http://www.acer.edu.au/research_conferences/index.html#Seddon)

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## Educators urged to respond to 'civilisational challenge'

### *Media Release from ACER Research Conference 2008*

The single most significant omission from educational thinking and practice is the absence of any kind of effective futures studies according to futures expert Professor Richard Slaughter.

Speaking at the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) annual conference in Brisbane on 11 August, Professor Slaughter said this situation has become indefensible. He called on educators to take very seriously what he describes as the 'civilisational challenge.'

According to Professor Slaughter, futures concepts, tools and other resources will be invaluable in assisting students to face an approaching 'perfect storm' comprised of climate change, regional environmental collapse, peak oil disruptions and economic crises, all exacerbated by continuing strife between different world views.

"Educators must first stand up for what they believe in as professionals, to nurture the young and prepare them for living and working in a globally connected but unsustainable society," Professor Slaughter said.

He challenged educators to see these issues as intimately bound up with all aspects of teaching and learning and presented key requirements for educators.

The first and core requirement is that educators look beyond their studies, offices and classrooms and inform themselves not only about the dimensions of the global challenge but also their implications for over dependent societies. Educators must also begin to seriously build on the wide range of futures work and initiatives that have occurred in various educational environments, both here and abroad.

Read more at [http://www.acer.edu.au/research\\_conferences/index.html#Slaughter](http://www.acer.edu.au/research_conferences/index.html#Slaughter)

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## **Secondary school reform needed to lower youth unemployment**

### ***Media Release ACER Research Conference 2008***

The education system pumps far too many poorly qualified and inadequately skilled young people onto a labour market that has little need for them, and only reform to the model of secondary education can address the problem, according to education expert Professor Richard Sweet.

Professor Sweet, of Sweet Group and the University of Melbourne, presented his views in a keynote address at the ACER annual research conference in Brisbane 12 August.

Professor Sweet contends that a low level of Year 12 completion results in too high a rate of teenage unemployment despite a strong and youth-friendly labour market.

The education system must shift to a universal structure of separate senior high schools to address this problem. Australia is one of the few OECD countries that does not divide lower and upper secondary education.

The Australian model has failed to convince many disengaged 15- to 18-year-old students to complete Year 12. These students need a more adult learning environment, not one based upon the discipline demands of 12-year-olds, Professor Sweet argued.

Separate senior schools would allow for larger grade cohorts and thus a wider curriculum, a greater range of more interesting subjects to choose from, and a more adult learning environment. Teachers in such schools would be better able to provide adult teaching styles and discipline policies, and support services such as remediation, counselling and welfare for those who struggle the hardest.

Read more at [http://www.acer.edu.au/research\\_conferences/index.html#Sweet](http://www.acer.edu.au/research_conferences/index.html#Sweet)

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## **MULTICULTURAL ENGAGEMENT**

### **Is Australia Asia smart?**

***Kathe Kirby***

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced a commitment to making Australia the most Asia literate nation in the western world last week. It's not a moment too soon.

The fact that Asian languages are currently on the decline in our schools and no state curriculum in Australia explicitly requires the study of Asia has left us in dire shape for the emerging Asian century.

Only 5.8 per cent of Year 12 students currently study an Asian language and close to 80 per cent of students studying Mandarin come from Chinese backgrounds.

A 2006 study found the majority of children surveyed in one Australian state believed all Muslims were terrorists, with most saying they had learned little or nothing about Islam in school.

We live in a complex region yet currently only half of Australian schools teach anything about Asia.

The Rudd Government has committed to reinvigorating a national Asian languages and studies program in schools. With a focus on Mandarin, Japanese, Korean and Indonesian languages and cultures this is a real boost to our Asia literacy.

But it's going to take much more than \$62 million to get there for every young Australian.

The Asia Education Foundation at the University of Melbourne has produced an impressive range of curriculum materials and teacher education programs to help achieve Asia literacy.

However, the majority of our teachers did not learn about Asian history or culture in their own education and there is no overarching plan to comprehensively address this shortfall with future teacher training. There's a shortage of Asian language teachers and we need native speaker teacher assistants.

Importantly we are in a moment in time to make a difference.

Read more at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/08/18/2338257.htm>

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## **An Open Letter from the Asia Education Foundation**

*Dear Professor Dawkins*

### **Re: Australian National Goals for Schooling**

I write on behalf of the Asia Education Foundation (AEF) in response to your call for consultation on the draft National Goals for Schooling in Australia.

School education stakeholders recognize that the world has changed significantly since 1999 when we last set national goals for schooling.

I draw your attention to the recent Call to Action: Asia literacy for every young Australian, an initiative of the AEF Advisory Board and endorsed by twenty-four peak education bodies.

This alliance specifically calls for "the National Goals for Schooling to state the necessity to equip every young Australian with Asia skills and knowledge."

