



Values Education

Volume 3 Number 2, April 2009

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BEHAVIOUR & DISCIPLINE

Discipline

Brenton's Blog, Family-School & Community Partnerships Bureau, 9 April 2009

I received the following message by email today:

Our high school is great but we have discipline problems; a couple of very disruptive children that not all teachers are good at dealing with can disrupt a whole class. Our son no longer asks questions of one teacher in particular because he feels she has enough to cope with dealing with the naughty children all the time. The school is addressing the issue, but my concern is that these are year7 children and they should have learnt by now that there is a place for certain behaviours, and that is generally not in the school classroom. Teachers need to be able to access more help with disciplinary problems, and some parents need to be more accountable for their children.

I have just this minute returned from running a Focus Group of parents in Devonport (Tasmania) where this issue (among others) was discussed at some length. It has also animated a number of the other Focus Groups that we've been holding.

In short, many parents are concerned about the impact of a few disruptive children on the rest of the class – and on the teacher's ability to manage the class.

Read more at <http://www.familyschool.org.au/?p=586>

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Many children 'unprepared' for school

ABC News, 6 April 2009

Education groups in Western Australia have backed an international study which reveals many students do not have the social and verbal skills necessary to start school.

The British research says many students are not properly prepared for school, and some are unable to dress themselves or use the toilet.

The State School Teachers Union (SSTU) says it is a similar story in Western Australia, and it is not limited to children from low socio-economic areas.

The president of the SSTU, Anne Gisborne, says working parents need to find time to prepare their children for school.

"So that they can pay attention, and provide that time that's required for their children," she said.

A spokesman for the West Australian Council of State School Organisations, Rob Fry, agrees.

"There's no doubt that the very early years of a child's development are the most important and set the foundation for the life ahead," he said.

The WA Minister for Education, Liz Constable, says the Government is focused on parenting and early education.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/04/06/2535967.htm>

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Good education begins at home, not school

Editorial, The Observer (UK), 5 April 2009

By the time British children are around six years old, their social background has overtaken their natural ability as the main predictor of success in education. Their chances of doing well are skewed before they reach reception class. Detailed research and school gate chatter concur on this point: the biggest problems in our education system have their roots outside the classroom.

The point is made plainly in today's Observer by Mary Bousted, general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers: "Too many children start school without the social and verbal skills to be able to take part in lessons and to behave well."

At its annual conference this week, the ATL will highlight declining standards in children's behaviour, for which parents, Dr Bousted argues, do not take enough responsibility.

Many parents would agree. It is their children's education that is jeopardised when a minority disrupts the class.

Often disruption can be handled by good teaching. But not always; not when bad behaviour is learnt at home and encouraged by parents. This is not exclusively a class issue. Wealthy and poor parents alike undermine teachers' authority by refusing to accept that their offspring are capable of doing wrong. But there is also a correlation between poverty and households struggling to provide an environment conducive to learning.

Read more at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/apr/05/children-behaviour-parents-responsibility>

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'Parents to blame' for problems in UK schools

Liz Lightfoot, The Observer (UK) 5 April 2009

Teachers have launched a devastating attack on parents, accusing many of failing in their responsibilities and undermining schools.

Children are now arriving at school socially undeveloped, increasingly unable to dress themselves, unable to use the toilet properly and unused to eating at a table, Mary Bousted, general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, writes in today's Observer. Instead of taking responsibility themselves, too many parents expect teachers to control their children's behaviour and wellbeing, she adds.

Bousted cites one mother who blamed staff when her 14-year-old daughter became pregnant and another when she discovered that her 16-year-old son was smoking cannabis.

The union leader's attack, which will be underlined at the ATL's annual conference in Liverpool this week, comes as research reveals that children and parents are becoming increasingly confrontational with teachers. A survey of members to be published tomorrow found that nearly two in five had been confronted by an aggressive parent or guardian.

Her Observer article says the problem is not children living in poverty; most come from homes with televisions, computers and games consoles. What they do not have "are adults who are prepared to give their time and energy doing that most difficult but essential of jobs, raising their children properly".

