

Credit rating company branches into education

Credit rating company Standard and Poor's has developed a web tool that will allow parents to compare the performance of US public schools.

The website, under construction, will allow users to compare statistics for up to five schools or districts at a time. For each public district there will be a 'return on resources' analysis comparing student performance with district spending.

As well as allowing customised searches, the site will automatically compare a school's statistics to state and national averages, and to a peer group of schools with similar demographics.

A director of Standard and Poor's school evaluation services division, Bob Durante, said calls for accountability in education were increasing. He said the tool – based on measurements such as test scores, spending, and demographics of students and teachers – would help provide transparency and objectivity about school performance.

"There is currently a great deal of data available, but not much information," he said.

The ambitious US\$40 million project covering 92,000 public schools is funded by private foundations and the federal government and is scheduled for completion by the end of the year. Standard and Poor's contract to run the service lasts for two years.

Vanessa DeCarbo – communications and research director for Hispanic CREO, a Washington DC-based organisation that helps low-income Hispanic families with educational options for their children – said user-friendly applications and solutions were needed for parents, educators and community-serving organisations to access school information.

The existence of so many comparison systems that did not connect with each other was a problem, she said. A centralised parental resource was needed.

A number of organisations provided good products, such as: www.greatschools.net, www.schoolresults.org and www.just4kids.org.

"We are all for technology but we are finding that there are also huge concerns about the digital divide in our communities," Ms DeCarbo said.

"Issues around the maintenance of the websites and the information on them also need to be addressed."

Ms DeCarbo said Hispanic CREO and a number of non-profit education organisations were planning a similar and cost-effective technology solution to reach parents, educators, policy makers and groups.

A New Zealand website launched in May by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority contains profiles of each

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Quality in early childhood means much more than meeting government regulations, video shows

A video released this week by New Zealand early childhood education (ECE) expert Sarah Farquhar aims to show parents what to consider when choosing an early childhood service. We spoke to Dr Farquhar about what prompted her to make it.



Sarah Farquhar

Dr Farquhar said the video was a response to concerns such as: "How families can learn where to get the best care and the best education for their child,

what they should expect of an early childhood service, what they will gain from it and how they can tell if a service is meeting their child's needs, and their own".

Porirua-based Dr Farquhar has extensive experience in teaching and research, and is cited internationally for her work on quality in ECE. Her research has repeatedly shown the importance to parents of information about the choices they face, and her experience as a mother of four young children has also pressed home the need for policy makers, officials and researchers to pay attention to the values, perspectives and needs of parents and families.

"I've written research for many years about quality in early childhood education but have realised that it was only read by a small group of other researchers and policy makers.

"My video is an attempt to reach

parents to let them know that what makes quality in an early childhood centre is a lot wider than simply what the government says and requires of services. It tells parents that they can and should have a voice in saying what best suits them, their child and family.

"And at the same time policy makers and officials might learn a thing or two about the requirements and concerns of children and parents."

Dr Farquhar said ECE centres needed more than just 'quality' – which had come to hold quite a narrow definition, focusing on such things as adult-child ratios, teacher qualifications, and whether regulations and charter requirements are being sufficiently met.

"We need 'remarkable' early childhood services that parents can genuinely get excited about and will talk about for years to come because of the value they added for their child's learning and the great support their family experienced."

Dr Farquhar said parents needed to know about the importance of making choices and of questioning early childhood service providers to get the insights and knowledge

to make decisions about the best service for their child.

"Officials worry that if parents are left to make the choices about what centres their children should attend they will always choose the cheapest. While cost is a major factor the research data does not support the officials' view.

"We need to engage in more dialogue with parents about what is best for their children, rather than ignoring the perspectives of the least powerful but most important stakeholder group."

Fourteen early childhood services are shown in the video, including nanny and home-based services, Te Kohanga Reo,

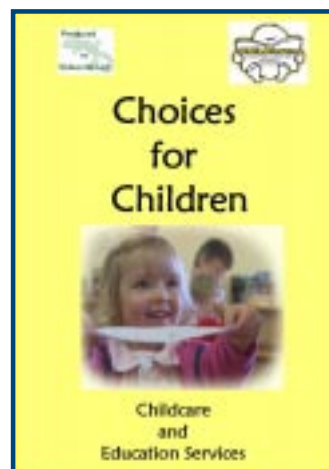
Pacific Island language centres, childcare, kindergarten, playcentre and a Montessori school.

