

## EDITORIAL

As Commonwealth Minister for Education Julia Gillard announced in a speech at the Sydney Institute last month, Commonwealth schools funding is to be reviewed. That review will rely heavily on data published on the My School website, using results gathered through National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy tests, as well as information on student intake and school location, with additional information on school income expected soon. Gillard promised she'd announce any new funding arrangements in 2011, before the beginning of the next funding agreement for the quadrennium 2013-16 and guaranteed that no school would be worse off as a result of the review. Labor's election promise in 2007 was to maintain the controversial funding system of the previous Commonwealth government of John Howard for the current quadrennium. Now adding her no-worse-off guarantee, and a review 'that is fully informed by the facts and the evidence,' it's clear Gillard wants to keep government and non-government schools happy. By coming clean on the purpose of the My School data, though, Gillard also appears to have sidelined the campaign by the Australian Education Union (AEU) against it. Her use of My School data to underpin the review of schools funding is now likely to make the AEU position untenable. As Gillard observed in her Sydney Institute speech, 'Public education advocates believe that...every win for public education flows to non-government schools and public education can never make up ground.' If Gillard's funding review really does 'look at the full range of student needs and the full range of ways in which schools are resourced, across all schools,' could we be looking at a funding system that is actually fair? **T**

## FAST FACTS

Number of languages taught in a formal education program in 2006: 133, including 50 Indigenous languages.  
 Top 10 languages taught in a formal education program: by enrolment, Japanese, Italian, Indonesian, French, German, Chinese-Mandarin, Arabic, Spanish, Greek and Vietnamese.  
 Percentage of students who study one of these top 10 languages: 97 per cent.  
 Number of language students in mainstream public education in 2006: 1,401,550.  
 Number studying Japanese: 332,943.  
 Studying Italian: 322,023.  
 Studying Indonesian: 209,939.  
 Studying French: 207,235.  
 Studying German: 126,920.  
 Studying Chinese-Mandarin: 81,358.  
 Number of states that produce comprehensive annual reports on languages education: one, by the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Source: Lo Bianco, J. & Slaughter, Y. (2009). *Second Languages and Australian Schooling*. Australian Education Review. Melbourne: ACER.

## QUICK QUIZ

1. What is a 'learning walk'?
2. Does Catherine Scott argue that gender is irrelevant in education?
3. Which pioneering philanthropist, educationalist and Sydney Public Free Grammar School governor appears on the \$20 note?
4. Studies have shown that sleep-deprived students are more likely to get poorer grades than students who sleep longer. True or false?
5. What's so special about the SWANs assessment tool of the University of Melbourne's Graduate School of Education Assessment Research Centre?
6. Mary Featherstone advocates the use of a simple technique when you're designing a new learning environment. What is it?
7. Off-campus activities are not worth the risk. True or false?
8. What do most educators do when they're bullied in the workplace?
9. When does consultation end on the draft national curriculum?
10. What is the hallmark of effective intellectual communication?

Answers: 1. essentially, visits to schools by educators to make comparisons between their own school's ways and those of the schools they encounter; 2. no, she argues that gender does matter, because it determines how we treat children and what we expect from them; 3. Mary Kelsey; 4. true, according to David Sousa; 5. it assesses students with additional needs on the basis of their abilities rather than their disabilities; 6. build and use a prototype in a portable classroom; 7. false, according to Lennen Forde and Rena Solomonidis; 8. resign, according to Joan Squeeh; 9. 23 May; 10. simplicity.

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