Read more at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/apr/05/schools-behaviour-teachers-parents>

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Abuse of teachers by parents and pupils on the rise, says survey

Andrea Lipsett, Guardian (UK) 6 April 2009

Teachers are facing increasingly abusive behaviour from parents and pupils, according to research revealed today.

More than a third (39%) of teachers have been confronted by an aggressive parent or guardian, and nearly a quarter of teachers have endured physical violence from a student.

The research, from the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), comes after the head of the union launched a devastating attack on parents, accusing many of failing in their responsibilities and undermining schools.

Writing in yesterday's Observer, Mary Bousted said that children were arriving at school ill-prepared by their parents, with a lack of respect for authority and lacking basic social and verbal skills.

Read more at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/apr/06/teachers-abuse-violence-pupils-parents>

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HOMEWORK

Starting early: How much homework is appropriate in the early years?

Kathy Walker The Age, March 23, 2009

Schools in Australia often talk about a crowded curriculum. That is, they have to find space for many different classes, subjects and activities each day, making for a busy week. While many of these opportunities are enjoyable and productive, the demand is often tiring and exhausting for young children.

Remember that in Australia we have one of the lowest school starting ages. We expect much from young children - mentally, emotionally and physically - at a relatively young age.

So when we come to "homework", it is important to consider what form this takes and what is realistic for the child's age and stage of learning.

Learning is meant to be meaningful and to relate not only to academic skills but to life skills and the building of a child's self-concept and creativity.

Homework in its most pure form is simply about building on and extending a child's life and learning experiences.

Read entire article: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/starting-early-20090319-92yn.html?page=-1>

Kathy Walker is an education consultant and the author of 'What's the Hurry? Reclaiming Childhood in an Overscheduled World'.

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Web gives homework hard edge

Heath Gilmore, Sydney Morning Herald, January 28, 2009

ACCESS to the internet is altering drastically the way primary and secondary students complete their homework.

Joanne Orlando, of the School of Education at the University of Western Sydney, said yesterday that students were being assigned more high-level homework that drew on their computer skills for research and presentation.

Special arrangements were made for children without a computer at home, but they were increasingly at a disadvantage.

Ms Orlando, who studied the use of computers in primary and secondary schools over five years, said students were asking their parents to provide guidance for free-wheeling, high-tech presentations.

"Parents helping with homework is an age-old issue," she said. The issue of parents who did not, or could not, help with homework was something confronting teachers all the time.

"Just because a child may have a computer does not fix that. The issue remains."

Read entire article: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/web-gives-homework-hard-edge/2009/01/27/1232818435421.html>

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Primary teachers call for homework to be scrapped

Anthea Lipsett, Guardian (UK), 8 April 2009

Teachers will tomorrow call for homework for primary school children to be scrapped as a waste of time for children and teachers.

Homework, frequent testing and the introduction of the government's "nappy curriculum" for early years classes have provoked criticism that nursery and primary schooling in England has become too formal and produces stressed children.

This is leading to three and four-year-olds throwing tantrums in class because they are being forced to learn to read and write too early, say teachers.

"Homework in the primary school is a waste of children's and teachers' time, which could be spent much more profitably on effective learning both in and out of the classroom," states the motion at the Association of Teachers and Lecturers conference in Liverpool, to be proposed by Cecily Hanlon, a former nursery and reception teacher from Leeds.

Read more at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/apr/08/scrap-homework-say-primary-teachers>

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Letter to the Editor

.... I was disgusted again to find that rather than education—the scandalous history of religion, inquiry, discussion, sharing of ideas, even awe at the mystery of life—my children were being spoon-fed inane creationism and twee religious sentiment.

Does this not outrageously conflict with the scientific paradigm that they will presently be expected to imbibe (or at least pay lip service to), and upon whose precepts our culture is built, even if it is observed in the breach?

Can someone please tell me exactly what the Queensland Government's conception of religious education is? Is the unabashed proselytisation of our children by zealots (however ineffective it may be) really sanctioned by the Bligh Government? And what brand of fundamentalism is it exactly?

Finally, how can my children obtain a balanced perspective on religious questions from the State System?