The video does not recommend any one type of service.

"We shouldn't be telling parents what service is best, and the current government message that a community service has got to be a better choice than

a private service is very risky because no one knows their child better than parents and family," Dr Farquhar said.

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UK Tories pledge greater school choice

Conservative party policy released late last month would mean thousands more children would go to the schools of their parents' choice.

Using taxpayer money, parents could send their children to any school – state or independent – under Conservative proposals.

The party said its plans meant 100,000 more parents would be able to send their children to their first choice school in the first term of a Tory government and the parents of all school age children – primary, secondary and sixth form – would have the right to choose which school their children attended.

They would be able to take the £5,500 average spent per child to any school offering a good education as long as no

charge was made to parents.

The Conservatives say the number of good school places would increase because popular schools would expand and new ones would be set up wherever there was parental demand. Under-performing schools would be forced to raise their game and failing ones would be taken over by new management.

The second key plank of the Conservatives' proposals would see teachers given far greater freedom. They promise headmasters and governors would be able to control their budgets

and set school policies on admission, attendance and discipline.

A Tory government would abolish the appeals panel, giving heads and governors the authority to deal with disruptive pupils. It would also scrap targets imposed on schools.

Key points of the new policy are at <http://education.guardian.co.uk/schools/story/0,5500,1249893,00.html>

More information is at the Conservative party website at http://www.conservatives.com/news/article.cfm?obj_id=108656

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- Dr Farquhar is founder of the New Zealand Early Childhood Research Network and managing editor of the peer-reviewed *New Zealand Research in Early Childhood Journal*, and has undertaken a number of studies on ECE programmes for children and families.

To purchase a copy of the 20-minute *Choices for Children* video (NZ\$20 plus \$5 p&h), visit Dr Farquhar's website at <http://www.childforum.com>

The video may be used to raise funds by services. Contact Dr Farquhar to discuss opportunities, or other information, at Sarah@childforum.com

Competition: win a copy of the video *Choices for Children*

We have five copies of a great new video – *Choices for Children* – to give away.

Choices for Children is a New Zealand-made, broadcast-quality video that shows parents that they can and should have a voice in saying what best suits them, their child and family in early childhood education.

"We need 'remarkable' early childhood services that parents can genuinely get excited about and will talk about for years to come because of the value they added for their child's learning and the great support their family experienced," says leading early childhood education researcher Dr Sarah Farquhar, the creator of *Choices for Children*.

To win a copy of this informative and interesting 20-minute video, simply email subtext@educationforum.org.nz with your name and postal address.

If you are one of the first five to do so, a copy of the video will be in the mail to you very shortly.

Credit rating company branches into education

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of the country's secondary schools but does not rank schools in 'league table' form, though it does compare each school against national averages and similar schools.

Education Forum policy advisor Norman LaRocque has argued that information in league table-style is badly needed to help New Zealand parents make informed decisions about which schools were best for their children and to make schools publicly accountable for their academic results.

The Standard and Poor's web tool (under construction) is at <http://ses.standardandpoors.com/>

A Subtext story on a Canadian school comparison web tool is at http://www.educationforum.org.nz/documents/e_newsletter/12_03/Dec03_Reportcard.htm

A Subtext story on the NZ school profiles website is at http://www.educationforum.org.nz/documents/e_newsletter/05_04/May04_NZQAT.htm

The Hispanic Council for Reform and Educational Options (CREO) website is at <http://www.hcreo.org/>

Private schools popular, if money allows

Half the parents in Britain would be likely to send their children to private schools if they could afford it, says a recent survey commissioned by a leading UK education trust.

The Sutton Trust makes grants to projects that provide educational opportunities for able young people from non-privileged backgrounds.

Its survey asked whether people agreed or disagreed with the proposal that all children should have the opportunity to go to private school at the Government's or taxpayer's expense, regardless of family income: 47 percent agreed and 30 percent disagreed.

Asked whether they would send their children to a private school if money was not an issue, 50 percent said yes (22 percent definitely and 28 percent probably), compared to 44 percent who would either probably or definitely not do so (29 percent probably not and 13 percent definitely not).

