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primary & secondary



2012/13

21st Century Learning:
Use of tablet technology
in the classroom

Gonski Review:
Time for a new vision
for Australian education

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editor's note



Welcome to the 2012/13 edition of *Education Matters* magazine. Australia's education sector reached a milestone in 2012 when the Federal Government made its long-awaited response to the Gonski Review of Funding for Schooling.

In an address to the National Press Club, Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced that a \$6.5 billion new school funding system based on individual needs will aim to deliver the education necessary for our students to get the jobs they need in the future.

With a bill due to enter Parliament by the end of 2012, Gillard called on Australians to join her "crusade" to put the nation's schools in the world's top-five schooling systems by 2025. She said the extra proposed funding would be aimed toward lifting teacher quality, more power for principals, and more information for parents through My School.

"I believe as a nation we should aim to make new money of this order available to our nation's schools, provided we can ensure that every dollar of the money makes a difference by having an appropriate transition to the new system and tying the money to improving schools," she said in her speech.

"Every child falling behind will get a personalised learning plan.

"Principals will be empowered to lead their schools, making decisions that get improvements unencumbered by stifling bureaucracy," she continued.

"To win the economic race, we must first win the education race. For our children to get the jobs of the future, we must give them a great education now."

The new changes are set to take place in 2014, and in the meantime Gillard must go into battle with the states over the funding arrangements.

Inside this issue we have a full-round up of the Gonski Review from key industry figures, including Dr David Zyngier, senior lecturer in curriculum and pedagogy at Monash University; Federal President of the Australian Education Union, Angelo Gavrielatos; Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) President, Norm Hart; and Australian Secondary Principals Association (ASPA) President, Sheree Vertigan.

Also inside Phil Smith writes about the educator's challenge and how the work of teachers remains essential in helping young people learn their way into the future. Charmaine Yabsley reports on how principals and teachers can stay fit, healthy and happy through the school year.

We have a special report from the NSW Department of Education and Communities – Sydney Region about its iPad in schools trail, and Margaret Ambrose reports on the Federal Government's Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative (AuSSI).

I would be very interested to hear your thoughts on our magazine or any of the issues addressed inside. Please feel free to drop me a line at editor@peachmedia.com.au or follow me on Twitter.

Kathryn Edwards

Editor

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What is the Global Classroom Project?

The Global Classroom Project provides teachers with the online spaces, a global network, and opportunities to connect, share, learn and collaborate globally. The #globalclassroom community hosts a wide range of primary, middle, and secondary global projects, which are organised and run by teachers around the world.

How did the Global Classroom Project come about?

It all started in March last year, while I was planning for a four-week relief teaching placement in a Year 6 class here in Perth, Western Australia. Late one night, I responded to a tweet from Deb Frazier, in Ohio, USA, who was keen to run a global VoiceThread project with her Grade 1 students. This idea became Global Classroom 2011, a project involving teachers and students from Romania, Australia, New Zealand, Guatemala, and the USA.

Three months later, we asked for expressions of interest for a “2011-12” project, and were overwhelmed by the response – with over 50 teachers signing up within three weeks. Faced with this (terrifying!) challenge, I dreamt up a way to enable interested teachers to connect and collaborate via informal online community spaces. I soon found myself leading the creation of the “The Global Classroom Project”, the world’s newest global education community.

In 2011-12, we established our project wiki and blog, and set up teachers’ groups on Facebook, Edmodo, and Skype. Registered #globalclassroom teachers are invited to join and participate in as many groups as

they wish, and participate in projects which interest them or their students. Last year, we hosted over 15 global projects, and provided a space for innovative teachers to explore new and exciting ways to open up their classrooms to the world.

Through the efforts of our amazing leadership team and mentors, the #globalclassroom community has grown from humble beginnings to involve over 350 teachers from 35 countries, across six continents. Leading this community has been a humbling, yet extremely rewarding experience, and I am excited about where we can take it over the years to come.

Why do you think it’s important for teachers from all over the world to collaborate and share ideas?

When I walk into a class and see children learning about another country using worksheets, I can’t help staring at it, thinking, “Why do you want to do worksheets when you can talk or interact with children in that country who can tell you what you want to find out?”

Through Twitter, Skype, and the Global Classroom, I have made friends all over the world, and been privileged to meet and work with people from richly diverse backgrounds. For example, I regularly correspond with Govinda Panthy, who runs his own school in rural Nepal, and earlier this year, I held a Skype meeting with the Kerala Finance Minister in India, co-inaugurating a major ICT project in a rural high school.

