

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF STATE SCHOOL ORGANISATIONS  
(ACSSO)**  
The national voice of parents of children in Australia's public schools and  
their school communities

## **LANGUAGES EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA**

Volume One Number Four: 12 May 2007

Having trouble reading this email? Read it on the web at  
<http://www.languageseducation.com/news1070512.pdf>

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Welcome to the fourth issue of the **Languages Education in Australia Newsletter**. Produced by the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) jointly with the Australian Parents Council (APC), this Newsletter will become a monthly event through 2007, to inform school communities and other subscribers with an interest in languages education, about events, activities and initiatives around the country in this vitally important field of learning and development – one with implications for the future of every student in our schools and for the future of our country in the modern world.

We want this Newsletter, and our new Languages Education in Australia Website (<http://www.languageseducation.com>) to become increasingly interactive, building two-way communication and providing a venue for school communities to put forward ideas, discussion topics, suggestions – and *a gallery of good news stories and photos about how your school is engaging its community around languages education*. Contact us on: [info@languageseducation.com](mailto:info@languageseducation.com)

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### **1. National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) Strategy: A New Hope?**

NALSAS was a cooperative initiative of State, Territory and Commonwealth governments in 1994 in response to a review and decision by the Council of Australian Government (COAG). This provided a funded national strategy to improve participation and proficiency levels in language learning in four targeted languages: Japanese, Chinese, Indonesian and Korean; and to support the contextual studies of Asia across the curriculum. Its purpose was to improve Australia's capacity and preparedness to interact internationally and in particular with key Asian countries and regions. From 1994 to 2002 the Australian government invested \$208 million to support and progress the strategy.

In 2002 that funding ceased, apart from a remnant \$1.2 million annual core funding to support the work of the Asia Education Foundation to promote studies of Asia across the curriculum.

On 10 May 2007, in his Speech in Reply, Labor Leader Kevin Rudd said: *Mr Speaker, at the dawn of the Asia-Pacific century, Australia lies in a region that will generate most of this century's economic growth. We must therefore ensure that we provide our businesses with every chance in*

*the decades ahead to engage fully in the new business opportunities that lie ahead.*

*My plan is to help foster a generation of Asia-literate Australians increasingly comfortable with the languages and cultures of our region.*

*Several years ago, the government discontinued funding for the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Strategy. This was a cooperative program which operated with the States and Territories... to 2002, which by that time had enabled hundreds of thousands of Australian school children to start learning the major languages of our region.*

*Tonight I announce that Labor will re-establish an Asian languages and studies strategy for Australian schools. This will cost \$65 million dollars over four years and will be done in partnership with the states and territories.*

**Editorial comment today provided by Francis Bacon: "The sweetest canticle is Nunc Dimittis, when a Man hath obtained worthy Ends and Expectations..." Scaramouche**

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## **2. Languages Teachers Recognised for Innovation and Excellence**

**Stephen Collis** *Northern Beaches Christian School, Terrey Hills, New South Wales*

### ***2007 Awards in Quality Teaching: Technology in languages; 2006 Microsoft Innovative Teacher Awards***

Stephen Collis is an exemplary teacher, engaging students through creative language learning and inspiring a dramatic growth in French elective enrolments and excellent student performance in French.

As the learning area manager for languages at Northern Beaches Christian School and the school's French teacher, Stephen brought the world into the classroom. He linked the school's students to other students studying French around the world through the creation of a website of online student communities. He has developed a French course available entirely online enabling students to work at their own pace.

When Steve wanted to teach beginner French students about language, culture and life, he created a safe, password-protected, moderated Web site called ***Beyond Borders***. There, students can send emails to a forum, text chat live, collaborate on central documents (wikis), post voicemails and keep blogs.

Read more at

[http://www.microsoft.com/australia/education/pil/innovativeteachers/innovteacher\\_winners06.aspx](http://www.microsoft.com/australia/education/pil/innovativeteachers/innovteacher_winners06.aspx).