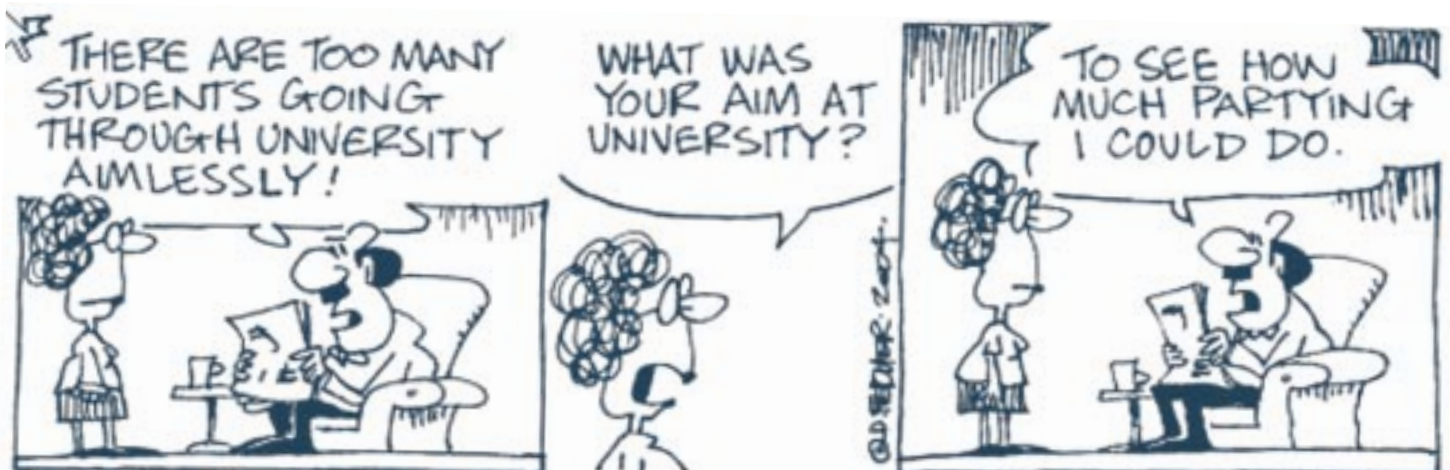
Nearly two-thirds (62 percent) of the sample agreed with the statement that pupils from state schools are at a disadvantage to private schools pupils

when they apply for places at top universities such as Oxford and Cambridge, while only 19 percent disagreed.

The Sutton Trust argues that opening up 100 percent of the places at Britain's top independent schools on the basis of merit and regardless of income would change the nature of those schools and "would lead to the removal of the unparalleled educational apartheid," which, the Trust argues, exists in Britain.

- The British survey results have similarities to a New Zealand *National Business Review* survey last year in which 52 percent of people surveyed thought that the standard of education at private schools was better than state schools, up from 48 percent from when the question was asked 10 years earlier.

The Sutton survey is at <http://www.suttontrust.com/reports/MORI-parents-survey-2004.doc>



Latino group pushes for school choice to boost children's academic results

More than 2000 Texas-based Hispanic parents and children aboard 80 buses rolled into their state capital last month to show their concern at the large number of low-performing Texan public schools serving Hispanic students. We profile the school-choice organisation behind the rally.

The 'Passion in Action' School Choice rally was organised by the Hispanic Council for Reform and Educational Options (Hispanic CREO). It was the first major rally Hispanic CREO had organised since its national launch last year and is evidence of its rapid strides towards maturity as a major social-justice group in the US.

The Austin, Texas event is perhaps the most visible sign to-date of the organisation's mission to improve educational outcomes for Hispanic children by empowering families through parental choice. It generally does its daily work at a grassroots level, working with local parent leaders and community organisations to help inform parents about local educational options.

Speaking to *Subtext* last week, Hispanic CREO communications and research director Vanessa DeCarbo said the organisation currently focused on four states – Colorado, Florida, New Jersey and Texas.

"So many of our parents are marginalised by language, economic status and culture – the US system is different from many Latin [American] countries, where parents may be used to sending their children to school knowing they will receive an excellent education and leaving it to the 'experts.'

"In the US, parents are called upon to actively engage with schools... and our role is to help them, providing local support and the information our parents need," Ms DeCarbo said.

A recent programme saw more than 3,200 parents trained in aspects of the No Child Left Behind legislation, specifically about supplemental services and public school choice options.

