

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 Two, Number Eleven: 31 July 2008

Read this on the web at <http://www.languageseducation.com/newsI080731.pdf>

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SPECIAL EVENTS

Raising Children in More Than One Language

31 August 2008, Sydney Myer Asia Centre, Melbourne: 12.45pm-5pm

This is a free seminar for parents, grand-parents, care-givers and professionals working with children.

It will be held in the Sydney Myer Asia Centre, cnr. Swanston Street and Monash Road, University of Melbourne from 12.45pm-5pm on Sunday 31 August 2008

Presenters are:

Michael Clyne – an Australian-born bilingual and father of an Australian-born bilingual;

Suzanne Dopke – a speech pathologist and international authority on raising children bilingually. She is also the mother of two Australian-born bilingual children.

Presentations and discussions will explore a range of issues including:

- What parents and other carers can do to assist a child speak two languages
- Supporting the child's first steps into language
- Advice for parents starting out and wondering if they are doing the right thing
- How parents and grandparents can encourage children to use the community language by finding uses of special interest to them
- How to build on the child's personality and motivation
- Community resources and strategies to boost language maintenance and development

Panel discussions will answer questions and examine the ways that parents can be more active in promoting bilingualism with their children.

The seminar is free – but registration is essential by 22 August.

Registration and enquiries: rumaccc-info@unimelb.edu.au

Festuri 2008 & Inaugural Languages Speech Competition

31 August 2008, University of the Sunshine Coast, Queensland

2008 is the International Year of Languages and to celebrate this wonderful occasion, language learners from schools throughout the region will be able to compete in the inaugural Sunshine Coast Speech Competition.

This prestigious competition will be run by the Sunshine Coast Branch of the Modern Language Teachers' Association of Queensland (MLTAQ Inc).

It will be held in conjunction with the multicultural event 'FESTURI' on Sunday August 31st in the grounds of the University of the Sunshine Coast. The competition will give students in Years 4 to 12 the chance to showcase their language learning skills across a range of 7 different languages including Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese and Spanish.

Entrants will need to prepare a speech in the language they learn at school, present it in front of a panel of judges and then answer questions about the content of their speech, all in the same language. Participation certificates will be awarded to all competitors and both medals and Highly Commended certificates presented to the best quality speakers.

The languages are: Chinese; French; German; Indonesian; Italian; Japanese; Spanish

With a day full of entertainment and food stalls from around the world in addition to the Speech Competition, this will be an event not to miss

Read more at http://your.usc.edu.au/wacana/mltaq_speech2008.html

Read more about Festuri 2008 at <http://www.festuri.org.au/>

Languages Matter!

Modern Language Teachers Association of Queensland (MLTAQ) Biennial Conference

October 1-2 2008, Griffith University, Gold Coast, Queensland

This prestigious event is shaping up as one of the most challenging, rich, varied and valuable bench-mark activities in Australia for the International Year of Languages 2008.

An outstanding array of leading speakers, expert practitioners and experienced facilitators and session leaders present a program of discussion that will engage and stimulate a capacity audience drawn from right across Australia and overseas.

You simply cannot afford not to be there!

Read more at <http://www.mltaq.asn.au/conference2008.htm>

AUSTRALIA 2020 YOUTH SUMMIT

National Linguistic and Cultural Platform

One of the ideas and proposals developed by the 100 engaged, passionate, and diverse young Australians who attended the 2020 Youth Summit on 12th and 13th April 2008.

The creation of government agency parallel to "study in Australia" that

- stimulates collaboration between Universities
- enforces mandatory learning of foreign languages in secondary schools and
- assists businesses with linguistics retraining.

This agency could also facilitate educational and business exchange, GAP years and volunteer work and linguistic support for Australians returning to Australia after practicing a language abroad.

Furthermore, this agency would encourage the passing on of the maternal tongues of new Australians, both to their family and the rest of society.

It would also facilitate connections between Australians, migrants, refugees and foreign exchange students.

Read more at http://www.australia2020.gov.au/docs/youth_summit_communique.rtf

ASIA EDUCATION FOUNDATION

New promotion resources on languages education being funded by Australian Government

Advice has been received by ACSSO on 31 July that the Australian Government - through the Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations (DEEWR) - has approved the production and national distribution of a range of promotional materials developed by the Asia Education Foundation (AEF) jointly with the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations (AFMLTA).