**Viviana Golding** *Highton Primary School, Geelong, Victoria*

### ***Excellence in Teacher Leadership: Best National Achievement Languages Other than English - Italian***

Viviana Golding's vision and enthusiasm have inspired students and teachers to focus on the joy of learning a second language. She has established stimulating professional development opportunities that centre on engaging students in Italian culture and language. She has achieved this through her work as a teacher at Highton Primary School and as the Italian network leader in the Barwon south west region of Victoria.

The introduction of primary, secondary and tertiary Italian programmes at three local schools, increased professional development opportunities including exchange programmes to Italy, and the creation of a beautiful piazza in the grounds of Highton Primary School (courtesy of the school's Parents' Club) illustrate Viviana's success in inspiring students to learn Italian.

The number of year 7 Italian classes has risen from one in 2005 to ten in 2007 and the primary school is about to start a bilingual preschool programme. Viviana's programmes are now being adopted by other schools.

<http://www.hightonps.vic.edu.au/>

Read more at

[http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school\\_education/programmes\\_funding/programme\\_categories/scholarships\\_awards\\_prizes/national\\_awards\\_for\\_quality\\_schooling/2007\\_winners.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/programmes_funding/programme_categories/scholarships_awards_prizes/national_awards_for_quality_schooling/2007_winners.htm)

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### **3. Victorian Schools' Initiative on Bilingual Education**

Approximately 10,000 people in Australia use the language of Auslan, (**A**ustralian **S**ign **L**anguage) according to an analysis of the 1996 census. There are 23 schools in Victoria attended by deaf or partially deaf students.

Students of the Red Earth Cluster: Mooroolbark Primary, Mooroolbark East Primary, Manchester Primary, Bimbadeen Heights Primary, Kilsyth Primary and Mooroolbark Secondary College are working with Victorian College of the Deaf project to create bilingual resources (spoken and written English and signed in Auslan) for students aged prep to grade 4.

The cluster has developed innovative digital books using Flash to animate the stories, with audio of the text and using split screen technology to sign the text of the book in Auslan (Australian Sign Language).

Read more at <http://www.languageseducation.com/redearthcluster.pdf>.

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### **4. Languages Languish in Schools: Report**

*Jewel Topsfield, The Age 15 April 2007*

Foreign Language teaching in schools has been neglected over the past decade as Federal Government rhetoric about Australian values and the "downgrading of multiculturalism" have turned the nation more inward.

That is the conclusion of a report commissioned by the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO).

The draft report said language teaching has also been hit by a shortage of qualified teachers, low morale and inadequate time allocated to it in the crowded school curriculum.

It said the co-ordination of languages between primary and high school was "appalling", with only 41% of students surveyed able to continue a language learned at primary school, in secondary school.

The Council's national project manager, Rupert Macgregor, said languages education had been the subject of six major reviews and three national forums since 1993. But he said the number of year 12 students studying languages remained at 12 percent and had not shifted any closer to the 20 percent target adopted by state and federal education ministers in 2001. "Languages have slipped off the education agenda over the past decade and public debate has been virtually non-existent."

Read the whole article at

<http://www.languageseducation.com/topsfield070512.pdf>.

To obtain a copy of the ACSSO discussion paper, email us at

<mailto:information@languageseducation.com?subject=Languages Report>.

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## **5. Bilingual school's scores rise:**

*If it's in Spanish, this must be math class at Hawthorne*

*Antoinette Konz, Courier-Journal 15 May 2007*

It's shortly after 9 a.m. at Hawthorne Elementary as Flora Martinez's fourth-graders gather around her to go over vocabulary words and discuss an assignment about electricity.

But no one is speaking English.

Instead, Martinez and her students speak Spanish as they begin to diagram a parallel circuit.

"Muy bien," Martinez says as she looks over her students' work.

Her students are part of the dual-language program at Hawthorne, a diverse school in the Highlands.

