

Family life

Become the best version of you

Time to re-educate ourselves



SCHOOL OF THOUGHT
DR ALI BLACK

UNIVERSITY OF THE SUNSHINE COAST

IT HAS been said that teaching is the profession upon which all other professions depend. As Nelson Mandela reminded, the power of education extends far beyond the development of skills we need for economic success. Education is a means of changing the world.

So how is it that we have lost

our way? Why do prescribed curriculum, league tables and standardised testing permeate so much of our children's education? Inquiry learning, problem-based learning, creativity and caring for our children has been set aside.

For more than a decade, politically driven (rather than educationally sound) views about achieving educational attainment have challenged and changed the nature of teaching and learning. And not for the better.

Recently, US Professors Les Perelman and Walt Haney, renowned authorities on assessment, argued that Australia's

NAPLAN tests are so flawed they offer "limited use" and should be discarded.

Yet, Australian taxpayers continue to invest more than \$50 billion per year in this flawed school system of which NAPLAN is a measure.

As Gabbie Stroud in her must-read book *Teacher: One woman's struggle to keep the heart in teaching* describes: "Trying to lay a blanket of standardisation over education shows a complete lack of understanding for the humanity required in this important job."

"In Australia today, we are confining education to a standardised model that values da-

ta and results and, in turn, conformity and productivity. We need to understand that there is nothing standard about the journey of learning."

Andria Zafirakou, best teacher in the world, concurs. Had she prioritised the targets the government sets for her profession and focused all her efforts on the performance measures she would never have been considered for the award. Andria describes the current school system as "a conveyor belt of stress".

So how do award-winning teachers and countries with strong education systems do it?

Linda Darling-Hammond,

CEO of the Learning Policy Institute, in a recent Stanford Radio podcast says: "Number one, they take care of children."

Relationships come first. Finland's education system is ranked best in the world. They invest not in NAPLAN-like measures, but in a child welfare system. They value early childhood education, play-based learning, early learning that is high quality. They value their teachers.

Australia's curriculum, standards and assessment clearly need an overhaul – and if Finland's world ranking example is our indicator, so does our government and its focus.

Teacher Offer

The discovery of gold in Australia in the mid-1800s is one of the most significant periods in our nation's history.

Understanding the impact of the Gold Rush on life back then – and the long-term benefits it has had centuries later – is the central focus of the Kids News digital teaching resource: **Gold Rush**.

This in-depth kit covers topics including the overall history of the Gold Rush, life as a miner, jobs of the goldfields, family and home life, the Eureka Stockade and the legacy of the Gold Rush.

Activities suited for Grade 3 to Year 8.

Kit covers curriculum areas of English, History and aspects of Visual Art, Health and Physical Education, Civics and Citizenship, Geography, Design and Technologies and Intercultural Capabilities.

Early bird \$5 orders close Monday, September 10th



News Corp Australia