"We are also building positive

working relationships with school boards, superintendents and schools to work with Latino parents and empower them in their children's education," Ms DeCarbo said.

At the 2000 Census, 12.5 percent of the U.S. population were of Hispanic origin (an increase of 57.9 percent from 22.4 million in 1990 to 35.3 million).

Hispanic school dropout rates have

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Vanessa DeCarbo, Hispanic CREO communications and research director.

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remained between 30-35 percent over the past 25 years – 2.5 times the rate for blacks and almost four times the rate for white non-Hispanics. For every 1,000 eighth grade students who are of Hispanic origin, 142 earn a bachelor's degree within eight years of scheduled high school graduation. By comparison, 318 white students achieve the same outcome.

Spurred on by such statistics and funded by private foundations and a federal grant, Hispanic CREO is the first nationally-focused organisation to look for answers to the problems of Hispanic education by actively working with parents.

Its membership is growing rapidly – last year its annual conference attracted 180 delegates while this year around 500 are expected – and increasingly regular calls to the organisation's national office in Washington DC for information on school choice shows its message is getting through.

School choice is a popular policy with many Latino communities. A *New York Times* poll last year found Hispanics

were twice as likely to call themselves Democrats as Republicans, but they identified with Republicans on a host of issues including tax cuts and the use of school vouchers to give choice.

With few existing avenues for poor parents to get their children out of failing inner city schools, Hispanic CREO – like its sister organisation, the Black Alliance for Educational Options – says school choice gives children a chance.

Hispanic CREO supports a list of options which include traditional public schools, charter and magnet schools, home schooling, private and religious non-profit schools, distance learning, and public/private school ventures; and it supports school vouchers as proven mechanism to provide students access to these educational options.

"Many wonderful public schools exist," said Ms DeCarbo, but "they are not usually located in our *barrios*."

The HCREO website is at <http://www.hcreo.org/>

White, unionised teachers less supportive of school choice

A new study looking at how personal traits affect school choice in the US finds that white, experienced, unionised, Democratic educators and those working in 'positive' school environments are less supportive of school choice.

The study looks at how a range of traits, including race, tenure, partisanship and familiarity with charter schooling, influence teachers' attitudes to charter schools and school vouchers. In addition, it examines how school- or district-level variables, including culture and charter penetration, inform teachers' views.

'In the Storm's Eye: How Race, Experience, and Exposure Shape Arizona Teachers' Attitudes Toward School Choice' finds charter school teachers are significantly more positive about school choice than their public school counterparts.

In the Storm's Eye is at <http://www.tcrecord.org/Collection.asp?CollectionID=56>



Education on the agenda at World Freedom Summit in Rotorua

Education Forum policy advisor Norman LaRocque will talk to an international classical liberal forum being held in Rotorua on 23 July. Mr LaRocque will discuss private education around the world.

Other speakers include Michael Cloud, MP Rodney Hide and George Smith.

More information is at <http://www.ilv.org.nz/index.php?content=wfs>

Tuition fees, privatisation and tertiary education – a round-up of recent news

Fee cap poses threat to universities

Britain's world-class universities will "wither away into under-resourced mediocrity" by 2012 if they are not privatised and deregulated, concludes a book from the

Oxford Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies. *The Economics of*

Higher Education argues universities must be free to charge market-based tuition fees in the region of £10,000 a year to pay competitive academic salaries and provide the best facilities.

Author David Palfreyman argues that the government's proposed £3,000 cap on fees is a step in the right direction but nowhere near the £18,600 that research shows is the annual cost of teaching each Oxford undergraduate.

More information is at <http://oxcheps.new.ox.ac.uk/Publications/theeconomicsofhi.html>

Private legal training making inroads in Britain

British universities like students who pay big fees. They are less happy to deliver the corresponding service, according to a recent article in *The Economist*.

That creates a gap, which private company BPP is making inroads into. BPP is Britain's largest provider of professional training and looks a bit like a private university: it teaches some

20,000 students in 32 centres, in subjects such as accounting and law.

But in many ways it is not like a university at all: "there's no sign of state planning; the staff are better paid, the buildings smarter, technology more high-tech, morale higher. Administration is leanly businesslike; there's no money spent on research, just a lot of high-quality teaching," *The Economist* writes.