Sincerely,
Mark Dew

Read more at <http://www.valuesineducation.org.au/pdf/dew090409.pdf>

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NSW church-state deal 'hampering ethics education'

ABC News, Oct 27, 2008

An independent ethics organisation says the teaching of non-religious ethics in New South Wales primary schools is being prevented by a century old deal between churches and the state.

Colleen MacKinnon is working on an ethics-based course to complement scripture classes.

But she says the deal which allowed the state to take over education from the churches, led to legislation which prevents ethics being taught to the 20 per cent of children who do not attend religious classes.

"Those kids who opt out of scripture are denied an opportunity for any kind of instruction in ethics morals, values," she said.

"A lot of studies have shown that values based education actually has a great deal of impact on life satisfaction and wellness."

Ms MacKinnon says 59 per cent of parents want a comparative religion and ethics course in primary schools.

Two Labor education ministers have rejected the proposal in the last five years.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/10/27/2402718.htm>

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FAITH-BASED SCHOOLS

Muslim student teacher refused position at Christian college

Kellie Cameron & Shayma Alshakshir, Wyndham Leader, 24 March 2009

A MUSLIM student teacher has labelled a Christian school in Wyndham discriminatory for refusing her a position based on her religion.

But Heathdale Christian College is standing by its decision, saying that as a faith-based school it expects its teachers, including student ones, to support its Christian perspective.

Mother-of-two Rachida Dahlal, 35, has complained to the Equal Opportunity Commission on the grounds of discrimination, prejudice and unequal employment opportunities.

The Hoppers Crossing college where she wanted to do placement said it would not have been in its, or Mrs. Dahlal's, best interests.

Read entire article: <http://wyndham-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/muslim-student-teacher-refused-position-at-christian-college/>

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Exclusive Brethren schools' massive funding paradox

John Kaye MP, February 2008

Exclusive Brethren schools receive more than \$10 million per year in federal government funding alone, despite Prime Minister Kevin Rudd describing the sect as 'an extremist cult'.

Both state and federal governments are ignoring Kevin Rudd's trenchant criticism of the Exclusive Brethren sect and continue to deliver massive subsidies to their schools that are closed to all children other than those from families within the cult, according to Greens NSW MP John Kaye.

In August last year Mr Rudd described the Exclusive Brethren as 'an extremist cult and sect'. He went on to say that 'there are real problems with the provision of modern education for kids under their system'.

Exclusive Brethren schools around Australia are set to receive more than \$10.1 million in federal funding this year. Subsidies from the Rees government to their NSW schools will exceed \$1.8 million.

Read entire article: <http://www.johnkaye.org.au/campaigns/education/private-school-funding/exclusive-brethren-schools>

Access the "Religion Report" interview with John Kaye on Exclusive Brethren schools on 6 February 2008 at: <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/religionreport/stories/2008/2155664.htm>

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UK: Teachers' union calls for an end to faith schools

National Union of Teachers seeks to end "segregated schooling" for greater social cohesion

Richard Garner, Independent, 5 April 2009

Teachers' leaders will this week demand the phasing out of the nation's 7,000 state-funded faith schools.

As a first step, delegates at the National Union of Teachers' conference will seek a ban on opening any new faith schools – on the grounds that their admissions policies have created "segregated schooling" in many parts of the country.

The move would put the union on a collision course with the Government, which has openly sought sponsorship by religious groups for many of its flagship new academies. Several of the new academies to be opened this year have church backing. It is also likely to provoke fierce debate within the union, as many of its members work in faith schools.

Read entire article: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/teachers-union-calls-for-an-end-to-faith-schools-1662932.html>

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TEACHING THINKING

UNESCO publication "Philosophy: A School of Freedom"

An innovative publication based on the results of a worldwide study and abounding with unprecedented recommendations and proposals on the teaching of philosophy.

Discovering the wonder of children when they face questions aroused by their encounter with reflective thought is the purpose of the first chapter of this publication.

It offers a glimpse into an entirely new field of teaching: introducing philosophy at the pre-school and primary levels.

Readers will discover the full significance of giving children both the opportunity and the space to tackle questions of a philosophical nature, including metaphysical ones, to which science cannot find answers.

This aspiration urges us to reflect more profoundly on education, on learning, as well as on the role of teachers.