The key defining global development over this past decade has been the emergence of Asia as the economic powerhouse of the twenty-first century, signaling significant shifts in Australia's strategic and trade alliances.

The National Goals for Schooling must recognize this reality if Australia is to equip its young people to thrive and prosper in our world today.

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has said that the core challenge for Australia is how we best prepare ourselves for the Asian Century - to maximize the opportunities, minimize the threats and make our own active contribution to making the Asian Century peaceful, prosperous and sustainable for us all.

In fact the PM has stated that he "wants Australia to become the most Asia-literate country in the western world." If this is to occur it is essential that our National Goals for Schooling include in their aspiration and intentions that for young Australians to comprehend their world and be active and informed citizens in local, national, regional and global contexts, they need to develop a sound understanding of Asian countries, cultures and languages.

A goal such as the following would be appropriate:

"That, when they leave school, students will have, within a significant international orientation, particular knowledge, understanding and appreciation of our Asian region and its engagement with Australia, as well as inter-cultural and language skills to engage successfully with Asian peoples and enterprises.

Read more at <http://www.languageseducation.com/opinion.htm>

Read the "Call to Action: Asian Literacy for Every Young Australian" at [http://www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/13930/Call\\_to\\_Action\\_July08.pdf](http://www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/13930/Call_to_Action_July08.pdf)

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## **Proposed teacher professional development resources on Islam**

The National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies at The University of Melbourne in association with the Myer Foundation is considering a professional development program for primary and secondary school teachers. The program is aimed at enhancing awareness and knowledge of Islam and Muslims. The proposed program would cover Islamic history & civilisation, principles and values, as well as the socio-economic experience of Muslims in Australia. The program will be designed and delivered in collaboration with the Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA) to ensure the material is relevant and useful for teachers. We wish to ensure that the program can be used by teachers in their classrooms, and will include in the program teaching strategies in relation to Muslim traditions and practices.

The proposed program is conceived in response to recent research which suggests that teachers can be at a loss when dealing with Islam. This feeling may be shared by students, making it very difficult to deal with bias and misrepresentation. A recent study by the Australian Catholic University discovered that half of the Victorian school children surveyed viewed Muslims as terrorists, and two out of five believed that Muslims were 'unclean'.

The proposed program would help teachers, especially those with a large number of Muslim pupils, to separate fact from fiction and relate to their Muslim students on common ground. For this project to move forward, however, we are seeking your support.

We hope you share our belief that the proposed program will be of intellectual and pedagogical value to our teachers, and, so that we can ascertain the level of demand for such a project, we would appreciate your supporting statement to that effect. You will find below a sample response which we hope would be of some help:

"I/We support and welcome the proposal for an Islamic education program for teachers. Introducing teachers to Islamic civilisation and history, as well as the experience of Muslims in Australia and Australian schools would have clear benefits to our teachers and students."

Responses need to be either on official letter-head, or emailed with full details of your association/school.

We look forward to hearing from you

A/Prof Shahram Akbarzadeh (NCEIS) & Ms Katherine Schoo (ACSA)

A/Professor Shahram Akbarzadeh  
Deputy Director  
National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies  
Asia Institute  
The University of Melbourne  
Vic 3010 - Australia  
Email: [shahrama@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:shahrama@unimelb.edu.au)

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## **SPIRITUAL VALUES**

### **Home-grown gender-divided values in Queensland's public schools?**

*Tony Jones Q & A Program ABC TV Thursday 11 September 2008*

The National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools sets out an agreed uniform structure of nine core values as being central to all young people's social, emotional and personal development, contributing to social inclusion and a cohesive civil society. These nine core universal values are set out at

<http://www.valuededucation.edu.au/values/default.asp?id=14515>.

On Tony Jones' "Q & A" program on 11 September, the position was put to panel member and Minister for the Status of Women, Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, that in at least one Toowoomba High School, federal funding is being utilised to present a highly gender divided and potentially divisive program which has separate and different values for girls including Patience; Obedience; Gentleness; Self-control and Sincerity - significantly different from the parallel program for boys. Does this reflect a sexist and out-dated view which "de-values" the status of women?

The ensuing lively discussion with the Minister and fellow panel members Mungo MacCallum, Linda Jaivin, Tim Wilson and Nick Minchin covers several aspects of values in education, including gender discrimination, religious schools and the drift from private to public schools.

<http://www.abc.net.au/tv/qanda/video.htm?pres=20080911&story=1> (go to 35min on the time-line bar - this segment runs for about 10 minutes)

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### **Confession: fewer know their Bible**

*Linda Morris, Sydney Morning Herald, September 10, 2008*

IT MIGHT be the greatest story ever told, but Bible literacy is slipping and not just among atheists. Devout churchgoers, especially Catholics, are losing touch with the scriptures of their faith, research shows.