From September, BPP will offer a postgraduate law degree, including the courses needed to become a solicitor. The degree won't technically be from BPP: the



firm is renting that right from the University of Central Lancashire, which is 'validating' the course.

The Economist reports that these hybrid products, combining an academic and a professional qualification, are the fastest growing section of BPP's business.

Launched in 1976, BPP specialised in training for the various accountancy qualifications until it listed on the Stock Exchange in 1986. Since then it has grown to take on exam and non-exam based training for other professions, and now has 2,000 staff and 40 locations worldwide.

BPP says it is Europe's largest

accountancy training company and largest insolvency training company, and the UK's largest tax training company.

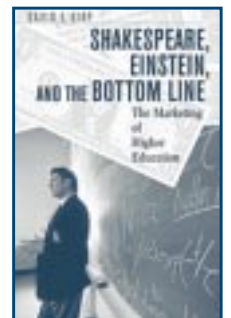
The BPP website is at <http://www.bpp.com>

Chasing private cash can keep education healthy, writer finds

The story of markets in US higher education is told in a new book which finds that over the past 50 years government subsidies have shrunk, endowments grown and education has improved through competition.

"How can you turn an English department into a revenue centre? How do you grade students if they are 'customers' you must please? How do you keep industry from dictating a university's research agenda? What happens when the life of the mind meets the bottom line?" – Harvard University Press.

"Kirp examines about a dozen schools and the ways they position themselves to attract the highest quality 'customers.' An illuminating view of both good and bad results in a market-driven educational system." – David Siegfried, American Library Association.



More information on Shakespeare, Einstein and the Bottom Line: The Marketing of Higher Education by David L. Kirp (Harvard University Press) is at <http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog/KIRSHA.html>

A distinctive contribution to tertiary education consultation boosts PTEs

A government paper on the future of tertiary education that puts private training establishments (PTEs) 'outside the main arena' prompted some PTE representatives to meet with industry and government officials this week.

A Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) consultation paper features ideas about future roles for tertiary education organisations but contains little information on the possible role of PTEs, says Independent Tertiary Institutions (ITI) executive director Dave Guerin.

Mr Guerin said the paper presented a strong challenge to ITI as it put PTEs "outside the main arena", possibly more so than any government paper since the late-1980s.

"Other sectors are discussed in detail but the discussion of PTEs only includes text that is two years old, with no further development. Even the non-existent specialist colleges sector is given more colour," he said.

ITI hosted the seminar to inform its response to the paper and to kick-start discussion about PTEs.

"Rather than simply send in a well-

argued submission to TEC, ITI members wanted to engage with other members of the tertiary education sector, government agencies and our industry and community partners to flesh out the role of the PTE sector. We feel that this is the best way for us to present our views and to have them tempered by the policies, practices and aspirations of other players," Mr Guerin said.

Four sessions, each with a short presentation and group discussions saw a range of views put forward that will be published shortly.

In a media statement, TEC acting chair Kaye Turner said New Zealand tertiary education had limited resources that required greater differentiation, specialisation and stronger links between organisations. The paper marked the start of consultation on how "a more focused, high quality, relevant and accessible tertiary

education system" could be developed.

"Differentiation and specialisation are one way to ensure a diversity of education, research and capability so the system can better meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population," Ms Turner said.

Comment on The Distinctive Contributions of Tertiary Education Organisations paper closes on 20 August.

Information on *The Distinctive Contributions of Tertiary Education Organisations* is at http://www.tec.govt.nz/about_tec/consultation/distinctive-contributions-consultation.htm

- ITI has 16 members. They are large, high-quality PTEs that enrolled 11 percent of the 81,924 students enrolled by EFTS-funded PTEs in 2002. ITI incorporates the Career Colleges' Association and the Association of Independent Degree-granting Institutions.

School quality debated at high-profile Australian conference

A summit in Melbourne next month looks at how to improve quality in education.

The Melbourne Institute, *The Australian* newspaper and the Faculty of Education of the University of Melbourne are co-sponsoring the conference, titled "Making Schools Better".

Politicians, teachers and

educationalists will take part. Speakers include Mark Harrison, Canberra-based author of the Education Forum's book, *Education Matters: Governments, Market and New Zealand Schools*.