Download the publication: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001541/154173e.pdf>

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Philosophy in the classroom.

ABC Radio National - Edpod, 5 February 2009

In the Year 6 classroom at Stanmore Public School in Sydney, the teacher, Dan Smith, is always right. Well, nearly always. Because once a week when the students move all the chairs into a big circle and gather for an hour of philosophy, their teacher is the first to admit that he does not have all the answers.

Two years ago, the school introduced philosophy to grades 5 and 6, and even though it's still a niche subject in Australian schools, its popularity is growing.

Kyla Slaven, who produces The Philosopher's Zone on Radio National, paid Stanmore Public School a visit.

Download Audio at <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/edpod/stories/2009/2483344.htm>

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Philosophy in Schools

Dr Gilbert Burgh, University of Queensland

Philosophy for children is an international program developed by Matthew Lipman (Director of the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children, Montclair State University in New Jersey) in order to improve children's reasoning skills so that they may become effective, independent, and creative thinkers.

Lipman was influenced and inspired by the philosopher and educationist John Dewey, who envisaged a classroom community of students engaging cooperatively in learning, motivated by their own curiosity and sense of wonder, and where they are educated to be responsible and active participants in society.

Philosophy for children was introduced into Australia in 1988 by Laurance Splitter of the Centre of Philosophy with Children and Adolescents, at the Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER), and is now well established in Queensland, NSW and Victoria, and established in various degrees in all other states and the ACT in Australia.

The use of philosophical inquiry as a means of developing the skills of dialogue and thinking involves both teachers and students as co-inquirers working together in a "community of inquiry".

Philosophy in the classroom employs the skills of philosophy with specially designed resource materials, and is used in schools around the world to improve reasoning abilities of students, to improve the quality of student thinking about important open-ended issues, and to examine ethical issues.

Further information: <http://www.uq.edu.au/hprc/index.html?page=21377>

Further sources of information and resources:

Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Associations [FAPSA] – with links to each State and Territory Association: <http://www.fapsa.org.au/>

International Council of Philosophical Inquiry with Children [ICPIC] <http://www.icpic.org/>

Philosophers & Critical Thinkers in Secondary Schools [PACTISS] - (including the Australian Philosophy Teachers' Network) <http://www.pactiss.org/>

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The need to teach critical thinking

The Skeptical Inquirer (USA) 9 March 2009

President Obama has declared that U.S. science policy will no longer be dictated by myths and beliefs.

I can almost hear the collective cry of "It's about time!" from all of our supporters.

The President says science policy is going to be about "ensuring that scientific data is never distorted or concealed to serve a political agenda—and that we make scientific decisions based on facts, not ideology."

I can't begin to express my happiness when I hear that the president has joined our cause.

We need to take hold of this opportunity to promote scientific inquiry and critical thinking in America's classrooms and in its public policy. But that means we need your help!

Read more at <http://www.csicop.org/specialarticles/obamaandscience.html>

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HUMANE EDUCATION

Voiceless Animal Law Lecture Series 2009

Commencing on Tuesday 5 May 2009, leading US animal protection litigator Bruce Wagman will travel to 11 leading universities, law firms and legal professional associations across Australia. During the ten-day tour, he will share his experiences seeking justice for animals in the courtroom.

Mr Wagman, who was named one of Northern California's 'Super Lawyers' in 2006, 2007 and 2008, will be joined at various events by distinguished legal practitioners and academics, including

- The Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG, former Justice of the High Court of Australia and
- Professor David Weisbrot AM, President of the Australian Law Reform Commission, who will speak at our main event in Sydney.

Every year billions of farm animals are raised for food and food production in Australia and the US. The vast majority are housed in giant factory farms in which they endure lives of permanent confinement and systemic cruelty, much of which is legal. In recent times, increased concern about the treatment of these animals has spawned the growth of the animal law movement in both countries.

In this Series of FREE lectures for lawyers and the general public, Bruce Wagman will lift the veil of secrecy on farm animal suffering and discuss how animals can be protected through strategic and public interest litigation. Drawing upon his own experience challenging the big corporations that use and exploit cows, pigs and chickens for profit, Bruce will demonstrate how lessons learned in America may apply to Australia and why animal protection law is fast becoming everyone's business.