Of those Australians who go to church, 21 per cent read their Bible daily, 14 per cent open it a few times a week and 6 per cent once a week.

But 24 per cent said they read their Bibles only occasionally, 18 per cent hardly ever and 17 per cent said they never read the Bible on their own as a private devotional activity, according to the research, which is based on the 2006 National Church Life Survey of 500,000 people who attended church from 22 denominations.

The most diligent Bible readers are Pentecostals, with 72 per cent saying they read the holy book daily or a few times a week, followed by Baptists (62 per cent), Anglicans (46 per cent), Lutherans (41 per cent) and Uniting (43 per cent). Dragging down the other denominations are Catholics, of whom 59 per cent confess they rarely consult their Bibles.

"This is a private devotional activity that some faith traditions strongly affirm," said the survey's director, Ruth Powell. "Personal Bible reading is seen by many churchgoers, particularly Protestants, as part of a core set of devotional practices including prayer and personal reflection ... The Catholic Church traditionally has had a greater role in interpreting the scriptures for individual believers."

The research has prompted Bible Society NSW to consider a self-help guided reading program for the Bible over the next three years on the back of its forthcoming media campaign, which is to focus on the figure of Jesus to resurrect interest in Christianity.

The Jesus, All about Life campaign has the backing of 15 churches and organisations including the Salvation Army, Baptist churches and Hillsong and is to run next September. Negotiations are under way with the Catholic Church.

Source: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/confession-fewer-know-their-bible/2008/09/09/1220857547474.html>

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## **FAMILY WORK-LIFE BALANCE**

### **Impact of mobile phones on family's work-life balance**

There are 21.26 million mobile services in operation in Australia - that is more services than people! Despite mobile phones being almost obligatory when leaving the house - along with wallet/handbag and keys - there is, surprisingly, very little research in Australia into the impact of mobile phones on work and family life.

That has recently changed with some of Australia's top social researchers undertaking the biggest study to examine the social impact of mobile technologies at work and at home. The project was based on collaboration between university-based researchers and the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association (AMTA), the peak industry body representing the mobile telecommunications industry and an ACSSO supporter.

The research by academics from the Australian National University and the University of New England, collected nationally representative data from a sample of 2185 households, and was conducted under the umbrella of the Australian Research Council Linkage grant scheme.

The research team's final report found that more than half of employed respondents believe that the mobile helps their work-life balance. Very few reported mobile phones had a negative impact. More than half of mobile-owning workers, who have high levels of satisfaction with their family interactions, regard the mobile as having increased their ability to find work-life balance.

Calls on mobile phones were predominately for social or leisure purposes (34%) or for managing home and family (28%). There were differences between men and women in the purposes of calls with 36% of men using their mobile to make work calls whereas only 10% of women used it for that purpose.

"Among parents, 'arranging to deliver goods or children' and 'finding out where children are' is rated as important by 48% and 47% respectively," says the study's report.

"Work-related calls are mostly confined to standard working hours, rising sharply after 7am with a small lunchtime dip. Work calls fall steeply after 5pm, trailing away towards zero as midnight approaches. The volume of calls to family exceeds work-related calls at any time of the day.

"Family calls are less frequent in the morning than in the afternoon, rising at the time school ends, and having a pronounced peak before the evening meal."

Read the report at

[http://www.amta.org.au/amta/site/amta/downloads/pdfs\\_2008/Work%20life%20balance%20final%20report%2026Mar08.pdf](http://www.amta.org.au/amta/site/amta/downloads/pdfs_2008/Work%20life%20balance%20final%20report%2026Mar08.pdf)

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## **HUMANE EDUCATION**

### **Launch of Australian Humane Education Website**

This week saw the launch of the first stage of the Australian Humane Education website - at <http://www.humaneeducation.org.au>

This first stage of its development primarily encompasses the proceedings of a unique event, an international symposium held at Griffith University, Brisbane in November 2007 "Humane Education - a compassionate ethic for animals"

Keynote speaker Professor Terry Lovat and other presenters identified humane education as an essential element of an effective values education framework and program in action.

A particular focus of the symposium was to provide a forum for discussion not only of the ethical aspects of humane education but also the practical issues of its implementation. Delegates agreed on the potential for HEd to contribute to a more moral, responsible and ultimately more compassionate society and the value of its inclusion in classroom teaching.

Due to its broad education and values framework, school is considered to be an appropriate place for HEd. but for maximum benefit it should extend beyond the classroom to include parents and the wider social circle.

Ideally, discussion should be on the basis of balanced, well-researched information from different perspectives, with students given the opportunity to form their own conclusions. The life experiences and the opinions of students should be appreciated and respected.

The primary focus of the forum was HEd. in relation to animals in society. However, it was agreed that an ethical perspective, rather than a solely animal advocacy view is important. An ethical framework includes respect, justice as fairness and integrity and provides an appropriate approach for classroom discussion of contentious issues, should they arise, enabling teachers to move forward.