The program, where 200 students are taught in Spanish for half the school day and in English the other half, is one of only two of its kind in Kentucky. The other

is at Maxwell Elementary in Lexington. Since adopting the programs, both schools have seen their test scores increase dramatically.

Read the whole article at

<http://www.languageseducation.com/konz070512.pdf>.

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## **6. Positively Plurilingual: The Contribution of Community Languages to UK Education and Society**

Plurilingualism is a concept developed by the Council of Europe to refer to the totality of an individual's linguistic competences in and across difference languages, which develops throughout life

UK society is changing and the need for good communication across cultures has never been greater. More than one in eight of English primary school children already speak a language other than English before arriving at school and this number is increasing. In some schools this proportion is much higher.

Any additional investment in developing their skills is likely to provide value for money in terms of outcomes.

People who already speak more than one language find it easier to learn new languages than monolinguals. The UK has a major linguistic asset in its multicultural population which, if developed wisely and inclusively alongside English and other languages, has the potential to benefit society as a whole as well as improving the life chances of individual children

This booklet presents some key findings from the 2005 survey of community languages in Britain. We aim to show how developing this asset is consistent with a wide range of existing social and educational policies, and our intention is to inform the work of policy-makers throughout the UK.

Download the

report: [http://www.cilt.org.uk/pdf/pubs/positively\\_plurilingual.pdf](http://www.cilt.org.uk/pdf/pubs/positively_plurilingual.pdf).

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## **7. SOME THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD**

*You may think these two articles from the USA are of relevance only to tertiary lecturers but who in fact trains the languages teachers in schools and how? In some ways and most campuses, Australian university languages programs have already moved away from the "literature fetish" and the "language/content dichotomy" as herein described but ... are languages departments (where such still exist), programs and lecturers teaching (their few) students the variety of languages they want and need to learn? Do we and they - and governments and educational authorities - know what that is?*

## **Languages Without Language Faculty**

Back in 2001, Drake University (Des Moines, Iowa, USA) did what to many language professors was nothing less than horrific: It announced that foreign

language instruction wasn't working, killed its language departments, and got rid of the instructors, including those with tenure.

Drake's president promised some sort of new approach, based on study abroad and individualized online instruction.

Language professors at Drake and elsewhere were outraged and, noting that the university hadn't figured out what it would put in place, predicted that the university would do terrible harm to language study and the humanities.

Six years later, Drake still doesn't have language departments or language professors, but it does have a new approach to language instruction in place.

And Drake — the institution language professors couldn't say enough bad things about — is being hailed in some quarters as a model.

Read the whole article at

<http://www.languageseducation.com/drake070512.pdf>.

## **Dramatic Plan for Language Programs**

A panel of some of the top professors of foreign languages has concluded that the programs that train undergraduate majors and new Ph.D.'s are seriously off course, with so much emphasis on literature that broader understanding of cultures and nations has been lost.

The panel, organized by the Modern Language Association, wants to jettison the traditional model in which language instruction is followed primarily by literary study.

In its place, the panel would like to see departments merge study of language and literature while adding more study of history, culture, economics, and society — in some respects turning language programs into area studies programs.

The changes might be most dramatic in graduate programs, in part because the panel's members believe that the professors who teach undergraduates need a much broader conception of their field.

Read the whole article at

<http://insidehighered.com/news/2007/01/02/languages>.

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## **8. Reminders**

**Conference: "Moving the boundaries of classroom learning", Spanish Teachers Conference, 23 June 2007, Adelaide, SA.**  
[maurene.mcewen@nmhs.sa.edu.au](mailto:maurene.mcewen@nmhs.sa.edu.au)

**Conference: Australian Society of Indonesian Language Educators biennial conference, 5-8 July 2007, Sunshine Coast, Qld.**  
<http://intranet.usc.edu.au/wacana/asile/>

**Conference: "The Language Connection", Modern Language Teachers  
Association of Western Australia, 11-14 July 2007, Perth, WA.**  
<http://www.mltawa.org/>

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