This will bring to completion one of the original eight awareness-raising projects which were commissioned by DEEWR via the MCEETYA Working Party on Languages Education in connection with the Action Plan for Languages Education 2005-2008.

Arrangements are now being put in place by AEF for the production of the complementary range of materials, which are designed to build a shared understanding of the importance of languages education for students at all levels of schooling.

Key audience groups for the materials include: students; parents and families; school principals; teachers in general; and the wider community.

We will provide more detail on the production and national distribution of these materials in our next newsletter in August.

Proceedings of National Forum on Languages Education

November 2007

The Australian Government, through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, funded a National Seminar on Languages Education as part of the School Languages Programme. This seminar

was held in Melbourne on 29-30 November 2007. The Asia Education Foundation managed the development and implementation of the seminar.

An online Report of Proceedings of that 2007 National Languages Seminar "*Languages Open the Door to a Bigger World*" can be accessed at http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/public_html/languages.htm

The Report includes downloadable video presentations of each Seminar session, related PowerPoint presentations [where applicable], and some summative documents regarding action moving forward.

The final communiqué document produced by the Seminar notes that:

"It was however agreed that current Language education strategies are not sufficient to fully meet the size of the challenge.

- Urgent action and intervention is now required to re-conceptualise Languages education in Australian schools.
- Transformative and bold innovation is needed.
- Further discussion required regarding whether resources should be focused on languages most taught and studied in Australian schools.
- Significant increase in funding to effectively support Languages is required at both national and State/Territory level."

Read more at http://www.languagesopenthedoor.edu.au/documents/seminar_release.doc

Call to Action

Asia literacy for every young Australian

An initiative of the AEF Advisory Board, endorsed by representatives of peak education bodies at the AEF National Forum, Adelaide 19-20 May 2008

The Asia Education Foundation has formed Australia's Asia Literacy Alliance of peak education stakeholders who call for:

- The Council of Australian Governments to act by December 2008 to develop and resource a National Action Plan to implement the National Statement for Engaging Young Australians with Asia in Australian Schools and to monitor improvements in Asia literacy through system progress measures
- The National Goals for Schooling to state the necessity to equip every young Australian with Asia skills and knowledge
- The National Curriculum to embed studies of Asia as core elements in English, History and Geography
- The National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program to designate funds to enhance Asian languages teaching and to increase studies of Asia in Humanities and Social Sciences, English and The Arts
- Digital Revolution initiatives to connect teachers and students with schools in Asia and provide Asia resources on-line
- Quality Teaching initiatives to develop teachers' knowledge and skills in teaching Asian languages and teaching about Asia
- Teacher Education initiatives to equip new graduates with knowledge and skills to teach about Asia and provide incentives to attract Asia-literate graduates (including those with Asian languages) to teaching
- Initiatives to expand the Leading 21st Century Schools: Engage with Asia principals' program
- Family-School and Community Partnerships Bureau to promote the need for Asia knowledge and skills for every young Australian and promote support from parents to achieve this
- Business to support Asia literacy for all students.

Read more at <http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/pdf/calltoaction.pdf>

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OPINION

Learning Languages

Yvette Slaughter & John Hajek

Kevin Rudd's Chinese language skills have contributed to renewed discussion about Australia's language capacity in the media.

Much focus has been on the importance of Asian languages (for example, Nicholson, Age 21/04/08; Yeoh, Age 9/05/08) and of Australia's engagement with Asia for trade and security purposes.

Other articles (for example, Hajek & Slaughter, Age 5/05/08; LoBianco, Opinion Online 9/05/08; Absalom, Australian 2/04/08) have acknowledged the importance of Asian language skills - but also called for the support of a broad range of languages.

As Davies (Age, 28/04/08) highlights, improvement in Australia's language capabilities requires an extensive change in attitude towards the complex endeavour of language learning.

He also points out that language learning is neither a simple undertaking nor a quick-fix for Australia's trade and security concerns.