Read more at <http://www.humaneeducation.org.au>

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## **ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION**

### **"Hope for Nature"**

#### **Dr Jane Goodall's Australian Lecture Tour**

*September - October 2008*

Dr Jane Goodall DBE, internationally renowned author, primatologist and founder of programs to promote community empowerment and engagement for the future well-being of young people and our planet, is visiting Australia and New Zealand from 30 September to 19 October 2008

In a series of events across the country, Jane Goodall will highlight the effects of climate change on the planet's biodiversity - and raise awareness of what we as individuals can all do to make a difference.

Jane will share stories from her new Book 'Hope for Nature' which highlights the scientists that are working on flora and fauna which are being saved from the brink of extinction from around the world. Also, each lecture will introduce local scientist "heroes" who will share their research results on native flora and fauna.

These events will also promote the work of the Jane Goodall Institute in Australia, and the rapidly growing network of young people and communities working together under the banner of her international "Roots & Shoots" program which promotes community interaction and engagement. There will be a Roots & Shoots component at each State's lecture, to involve the children that have been doing their own projects on the environment, involving their community and its conservation

Read more at <http://www.janegoodall.org.au/attachments/db/jgd/3.pdf>

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#### **Greenfest 2008: 10-12 October Brisbane**

Greenfest is Brisbane's free green festival and place for full community participation in the issues around climate change and global warming

View presentation by Dr Jane Goodall, who will speak at the opening of and become the patron of Greenfest green education. View SEED International's locally produced film Think Global Eat Local.

All exhibitions, speakers and performances are free. Participation by new and renewed generations together is a formula for resonance and by just turning up you will have taken action for sharing a greener world. Greenfest offers real benefits to schools and universities and is committed to working towards conserving Australia's natural habitat.

Read more <http://www.greenfest.com.au/>

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## VALUES IN ACTION

### Anti-Poverty Week 12-18 October 2008

Our aim is to encourage as many schools as possible to do something during Anti-Poverty Week. Some simple ideas to promote activities include:

- use your community networks to encourage organizations who work with poverty (local welfare agencies, international aid or development organisations, etc) to think about focusing on schools during the week, through
  - o school- linked or school-based projects;
  - o speaking to classes or
  - o conducting information sessions at school assemblies;
- contact other schools in your area and encourage them to participate with your community; or find out what they are doing and how you can coordinate your activities with them

Think about the idea of a competition or challenge...

- After the week, a number of interesting school activities in each state or territory will be featured on the Anti-Poverty Week website; so now is the time to brainstorm some really creative thoughts
- Explore with teachers and parents ways in which the anti-poverty week themes can be linked into the activities in each subject area of the school; such as
  - o an art competition
  - o an essay competition
  - o a research assignment on community welfare agencies in your area
  - o explore the issues around poverty in the countries where they speak the languages you teach
  - o a Home Economics research assignment research on healthy nutrition on a tight budget...
  - o what is Australia doing internationally e.g. with Indonesia?
  - o focus on an initiative or charity you already support
  - o hold a debate.

- The South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) has produced some great Anti-Poverty Week resources and class material in previous years, you can access them through: [www.decs.sa.gov.au/learninginclusion/antipovertyweek](http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/learninginclusion/antipovertyweek). DECS are in the process of developing material for this year, which will have a Design and Technology focus, with the theme Designing for a Better World and targeted at 5 -15 year olds. The planned release date is 8 September, when it will be available through the same link.

- SA is producing a poster to promote Anti-Poverty Week in schools, which can also be accessed through the same link - available soon. You could think about using it in your state or territory or about producing something similar, particularly if you wanted to promote a particular activity or initiative.

- Victoria has established an Anti-Poverty Week sub-group, which has decided this year to focus on a statewide initiative to showcase and encourage school breakfast programs, which will include highlighting the involvement of unions and business.

- ACT has sent an email out to school pastoral care coordinators encouraging them to participate in the week and suggesting ideas for activities.

Read more at <http://www.antipovertyweek.org.au/>

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### ACSSO EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

- **Australian Education Digest** : <http://www.acsso.org.au/aed.htm> (weekly)
- **International News Roundup** : <http://www.acsso.org.au/roundup.htm> (monthly)
- **Values Education** : <http://www.valuesineducation.org.au/news.htm> (monthly)
- **Languages Education** : <http://www.languageseducation.com/news.htm> (monthly)

- **Ensemble - Music Education** : <http://www.ensemble.org.au/news.htm> (monthly)
- **Public Education Voice** : <http://www.acsso.org.au/pev.htm> (quarterly)
- **Family School Partners** : [http://www.familyschool.org.au/?page\\_id=6](http://www.familyschool.org.au/?page_id=6) (quarterly)

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