Ultimately, it doesn’t matter which tools teachers use to connect and collaborate globally. The learning and opportunities

which arise from simply talking to other educators, and students, around the world transforms your worldview and teaching practice. When you think globally, you can’t go back.

What can school children learn from their peers overseas when they get the chance to connect and talk with them?

A great deal! There are so many stories to tell, but here are a few examples:

In Tina Schmidt’s (@MrsSchmidtB4 – USA) *Edmodo PenPals* project, children from 11 countries participated in moderated discussions about school life, hobbies, weather, pets, special holidays, etc. with similarly-aged students around the world. I still laugh recalling the American students’ horrified comments about children in Australia having to wear school uniforms, and it was amazing to see children working out the time-zones and participating in real time conversations – well outside of school hours!

Another fantastic project was Deb Frazier’s (@Deb_Frazier – USA) Kids Speak VoiceThread, which saw K-3 children from five countries asking and responding to each other’s questions about the world. Their discussions ranged from playground games, favourite books, pets, and languages, and have been listened to over 6000 times.

While these are just a few #globalclassroom projects, they testify to the power of opening up students’ learning to the world. They really do help us fulfil our goals of building cross-cultural understanding and mutual respect between teachers and students worldwide.



How easy or hard is it for teachers to integrate the internet and social media in their classrooms?

Many teachers struggle with connecting technologies and social media being blocked at their school, but some institutions are more open than others. Some of our teachers have class Twitter accounts whereas at other schools that's unheard of. Similarly, not all teachers can benefit from our links with 'Hello Little World Skypers', a community of teachers who regularly connect their students via Skype videoconferencing.

So, it really depends on the school and the support of the school leadership. Many teachers involved in global collaboration are pioneers in their schools and educational districts, and given the considerable lack of understanding about what we do, we tend to rely on our global networks for support, advice, and new opportunities.

You've also had an online blog going for over two years. How has it helped you develop professionally?

My blog started out as a way to reflect on my relief teaching and classroom management practices. I also kept a reflective journal, a more private version of the blog, and they have both evolved over time.

I find it ironic that my first year teacher's reflections on classroom management and relief teaching consistently drives thousands of visits to my blog every year, and I continue to receive wonderful comments and emails from people who have learnt something, or found solace from my writing.

My blog has given me a voice beyond the normal education system. I'm not "just

another relief teacher". It has enabled me to make a difference, all over the world.

Do you see yourself transitioning to full-time teaching?

Relief teaching has had its ups and downs. I'm now in my third year of teaching, and I've taught in around 32 schools. Some days it is frustrating and hard, yet on others you walk out with a big smile on your face thinking about how much you love your job.

I've taught several hundred classes, and worked with well over 1,000 students. I've come to treasure the relationships I've built with experienced teachers and students in a number of schools; and have the privilege of watching my students learn and grow over time.

Ultimately, I would like to transition into my own class, but I'm looking for a school which values and supports my work with global education. Relief teaching has helped me grow into the teacher I am today, and I'm happy to see where the journey takes me.

Where to next for the Global Classroom Project?

'Global Classroom 2012-13' is going to be bigger and better as we implement a few changes and refinements based on feedback we've received. It was launched in the week following my presentation at the ACEC conference (October 3-5, 2012), where I was happy to meet several #globalclassroom teachers face-to-face for the very first time!

The Global Classroom Project is a global innovation community. If you're interested in using our spaces to explore, learn, and connect globally, you're welcome to join us.



Michael Graffin is a third-year teacher working in Perth, Western Australia. He is the co-founder and leader of The Global Classroom Project, and a member of the iEARN Australia Management Team.

With diverse interests in education technology, science, iPads, relief teaching, and global education, Michael blogs at mgraffin.edublogs.org and theglobalclassroomproject@wordpress.com.

You can email him at mgraffin@gmail.com, or connect via Twitter by following @mgraffin, @gcporganisers and @iEARNAustralia.

To find out more about or get involved in the Global Classroom Project, please visit the following websites:

Blog: <http://theglobalclassroomproject.wordpress.com>

2011-12 Wiki: <http://globalclassroom2011-12.wikispaces.com>

2012-13 Wiki: <http://globalclassroom2012-13.wikispaces.com> (Launching October 2012)