From 2009, the Rudd government will provide around \$62 million, over a four-year period, for the study of Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean. While this is great for Asian languages, this policy treats these four languages in isolation from the wider notion of language study – and from the use of languages other than English by over 16% of Australia's population.

We argue that this isolation will frustrate the program's aims. Languages do not work in isolation, and Asian languages should be supported within the wider promotion of a broad range of languages.

Our research shows that the success of language programs is strongly affected by attitudes towards language learning – and towards countries and cultures.

These are, in turn, affected by political events, government policies and the ups and downs of world economies, among other issues.

Belief in the importance of language study needs to be underpinned by promoting a wide range of rationales – thus building a genuine desire to engage with other cultures and people (as friends, not as potential enemies) – and the provision of a broad range of languages.

In this way, language study can be protected in part from the fickle nature of world events and public attitudes; and eventually the study of all languages will prosper.

*Dr Yvette Slaughter & Assoc Professor John Hayek, School of Languages & Linguistics, University of Melbourne.
This article appeared in ACEL's "Directions in Education" of 23 May 2008*

Read their earlier and other articles referenced at <http://www.languageseducation.com/opinion.htm>

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VIEW FROM ABROAD

Ensuring America's Place in the Global Economy by Building Language Capacity in the Schools

Rita Oleksak, President of the American Council on Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), addressing a US Congressional Committee on languages education, 25 January 2007

ACTFL offers the following recommendations to strengthen the foreign language capabilities of our nation:

- Ensure that ALL languages are supported in our educational system, not just the languages that are deemed critical for today. Since research supports the notion that after learning a second language, the third and fourth languages come more easily, it is important to support any language that a school system considers important for its community and for which teachers are available.
- Encourage and support the creation of articulated, continuous sequences of language courses beginning in the earliest grades and continuing through college, with immersion and language study abroad as key components.
- Include funding for the development of a consistent program of assessments starting in the earliest grades to measure student progress toward proficiency in foreign languages.
- Since learning a foreign language increases performance in other core subject areas, make foreign languages truly a part of the core curriculum in every school.
- Provide assistance to community colleges and universities offering specialized foreign language instruction focused on combining language instruction with other majors, and for special purposes, such as law enforcement, health care, and first responders.
- Provide incentives to enhance teacher recruitment and retention, such as loan forgiveness, and ensure teacher quality through the teacher education and certification process.
- Require intensive training for teachers recruited from abroad so they understand how to teach in [our] schools, and provide professional development for teachers currently in the classroom on how to incorporate standards-based teaching into their curriculum.
- Develop the skills of our Heritage Language speakers by encouraging the continued learning of their native language as well as English.
- Fund research into a wide range of areas, including enrollments, best practices, and longitudinal studies to examine the effects of language education on the cognitive development, as well as the academic and career success of students.
- Provide funding for public education initiatives such as the Discover Language- Discover the World campaign.
- Policy makers and business leaders need to support efforts to change public attitudes toward foreign language learning.

Read more at <http://www.actfl.org/files/public/testimonyoleksak.pdf>

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OPINION

International Diplomacy and Languages Education

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice & Minister for Foreign Affairs the Hon Stephen Smith MP, answering questions from the students of Mercedes College, Perth, 25 July 2008

SMITH: ... when I was in Indonesia, I discovered that Australia was building or repairing 2,000 Indonesian high schools as part of our development assistance. And you can have good relations between ministers, good relations between governments, good relations between nations; but the thing that really, in the end, brings a firm partnership and friendship between nations is what we call the people-to-people exchanges. And in people-to-people exchanges, there's nothing, in my view, and I'm sure the Secretary shares it - there's nothing more powerful to build people-to-people exchanges than education.

So young - historically, one of the best things Australia did was what we used to call the Colombo Plan, where we got young students from Southeast Asia coming to Australia to study in the '50s and '60s and '70s. Now we do that through scholarships and through encouraging young students from other nations to come to Australia. When they go back to their own countries, they're ambassadors for Australia for life. What we're now trying to do is to encourage young students to go to countries in our region and study, to learn their languages, to

appreciate their culture more, so that they can become ambassadors for us in those countries, but also become ambassadors for those countries when they come back to Australia.

