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Independent Schools of  
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## My School website

The My School website has, as expected, generated a considerable degree of media attention and controversy. While the media coverage, including the construction of league tables, has been disappointing and unhelpful (but not entirely unexpected) schools are reminded that the publication of NAPLAN and other school performance data represents only a small element of a school’s overall educational focus.

The AIS, in responding to media enquiries about the views of independent schools regarding the website, has commented that the NAPLAN testing was designed as a diagnostic tool for schools to assist in the development of future teaching strategies. It is, therefore, a somewhat limited and inappropriate measure of a school’s academic performance. The My School website provides only limited additional data to the already comprehensive information provided by schools to parents, such as information on academic progress, student welfare, pastoral care and co-curricular activities.

The league tables produced by some media outlets, in reducing the school performance data to a single score or focusing on a very narrow range of test results, do nothing to assist parents or the community to make valid assessments of a school’s achievements.

## 2010 Data Standards Manual – Student Background Characteristics

The 2010 Data Standards Manual provides guidance to schools and school systems with the collection of information on student background characteristics using nationally agreed, standard measures of the characteristics. The 2010 edition of the Manual is to be used by schools and school systems when enrolling students for the first time in the 2010 school year or when collecting information, via special data collection forms, on students participating in national assessments in 2010.

The Manual is intended for school and school system personnel responsible for:

- designing enrolment forms and enrolment processes;
- collecting information from parents;
- designing, maintaining or modifying student information storage and retrieval systems;
- updating student records; and
- managing or coordinating at the school level student participation in full cohort literacy and numeracy (NAPLAN) testing, and national or international sample assessments.

The 2010 Data Standards Manual is now available on the MCEECDYA website at the following link:

[http://www.mceetya.edu.au/mceecdy/data\\_standards\\_manual\\_2010,30011.html](http://www.mceetya.edu.au/mceecdy/data_standards_manual_2010,30011.html)

## Changes to the *Education Act* for Managing Students with Violent Behaviour

The violent behaviour of a school student can pose a risk to the health and safety of all students (including the student concerned), to school staff and to visitors to the school site. Schools are legally required to first assess and then eliminate or control that risk.

The *Education Act* has been amended to give schools the power to obtain information relevant to the assessment and management of this risk from certain government agencies and to provide the Director-General with the power to direct that a student with violent behaviour can only attend a government school that is able to safely accommodate the student. The Minister for Education and Training has issued guidelines setting out how these processes will work, and compliance with these guidelines is mandatory.

The guidelines can be accessed on the AIS website at [www.aisnsw.edu.au](http://www.aisnsw.edu.au). Supplementary material is being developed to assist principals who are required to take action under the guidelines and this material will include appropriate referral points and contacts where assistance and support can be obtained. In the interim, questions about the guidelines should be directed to Robyn Yates at [ryates@aisnsw.edu.au](mailto:ryates@aisnsw.edu.au)

The guidelines will be reviewed after 12 months and the AIS would appreciate feedback from principals who have had cause to use the guidelines.

## Board of Studies update

Dr Timothy Wright, the independent sector nominee on the Board of Studies, has provided the following key points from the Board of Studies meeting of 15th December 2009.

- The BoS President, Mr Alegounarias, gave an indication that the NSW School Certificate will be scrutinised in the context of the Bradley report into higher education, with a focus on the impact of raised school leaving ages and the impact that SES quotas at tertiary level may have on schools.
- The Board is confident of the standards and processes related to the 2009 HSC results. It was found that the result patterns in the Studies of Religion examinations were similar to historic patterns.
- The Minister has reiterated the role of the Board in coordinating, across all sectors, the NSW approach to the National Curriculum.

## NSW – Commonwealth agreement on early childhood education

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Partnership on Early Childhood Education provides funding to NSW for students to achieve universal access to early childhood education in the year before school by 2013 and to improve the quality of that education.

From mid-2011 licensed centre-based or mobile services in NSW employing university qualified Early Childhood Teachers as per NSW regulations will be eligible for funding to help meet the costs of teacher employment and professional development. Smaller services that are not required by regulation to employ a teacher, but have a teacher on staff anyway, will also be eligible for the funding of one teacher. Services will be eligible for funding of \$6,000 to \$8,000 per teacher, per year, with an additional \$1,000 per teacher, per year, in remote areas.

For more information about how the arrangements will be implemented in NSW go to [www.community.nsw.gov.au](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au)

## Education Tax Refund

The Australian Government is providing an Education Tax Refund (ETR) which allows families to claim a range of education related expenses. The Australian Taxation Office has advised that, to date, only half of all eligible Australian families have lodged a claim.

