



# Grapevine

## TRADES IN THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM

A ground-breaking Victorian school program which allows primary students to engage in a hands-on learning curriculum was awarded the 2011 Group Training Australia Partnership Award at the Career Development Association of Australia Conference in Cairns in April. The Primary Technical Schools Program, a partnership between WORKCO, the largest provider of employment and training services in Victoria's Wimmera and Grampians regions, and Horsham Primary School, gives Years 5 and 6 students the opportunity to gain practical experience in technical and trade-based areas in the school curriculum through hands-on learning, visits by guest speakers and industry tours. Horsham Primary School's Keryn Ackland said the program allows students to explore several careers early in their schooling. 'Children's early experiences influence their later life chances. Career education needs to begin in primary school. We need to raise expectations, broaden horizons and develop self-belief that anything is possible,' she said. Following a successful pilot program in 2010, the program is now a key part of the school's strategic goals, curriculum and timetabling.

## NEW CYBERSAFETY GUIDES

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) released an online professional development program, Connect.ed, in May that aims to help teachers to protect students from potential online dangers. Launching Connect.ed, ACMA Chairman, Chris Chapman said the online professional development program, which draws on Australian experts in the cyber-safety field, as well as on teachers and students themselves, was designed to complement and enhance ACMA's existing suite of cybersmart programs, which already includes extensive online support for teachers. The Connect.ed program covers cyber-bullying, sexting, excessive internet use, mobile use, e-security, and managing your

digital reputation and digital profiling. Connect.ed also advises teachers on the typical online activities of young people. Facebook also released an online guide for educators in May that aims to address safety and privacy concerns, and help teachers use the social networking site for more effective learning in the classroom and beyond. The guide offers teachers advice on developing school policies on using Facebook, shows students how to follow Facebook guidelines and explains safety and privacy settings on Facebook, but also shows teachers how they can use Facebook's pages and groups features to communicate with students and parents, and use Facebook as a professional development resource.

### LINKS

For more on Connect.ed, visit [www.cybersmart.gov.au/outreach.aspx](http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/outreach.aspx)

For more on Facebook's online guide for educators, visit <http://facebookforeducators.org>

## SKYPE IS A VERB

In the online world of information and communication technology, Microsoft is now trying to tackle Google through acquisitions. The acquisition path isn't new for the old firm. Microsoft has been buying start-ups and smaller companies and their technical teams for years to build products like Windows, Office and Internet Explorer. And don't forget its offer of USD48 billion for Yahoo in 2008, which led eventually to a Microsoft-Yahoo internet search partnership to take on arch-rival Google. Most recently, Microsoft has shelled out USD8.5 billion *in actual cash* for the voice-and-video technology leader, Skype Global. Microsoft apparently likes the fact that Skype has 170 million connected users and carried more than 207 billion minutes of voice and video conversations in 2010. Microsoft Chief Executive Steven Ballmer told the *New York Times's* Andrew Sorkin and Steve Lohr that that large active user base represents a major asset. 'It's an amazing customer imprint,' Ballmer said, 'and

Skype is a verb, as they say.' Microsoft plans to expand Skype's voice-and-video technology across Microsoft products like Xbox and Kinect, and Windows Phone and to connect Skype users with Lync, Outlook and Xbox Live.

## JOE LAPTOP

Still on things digital, Martin Amis, writing in the *Observer* on 'the peerless intelligence and rhetorical ingenuity of his exceptional friend, Christopher Hitchens,' has coined a new moniker for the average person, which Christopher Hitchens is undoubtedly not. It's Joe Laptop. While Amis, being Amis, didn't stretch this to Jane Laptop, it's almost certain that we'll see media references to Joe and Jane Laptop everywhere, soon.

## GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES

'Our federal and state governments allow us to take the Christian faith into schools and share it. We need to go and make disciples.' So said Access Ministries Chief Executive Officer Evonne Paddison, as recorded in a speech at the Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion national conference in Melbourne in 2008 that was sent to state Minister for Education Martin Dixon and Commonwealth Minister for Schools Peter Garrett in May. According to Victoria's *Education and Training Reform Act (2006)* 'Special religious instruction may be given in a government school' but 'not (to) promote any particular religious practice, denomination or sect.' 'We will be talking to Access Ministries and seeking an assurance from them that their instructors abide by this requirement,' Dixon said. The guidelines of the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations National School Chaplaincy Program stipulate that 'a chaplain should not take advantage of his or her privileged position to proselytise for that denomination or religious belief.' Garrett said any examples proselytising would be investigated.

*The Grapevine is written by Steve Holden, Editor of Teacher.*