



#### This week's stories from the media

- A class above: parents push for higher teacher standards
- Importance of preschool
- Children who start school later fare better
- Lack of awareness of STEM careers key issue
- School bans birthday invitations
- NAPLAN report released

#### Importance Of Preschool

There is mounting evidence that two years of quality preschool sets up a child for success.

A wealth of international research shows children who attend high-quality early childhood programs not only perform better in learning, but also in skills such as social competence, vocabulary and self-control.

And these benefits are greatest for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

This is backed by research into early brain development, which shows the importance of laying foundations for learning early in life, while children's brains are most malleable.

Just over 90% of Australian children are participating in preschool in the year before school – when they are four years old. Now the challenge is to extend preschool participation to three-year-old children, so support for learning begins even earlier.

[Read the story](#)

#### A Class Above: SA Parents Push For Higher Teacher Standards

**South Australian parents want teaching standards lifted by raising the minimum ATAR for entry into education degrees to 80.**

More than 60% of nearly 1000 respondents to a survey by public school parent group the SAASSO backed the proposal.

The survey came after the federal Opposition announced that under a Labor government, universities would have to restrict entry to the top 30% of students, equating to an ATAR of about 80.

In his report, SAASSO director David Knuckey said comments from participants "showed strong community support for the need for higher standards for those wishing to become teachers".

"A significant number, however, indicated that ATAR may not be the only way to assess those who would be best suited to teaching," he said.

One respondent said "a higher ATAR is a first step to returning the prestige and appeal of the profession", while another said "teaching needs to stop being everyone's last choice".

Almost all respondents were parents and more than four in 10 worked in schools. Only a third of school staff supported the minimum 80 ATAR, compared with more than 80% of others.

The federal shadow minister Tanya Plibersek said: "Like parents, Labor wants Australians with a track record of achievement, motivation and capability to teach the next generation".

The SAASSO survey also found only one in 10 respondents thought school students should be punished for attending climate change rallies in school time.

Three-quarters backed the Federal Government's plan to waive uni debts for teachers who work for four years in remote Aboriginal communities.

[More](#)



**“...Like parents, Labor wants Australians with a track record of achievement, motivation and capability to teach the next generation....”**

### Children Who Start School Later Fare Better

**A quarter of NSW children are starting school a year later than they are eligible, and the delay is helping them fare better in kindergarten than their younger peers, a landmark study has found.**

The children scored better on developmental milestones for each extra month of age, raising questions about equity, said Ben Edwards, associate professor of child and youth development and longitudinal studies from the study's partner institution, the ANU.

The study looked at student data from 2009 and 2012. It found that if parents were able to choose whether to send or delay - if their child turned five between January and July - half decided to delay.

The researchers linked the school age data with the Australian Early Development Census, finding each month of maturity corresponded to an increase of about 3% in the probability of scoring above the 25th percentile in five early development domains.

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### Lack Of Awareness Of STEM Careers Key Issue

**Currently, too few women are entering the fields of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).**

Faced with gender biases and various other barriers, attracting, retaining and progressing women in these industries is a huge problem, and one which has significant social and economic repercussions.

While Australia's workforce is almost 50% women, the percentage of women in skilled STEM work is a mere 16%. What's more, only 8% of women hold executive positions as CEO or head of business. One cumulative result of this is a yawning gender pay gap of 27%.

To address this persistent inequality, remove barriers and harness this huge pool of underutilised talent, a new 10-year plan has been set in motion. The Women in STEM Decadal Plan was launched earlier this month at Parliament House, and is the work of years of research and collaboration with individuals, organisations and other stakeholders across the sector.

[More](#)

### School Bans Birthday Invitations

**In a bid to avoid upset, a Sydney public school has banned the handing out of birthday party invitations in the school yard in case the children who aren't invited take offence.**

The school has asked parents to send birthday invitations via email to avoid other children getting upset.

They also encouraged parents to make sure their kids refrained from discussing the planned festivities while at school.

[Full Story](#)

### Happy Easter!

**SAASSO wishes you and your family a safe and happy Easter!**



### NAPLAN Report Released

**The NAPLAN report card has been published and it confirms the findings of the snapshot released in August last year.**

The writing test results in Years 5, 7 and 9 were below those observed in that test's base year of 2011.

Education minister Dan Tehan said this decline was concerning.

The most recent NAPLAN also revealed that since 2008, there have been some significant improvements in some domains and year levels for Indigenous students, including reading and spelling across years 3 and 5.

[Read more](#)