

EDITORIAL

A week, they say, is a long time in politics, as the last few weeks have demonstrated. Julia Gillard replaced Kevin Rudd as Prime Minister on 24 June, and shifted a swag of Commonwealth government policies: the proposed resource profits tax; changes to the processing of refugees, possibly in East Timor and, for curious reasons, only for refugees arriving by boat; climate change; and – drumroll – changes to the education tax refund scheme to cover school uniforms. ‘Moving forward,’ the PM called an election in July. Back in June, she appointed Simon Crean as her new Minister for Education, Employment, Workplace Relations and Social Inclusion, handing over the portfolios she’d held as Deputy PM, including the ‘troubled’ \$16 billion Building the Education Revolution (BER) program. Crean, who was Minister for Education from 1993 to 1996 under Paul Keating, kept smartly quiet in the portfolio, but there was plenty of noise coming from the inquiry of the Liberal-dominated Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations into the BER – Primary Schools for the 21st Century (P21) program. According to the Senate Committee website, ‘the Committee is currently seeking information...that addresses claims being made in submissions and at hearings regarding inflated costings and failure to achieve value for money for P21 projects.’ Crean told Derryn Hinch on Radio 3AW last month, ‘I want to fix the problems where they exist,’ describing New South Wales as the state ‘where most of the problems exist’ and ‘the bigger problem state, if you like.’ In search of other hot potatoes, the Senate Committee is also conducting an inquiry into the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy program. **1**

FAST FACTS

Percentage of Year 6 students in 2008 who reached the Year 6 proficient standard identified by experts as an indication of what students should be able to do using infotech: 57 per cent.

Percentage of Year 6 students in 2005 who reached the proficient standard: 49 per cent.

Percentage of Year 10 students in 2008 who reached the Year 10 standard: 66 per cent.

Percentage of Year 10 students in 2005 who reached the standard: 61 per cent.

Percentages of Year 6 and 10 students whose parents are from the ‘unskilled manual, office and sales occupational groups’ who reached the standard: 41 per cent and 52 per cent respectively.

Percentages whose parents are from the ‘senior managers and professionals’ occupational group who reached the standard: 72 per cent and 78 per cent respectively.

Source: Ainley, J., Fraillon, J. & Freeman, C. (2010). National Assessment Program – ICT Literacy Years 6 & 10 Report 2008. Melbourne: Curriculum Corporation (for the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs).

QUICK QUIZ

1. According to Mick Wilkinson, where in a high school will you find the raw, visceral and often turbulent politics about timetables, subject allocations and the fact that some teacher you loathe seems to teach a Year 12 class of three?
2. Is teaching rocket science?
3. Last issue, we referred to ‘the three r’s’: were we wrong?
4. Was Emma Rhodes wrong when she used the F-word in physics?
5. Why is synthetic phonics called ‘synthetic phonics’?
6. What is a rubric?
7. Student participation in extracurricular activities raises general and academic self-concepts. True or false?
8. Can you use an exclusion clause or waiver to contract out of your duty of care?
9. Why does a London taxi driver typically have a larger hippocampus than a London bus driver?
10. Who taught a handful of Moscow’s wild dogs how to commute using the Moskovskiy metropoliten?

Answers: 1. in a heads of department meeting; 2. no, according to Greg Whithby; 3. no, the plural forms of a letter calls for an apostrophe; 4. no, she was referring to feminisms; 5. because it refers to learning letter-sound correspondences and then synthesising these to pronounce whole words; 6. a ‘scoring tool’ used in performance-based assessments; 7. true, according to research reported by Katrina Ahearne; 8. no; 9. because taxi drivers navigate their route, thus exercising the region of the hippocampus that specialises in using complex spatial information, unlike bus drivers who follow a set route; 10. they taught themselves.

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