The summit will present evidence on school performance and discuss policy options for making schools better, including:

- the importance of teacher quality, class sizes, leadership, the

socioeconomic background of students, and other factors in determining school outcomes

- the right incentives to encourage high quality teaching
- school funding systems
- an integrated public/private system.

More information is at http://www.melbourneinstitute.com/school_conf/

Minister's statistics don't tell the real early childhood story

The Minister of Education's claims that privately-owned early childhood services receive on average nearly three times the funding of community-owned services is a misleading distortion, the Early Childhood Council says.



Sue Thorne

Minister of Education Trevor Mallard has said Budget-announced early childhood policy changes would give each community centre \$50,000

more than it currently receives and that private centres would benefit by \$140,000 each on average.

Chief executive Sue Thorne said funding increases were welcome as they were much-needed in the sector, but the Minister's claims of large increases to private centres were nonsense.

More than half the services the Minister included in his 'average' for community services were minimally-funded unlicensed playgroups and voluntary parent-led groups.

"To compare these with services that are fully licensed and staffed by paid professionals and provide all-day education and care is nonsense and the Minister knows it," said Mrs Thorne.

Currently private and community services which provide the same level of service, for the same number of children, for the same length of time, receive the same funding, with the exception of kindergartens whose hourly funding rate was at least 30 percent

higher than all other services.

Mrs Thorne said the Minister's claims were nothing but a desperate attempt to deflect unwanted attention from his discriminatory new 'free' early childhood education funding policy, which excludes 60 percent of children attending all-day early childhood services.

The issue was not the current funding level – it was the Budget announcement that, in the future, families who had chosen private services would not be funded to the same level as those who chose community centres, Mrs Thorne said.

"... no amount of fudging the figures alters the fact that parents who choose privately owned services will miss out on the Minister's much-touted 20 hours per week of free early childhood education."

"Unfortunately for the Minister no amount of fudging the figures alters the fact that parents who choose privately owned services will miss out on the Minister's much-touted 20 hours per week of free early childhood education.

"Nothing short of ensuring that all children in New Zealand had access to the same level of funding will repair the damage caused by allowing anti-business bias to steer policy, rather than what is

good for New Zealand families."

Public consultation over the government's early childhood proposals ends on 23 July.

In a media statement, Mr Mallard said: "We've got the money there and we know that it will be spent on lifting teacher quality, improving adult to child ratios and other quality standards. But we're now turning to the sector to tie down the detail so we can be sure we are getting the best quality improvements that work effectively for every child."

The consultation will seek feedback on matters such as:

- what the improved adult/child ratios will be
- how teacher registration targets will be regulated
- progressively improving adult: child ratios and reducing group size
- legislating Te Whariki as the curriculum for all early childhood education services.

"The consultation document also proposes a new framework for regulation that is more streamlined and transparent than the current system. This should reduce the compliance costs of early childhood regulation, while ensuring that the current standards are maintained," Mr Mallard said.

More government information is at <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/ViewDocument.cfm?DocumentID=19951>

Quote of the month:

"Every parent, whatever their background and wherever they live, wants one thing for their children: a decent education in a school where standards are high and discipline is good. Sadly, for too many parents, that is something their children are denied – unless they can afford to pay for it. Too many parents in Britain today simply have to shut up and take what they are given by the state."

– UK Conservatives leader Michael Howard at his party's education policy launch in June.

Campaign to boost skills in key industries

A joint government, business and union campaign to raise skill levels in four key industries was launched late last month by Acting Associate Education (Tertiary Education) Minister Margaret Wilson.

The campaign targets tourism, furniture, retail and hospitality employers and promotes the benefits of on-the-job training designed to meet industry needs.

It is part of the Skill New Zealand campaign which aims to lift participation in industry training from the 127,000 learning on-the-job today to 150,000 by 2005, and from there to 250,000 trainees.

More information is at <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/ViewDocument.cfm?DocumentID=20147>

Melbourne University Private applies for official recognition

Melbourne University Private hopes to join the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee to help develop its credentials overseas.

The six-year-old university is wholly owned by the public University of Melbourne and has state approval to operate for another five years. Last financial year its operating result was AU\$132,000 on revenues of AU\$55.4 million.

The private university's website is at <http://www.muprivate.edu.au/>

New Australian institute aims to promote quality teaching and school leadership

The Howard government has provided \$10 million toward the establishment and operation of the National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership, which will be based in Canberra at the Australian National University.