So it's a very small thing, but it just, to me, crystallised and underlined how our relationship with Indonesia, which from times has been problematic, really now has become a first-class relationship. And the relationship I have with Foreign Minister Wirajuda is personally very strong. And what is often a difficult relationship just because you're neighbors is now probably in the best state that we've seen it historically. And that's very important for Australia. So it's a small thing, but to me it was quite memorable. And it was widely appreciated in Indonesia, because they said to themselves, well, here we have young Australians actually wanting to understand our language, understand our culture, and genuinely take an interest in it.

RICE: Can I just add on exactly that point? Because one thing that I would encourage you all to do is study a foreign language and go to another country. And you never know what - you know, for me, it was Russian. My mother tried desperately - I had nine years of French. I was dragged off to French lessons when I was nine years old, and it never really stuck. I can understand French, I can read French, but I could never speak it.

The first time I heard the Russian language, it was like falling in love. And Russian has always been, for me, a language that just resonates with me. And so learning another language and knowing other cultures is really important. And Australia, like the United States, is continental size. And so you can go a long time and never really learn anybody else's language. But it's important to do that.

Read more at http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/transcripts/2008/080725_mercedes.html

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RESOURCES

German with a Smile

Helga Lees – Isle of Wight, UK

This website provides an insight into the make-up and language content of the course & important downloads. It offers links, information and background material such as pictures and maps of Germany and Austria. The website is complementary to the book 'German with a Smile' by Helga Lees. Teaching/learning content, exercises plus a wealth of useful material can be found in the book.

"German with a Smile" is a new interesting one-stop course + complementary website for Beginners and Students who wish to revise.

Acquire all the relevant language knowledge to function in a wide range of situations in German speaking countries, and/or use the course to prepare for Intermediate Level Exams.

It is structured around a story in a stimulating and humorous environment to encourage the learning and practising of acquired language skills.

German language course book, integrated German language website to practise German sounds, study German, speak the German language, travel and communicate in German speaking areas, gain an insight into the culture of the German areas.

Read more at <http://www.germanlearnteach.com/>

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FROM HERE AND THERE

USA: We Made History!

New York Immigration Coalition, 23 July 2008

More than a decade of direct actions, legal work, research, community organizing, and coalition work have culminated in a major civil rights victory for millions of New Yorkers!

On July 22, 2008, Mayor Bloomberg and City Council Speaker Christine Quinn announced Executive Order 120, which ensures that all New Yorkers will have meaningful access to all city government programs and services, regardless of their English ability.

As a result, when New Yorkers go into any city government office, they'll be able to get important forms and information in at least six languages and get help in their language when they need it.

Read more at <http://www.nilc.org/immspbs/la/nyic-lang-access-2008-07-23.pdf>

Canada: Young writers create bilingual books

The Record.com July 25, 2008

Karen Kawawada reports on a club of students aged seven to 14 who are spending 10 days writing dual-language books at the Waterloo (Canada) Public Library. The books they produce will be bound and put in public and school libraries for anyone to check out.

Some students are telling the story of their immigration to Canada, while others are writing fiction. Some are working with a sibling or friend who speaks the same first language; others are working on their own. All get help from teachers Stephanie Ledger and Kay Cairns. Parents also help, mostly with editing and typing their first languages.

Ledger, who teaches English as a second language, and Cairns, who teaches Grades 1 and 2, started a lunchtime dual-language book club at Winston Churchill Public School four years ago. The idea was to help newcomer students improve their skills in both English and their first languages.

Developing literacy skills in one language helps with corresponding skills in another, Ledger said

Read more at <http://news.therecord.com/News/Local/article/388984>

Malaysia: Local Cartoons to Boost Kids' Command of English

Malaysia Star, July 19, 2008

The Malaysia Star reports on a new initiative in Terengganu, a north-eastern peninsular Malaysian state. A partnership between a local animation team and a Hollywood producer will result in the production of locally produced English language animation for use in schools.

Locally produced cartoons in English will be used in nurseries and kindergartens in efforts to encourage the use of the language from very early years.