Find out more about the lectures:

http://www.voiceless.org.au/Law/Lecture_Series/Super_Lawyer_to_bring_down_the_gavel_on_animal_suffering.html

Dates, venues and online registration: http://www.voiceless.org.au/Law/Lecture_Series/Animal_Law_-_coming_soon_to_a_venue_near_you.html

Find out more about the extensive work of Voiceless: <http://www.voiceless.org.au>

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Australian Orangutan Project:

AOP releases new classroom information and activity sheet pack in 2009.

The Australian Orangutan Project (AOP) is a very special organisation - one of the most successful orangutan protection and education organisations in world.

Our president, Leif Cocks, Perth Zoo's Curator of Exotic Mammals, is an internationally recognised expert in primate care, especially for orangutans.

Founded in 1998 on a not-for-profit basis, AOP has focussed strongly both on the preservation and restoration of Indonesian rainforest - the orangutan's natural habitat - and on the rescue and rehabilitation of large numbers of individual endangered animals.

Orangutans, native to the rainforests of Indonesia and Malaysia, are a beautiful and intelligent species, at great risk of disappearing forever. They share 97% DNA with humans.

Read more at <http://education.orangutan.org.au/>

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United Nations International Year of the Gorilla 2009

As a project of UNESCO's Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, 2009 has been declared the International Year of the Gorilla: working closely with four leading conservation organisations:

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals <http://www.cms.int/> works for the conservation of a wide array of endangered migratory animals world-wide through the negotiation and implementation of agreements and species action plans – currently with 110 member countries, many of them in Africa.

The Great Apes Survival Partnership <http://www.unep.org/grasp/>, a strategic alliance of UN agencies, governments, NGOs, foundations and sponsors, to stop the decline of great ape populations.

The World Association of Zoos & Aquariums whose members and affiliate organisations come from all around the world

World-renowned great ape conservationist Dr Jane Goodall DBE will lend her voice as the official campaign patron; and her global network of educational and conservation activities through the Jane Goodall Institute – find out more about the Jane Goodall Institute in Australia at: <http://www.janegoodall.org.au/>

Find out more about the Year and activities around the world, at: <http://www.yog2009.org>

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GENDER VALUES

Boys Need Societal Nurturing, Too

Sharon Jayson interviews Michael Gurian, USA TODAY, 9 April 2009

Q: You are a believer in single-gender education. Can you explain how such schooling benefits boys?

A: I don't promote or not promote it. What I do is train teachers and parents in how boys and girls learn and some people do single-sex classes.

What we find is there are certain targeted areas in the culture where single-sex can work terribly well — in the inner city where boys are being raised without dads.

Our theory is that boys raised without fathers are hungry for male influence. But, if we can arrest that and get them into healthy boy environments, they learn better, go to school more and get better grades.

It's the same for girls, especially in the learning of science. Often three or four boys very smart in science dominate a classroom.

There are areas where single-sex can work well.

There is no single way to educate.

Read more at http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2009-04-08-gurian-boys_N.htm

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CONFERENCES & EVENTS

National Values Education Conference 2009

Values in Action – Shaping Positive Futures

30 April–1 May 2009 – Canberra ACT

The 2009 Conference aims to:

- Explore the implementation of the National Framework for Values Education
- Provide an update on the Values Education Program in action in schools around the country
- Explore the links between values education, student well-being and their positive learning and development
- Assess the research in values education and its longer term impacts for school communities

The conference brings together international and national speakers, students, parents plus curriculum leaders, teachers, principals,

Register online at: <http://www.acsa.edu.au> Places are limited and registrations close 17 April 2009



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REMINDERS

15-17 April - Dialogue Australasia Network Conference - Canberra, ACT - <http://www.dialogueaustralasia.org>

May- November - Generation Next Seminar Program - national - <http://gennextseminars.com/>

1-3 June - Educating Youth for Citizenship: East and West - Beijing, China - <http://citizen-09.nmsu.edu>

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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 (quarterly)

Do you know of an event or resource that schools should know about? Email us at letters@acssso.org.au

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