Teachers and school leaders will operate the institute on behalf of their profession, and it will have four key functions:

- professional standards development

- professional learning for school leaders and classroom teachers
- research and communication
- promotion of the profession.

More information is at <http://www.dest.gov.au/Ministers/Media/Nelson/2004/06/n721030604.asp>

A university degree is a very good investment, statistics show

New statistics highlight the economic and social value of a tertiary qualification.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics, through its latest Australian Social Trends report, has confirmed that higher education results in significant private benefits.

The research showed full-time workers aged 20-64 with higher education qualifications earn almost 50 percent more than those without a degree and have lower unemployment rates. In May 2003, the unemployment rate for people without higher education qualifications was six percent, whilst for those with such qualifications, the unemployment rate was three percent.

More information is at <http://www.dest.gov.au/Ministers/Media/Nelson/2004/06/n744160604.asp>

Bureaucracy-busting watchdog cuts plethora of UK govt teacher initiatives

A UK bureaucracy-busting education watchdog says it has cut by a third the number of government initiatives aimed at teachers.

The Department for Education and Skills' implementation review unit was launched in April last year.

It has called for just a few key strategies to raise standards, is considering a single school improvement plan and wants all the bids, plans and reports that schools must write to receive funding to be replaced.

More information is at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/ir/u/>

China encourages naming rights on schools

The Chinese government is encouraging the private sector to invest in non-government schools by allowing the schools to be named after their donor, Eastday.com has reported.

Non-government schools run by private donation and non-profitable, non-government schools can also enjoy preferential tax policies equivalent to public schools.

Demand high for Washington voucher scheme

Demand in Washington DC for access to the first federally-funded school voucher programme has proved overwhelming, in large part because of parental frustration with the state's troubled public education system, Charleston's *Post and Courier* reports.

The number of applications to the Washington Scholarship Fund (WSF) is more than double the number of spaces available.

Congress is providing up to US\$7,500 per year to help low-income students attend one of 50 private or parochial schools. Nearly 1300 spots are available for the upcoming school year.

The *Washington Post* reported that WSF recently held a two-day fair for low-income parents to shop around for schools. More than 40 private schools had stalls at the fair.

More information is at
http://www.charleston.net/stories/061204/wor_12vouch.shtml

Review published of research on teacher recruitment and retention

A new literature review takes a comprehensive and critical examination of research published since 1980 on the topic of teacher recruitment and retention in the US.

The review provides an understanding of the patterns governing the entry and exit of individuals into and from teaching in the face of a growing school-age population, and of schools struggling to maintain teaching standards by recruiting bright new teachers and retaining their most-effective ones.

The review is at <http://www.rand.org/publications/TR/TR164/>

Bill would ease restrictions that limit access and aid to US for-profit colleges

A US government hearing last month heard that federal student-aid laws discriminate against students at for-profit colleges.

Republicans on the US House of Representatives education committee argued that a bill they introduced last month to renew the Higher Education Act would ease restrictions in existing law that limit access and federal aid for those students.

"There is a problem when schools serving some of the neediest students are treated like a second class," said Rep. John A. Boehner of Ohio, chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce.

More information is at
<http://www.ccweek.com/datelinewash/index.asp>

Strong results mean more business for education company

Schools managed by US education company Edison improved levels of proficiency by an average one-year gain rate of seven percentage points – two to three times the gain rates at comparable schools and districts, according to Edison's recently released Sixth Annual Report of School Performance.

That success resulted in 100 percent contract retention, a number of new contracts and current school expansions for the upcoming school year, Edison said.

More information is at
<http://www.edisonschools.com/news/news.cfm?ID=172>

Report summarises trend toward markets in education

A report summarising the trend toward introducing markets into the education sector is available online from the National Center for the Study of the Privatization of Education.

The report begins with a brief history of the market reforms and then reviews recent policy developments related to vouchers, charter schools, tuition tax credits, and educational management organisations. Through the application of the NCSPE framework for evaluating market reforms, with its four criteria – freedom of choice; productive efficiency; equity; and social cohesion – the paper shows how the intent and impact of privatisation policies can differ considerably.

The paper is at
http://www.ncspe.org/publications_files/OP86.pdf

Education Forum

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