The ETR provides parents with refunds of up to \$375 per primary school student and \$750 per secondary school student. Claims can be made as part of the normal tax return process or through family support allowance processes for those not required to lodge a tax return. Taxpayers have until March-April 2010 to claim out-of-pocket expenses for the 2009 school year if they lodge their individual returns through a tax agent. Schools are encouraged to bring the ETR to the attention of parents. For more information about the ETR visit [www.educationtaxrefund.gov.au](http://www.educationtaxrefund.gov.au)

## ABS CensusAtSchool

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has advised that the 2010 CensusAtSchool Online Questionnaire is now open until 2nd July 2010. The 2010 data will then be released to the Random Sampler facility online for use during Terms 3 and 4 and thereafter. The more schools which get involved the better the data available for use by all students.

CensusAtSchool is an annual online questionnaire and analysis resource for students in Years 5–12 at all Australian schools that can be included in curriculum programs. It is voluntary and is provided strictly for educational purposes only. The 2010 questionnaire includes 30 questions on topics about students, including their lifestyle (e.g. method of travel to school, favourite type of music and use of technology), characteristics (e.g. eye colour, height) and opinions on environmental issues. There are also interactive questions designed to test reaction time and concentration.

The registration process for teachers has been streamlined for easier access with an online form available to create a CensusAtSchool Teacher Account. The new form is available at <http://www.cas.abs.gov.au/cgi-local/casr.pl>.

For more information about CensusAtSchool 2010 visit the CensusAtSchool home page on [www.abs.gov.au/censusatschool](http://www.abs.gov.au/censusatschool)

## 2010 Schools First Conference

The National Australia Bank's Schools First program, which provided millions of dollars for schools in 2009, is holding a Power through Partnership conference on Friday, 19th March 2010 in Melbourne. The conference will bring together key education stakeholders in the school and tertiary sectors, community sector representatives, industry leaders and government officials to explore what is being done in school-community partnerships, what could be done to build and sustain these partnerships and the role that each sector can play in contributing to educational reform through partnering.

Speakers at the conference, being held at the NAB Auditorium at the Docklands, include:

- Professor Geoff Masters, CEO of the Australian Council for Educational Research
- Steve Bracks, former premier of Victoria
- Adam Smith, CEO of the Foundation for Young Australians, and
- Peter Clayden, Deputy Principal of Canberra College – the 2009 Schools First National Impact Award winner.

For more information visit the Schools First website at [www.schoolsfirst.edu.au](http://www.schoolsfirst.edu.au)

## Premier's Reading Challenge

As part of the Premier's Reading Challenge, OPSM will be running a campaign titled *Eye Love Books* from 1st February to 1st April 2010, which will see New South Wales schools benefit from their students having eye tests. For every student having an eye test during the *Eye Love Books* campaign, OPSM will donate \$5 worth of books to the student's school library. Please note that schools will need at least 10 students to have an eye test in order to qualify for a prize. Student and school information will remain confidential and there will be no direct mailing by OPSM to students or schools on other matters.

New South Wales schools can now go to the website [www.opsm.com.au/prc](http://www.opsm.com.au/prc) for more information, as well as FAQs, a form for participation and information on store locations for testing.

## Harmony Day 2010

This year, Harmony Day will be held on 21st March 2010 with the theme *Express Yourself*. This year, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and the Australian Red Cross have published *Y Challenge – celebrating diversity*, a program which provides teachers and parents with a resource manual and other materials to help young people learn the principles of respect and tolerance for other cultures.

Harmony Day ideas, activities and the 'Aussie Facts' page can be accessed through the Diverse Australia Program website at [www.harmony.gov.au](http://www.harmony.gov.au). Promotional products are also available free from this site and include posters, button badges, temporary Harmony Day tattoos, stickers and balloons.

## 2010 National Awards for Excellence in School Music Education

Nominations are now being called for the 2010 Awards for Excellence in School Music Education, which recognise music teachers and school leaders for their contribution to enhancing the status and quality of music education in schools. There will be up to eleven teacher Awards and up to two school leader Awards. Each recipient of an Award will receive a certificate and a cheque for \$5,000, which is intended to be used to further their professional learning related to music education.

The closing date is Friday, 16th April 2010, and all details about the 2010 Awards, including Guidelines and nomination forms are available on the website at: <http://musicawards.asme.edu.au/>

**PLEASE REMEMBER TO ADVISE THE AIS OF ANY CHANGES TO YOUR SCHOOL'S CONTACT DETAILS, INCLUDING CHANGE OF PRINCIPAL, BUSINESS MANAGER AND CHAIR OF THE SCHOOL COUNCIL. CHANGES CAN BE EMAILED TO [admin@aisnsw.edu.au](mailto:admin@aisnsw.edu.au)**

Dr Geoff Newcombe  
Executive Director  
1st February 2010