"This will be a home-grown software in which a series of popular cartoons will help enhance the command of English among the young," said Ahmad Razif Abd Rahman, state executive councillor in charge of education. The state government is also providing computers to preschools and primary schools to assist in teaching English.

"The state is serious about equipping teachers with the right tools to enable them to teach English without any setback," he said, adding that it was important that children be taught to speak eloquently in English.

Source: <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2008/7/20/nation/21874961&sec=nation>

USA: Demand Growing for Teachers of Chinese

Bloomberg.com, July 25, 2008

Schools in the U.S. face a shortage of instructors in Chinese, stymieing efforts to prepare pupils for careers tied to China, the world's fastest-growing economy...

Programs to teach Chinese in grades K through 12 have almost tripled since 2004 to at least 779, say the Asia Society and the College Board, two New York-based nonprofits.

Americans fluent in Chinese will be needed for finance, business, diplomacy and security agencies, according to the U.S. Defense Department's National Security Education Program.

Read more at http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601080&sid=aeQT_cCrj3eI&refer=asia

Sri Lanka: Promoting English Teaching to Enhance Jobs - A Presidential Initiative

Daily News (Sri Lanka), July 22, 2008

Sri Lanka's president, Mahinda Rajapaksa, has recently announced the initiative "English as a Life Skill."

The initiative aims to boost English teaching and learning as part of ongoing training for employment in IT and call centers. In the short term, the project aims to train 50,000 people within three years.

Training will focus on the communicative skills required for employment in the targeted sectors.

Funding will operate on a public-private partnership model, with the government matching funds from the private sector to provide the training.

Read more at <http://www.dailynews.lk/2008/07/22/fea02.asp>

Spain: How Does Language Exist In The Brain?

Science Daily June 30, 2008

Science Daily reports on ongoing research into the neurocognition of bilingualism at the University of the Basque Country in Spain. La Mente Bilingüe ("the bilingual brain") research team, headed by Dr. Itziar Laka, is examining ways in which the brain handles two languages. The team is researching effects of the age of language acquisition on an individual's ability to learn a second language quickly.

Dr. Laka explains that although it is well known that the age of acquisition has an effect on whether or not an individual will speak with an accent or not, age seems to be irrelevant in terms of how quickly an individual will learn vocabulary. Grammar appears to be a complex phenomenon.

"As regards grammar, our research shows that it should not be understood as a whole but that inside it there are some phenomena that do show effects of acquisition and others that do not," said Laka.

The team is also studying ways in which the structure of the first language might influence the way in which the second language is processed in the brain.

Read more at <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/06/080630093618.htm>

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REMINDEERS

21-25 July - FIPF World Congress - Quebec City, Canada - <http://www.fipf.org/>

7-9 August - Modern Language Teachers Assoc of Tasmania State Conference - Hobart - <mailto:suzette.holmes@education.tas.gov.au>

10 August - Toowoomba Languages & Cultural Festival - Toowoomba - <http://www.mltaq.asn.au/mltaq/branch%20stuff/darlingdowns.htm>

1-2 October - Modern Language Teachers Association of Queensland Biennial Conference - Gold Coast - <http://www.mltaq.asn.au/conference2008.htm>

3-5 October - Japan Studies Association of Canada 2008 Annual Conference - Waterloo, Canada - <http://www.lib.unimelb.edu.au/collections/asian/jsaa/JSAC.pdf>

16-18 October - Immersion Education: Pathways to Bilingualism & Beyond - St Paul, USA - <http://www.carla.umn.edu/conferences/immersion2008/call.html>

25-27 September - XIIth Foundation for Endangered Languages Conference 2008 - Leeuwarden, Netherlands - <http://www.ogmios.org/home.htm>

8-9 November - International Symposium on Japanese Studies and Japanese Language - Hong Kong - <http://www.lib.unimelb.edu.au/collections/asian/jsaa/hk-j.pdf>

20-23 November - American Council for Teaching Foreign Languages Annual Convention and World Languages Expo - Orlando, USA - <http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=4730>

4-7 December - Media in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning, Singapore - <http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/cls/clasic2008/>

7-11 December - World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education - Melbourne - <http://www.wipce2008.com/>

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ACSSO EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

Subscription is available free to ACSSO's current range of 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)

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