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The Learning Place: something for everyone

Focus on: Back to school

It's never too soon to think about back-to-school, believes Tanja Obstoj, lower primary teacher at Mt Gravatt State School.

Even before she had waved goodbye to her class of 2005, Ms Obstoj had begun preparing for her new students in 2006. A lot of that preparation took place using the Learning Place.



"One of the first things, because I'll be at a new school, was to go to the Learning Place's professional learning communities website to check out who my Learning Place District Mentor is and see what professional help I can get," Ms Obstoj said.

Ms Obstoj went to the Curriculum Exchange (CX) resource centre to look for interesting units of work and resources.

"Then I've used the Learning Place's unit planning template to help me prepare units of work," she said. "This is brilliant! Everything a teacher needs to consider when planning a unit of work is right there: resources, outcomes, Six Thinking Hats, multiple intelligences, essential questions, higher order thinking skills... and it's incredibly easy to use."

Ms Obstoj has already registered her new students with the Learning Place. "Once I've done that, they are Learning Place members. It makes it very easy when I want my students to do an activity in a project room, I don't have to get new user names and passwords every time."

One of her students' first activities for the year will be taking part in a blog, reflecting on what it's like to be in a new year level and contributing text and images on their favourite place in the school.

"The blog's set up and ready to go," Ms Obstoj said. "During term 1 I'll also set up a Virtual Classroom (in Blackboard) that the students will use in term 2. Then, in terms 2 and 3 I'll be setting up some online tasks for them."

There'll be time for fun, too. "I've noted that the Easter Bunny is going online for chats with students in April, and later in the year, through the Online Literature Festival in August, my students will be able to chat online with some of their favourite authors and illustrators."

Ms Obstoj said, "It's going to be a pretty full-on year! It's good to know I can plan so much of it ahead."

Learning objects



Citizens' Arch (Series) Learning Object

Developed by The Learning Federation for use in classrooms, this Learning Object assists in the exploration of Australian history for Australia Day. Through the Citizens' Arch (built in 1901 to celebrate the opening of the first Federal parliament) students find out about Australian Federation. The Citizens' Arch series includes:

- Federation celebrations
 - An exploration
 - Build your own arch.
- And check out these other Learning Objects suitable for Australia Day themes:
- Gold rush
 - Nhu Minh: multiculturalism in Australia
 - The Enterprise: paddle steamer on the Murray
 - The first golden age of cricket
 - Beth Murray: the people behind the Snowy Mountains Scheme
 - Dorothy Griffin: great Australian women
 - Fiona Chiu: Chinese family tree
 - Norman Dean: Great Depression.

Search the new CX resource centre for Learning Objects:
<http://learningplace.eq.edu.au/cx/resources>

Hot Topics

For back-to-school, check out *The first weeks of the school year*. Here you'll find a collection of Education Queensland sources and partnerships and other useful sites, giving you access to resources that will assist you to form an effective community of learners with a new group of students – leading to successful learning throughout the year.

http://education.qld.gov.au/tal/tips/hot_topics/01939.html

EduSites

Evaluated curriculum websites

EduSites is a quality collection of evaluated websites of interest to teachers and students, with content relevant to the Queensland curriculum. All sites have been suggested by practising teachers and evaluated by experienced teacher-reviewers.



For example, a useful site for Australia Day is *Australians at War*.
 Review: Designed to accompany the television series, this site examines the experiences of the Australian defence forces during the wars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and in their peacekeeping role. Includes a timeline, letters, interviews, documents, images and sound files.
 (SOSE, History, Year level 4-10)

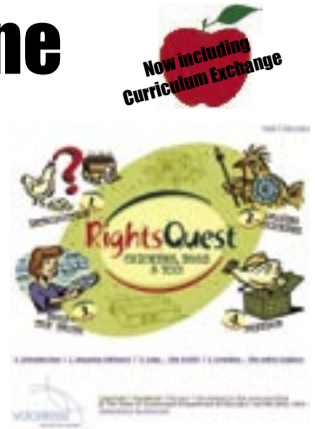
Other sites suitable for Australia Day are:

- National Australia Day Council
 - Australians at work
 - Multicultural Australia
 - About citizenship
- And for back-to-school:
- Education Oasis
 - Vibe school
 - No more bullies!
 - Integrating technology into the classroom
 - Figure this! Math challenges for families
 - Cybersmart kids online
- Search the CX resource centre for more EduSite reviews.
<http://learningplace.eq.edu.au/cx/resources>

Ready-to-go courses

Quality assured online student courses

Fully developed, ready-to-use courses for your class!



Chicken Rights WebQuest

This Chicken Rights WebQuest challenges students to think, view things differently, read critically, feel passionately, take action and make choices with knowledge and compassion.

This WebQuest focuses on rights issues surrounding factory farm egg production. Through a virtual exploration, students develop an understanding of and empathy with chickens and other animals, and an understanding of factory farming methods which produce most of the eggs and white meat we consume.

Visit the online course catalogue for a full list of Ready-to-go courses.

<http://education.qld.gov.au/learningplace/onlinelearning/courses/catalogue.html>

TIPS

Teaching Ideas and Practices

TIPS are useful teaching ideas, activities, lesson plans and units of work, all provided by Queensland teachers. You can download and use as-is, or edit to suit your own needs.

You'll find a great range of back-to-school TIPS! For example, the unit *Getting to know me through ICT*, aimed at Year 6 students, involves students in writing an autobiography, creating a class web page, and using PowerPoint, digital cameras and scanners. Students develop an understanding of self and others while increasing their skills in ICT.

Other useful TIPS include:

- Wow! look what I can do
- Too cool for school
- Using Learning Objects in the classroom.

<http://education.qld.gov.au/tal/tips/>

The new Curriculum Exchange resource centre

As you prepare for back-to-school, have you wished for an easier way to locate curriculum resources? Imagine having access to up-to-date, relevant, interactive content across the entire curriculum? Content like learning objects, copyright-cleared video clips, songs, radio broadcasts and photographs. Access to prepared units of work and ready-to-go, interactive online courses. All in one easy-to-access, easy-to-use online space that requires just one log-on?



The Curriculum Exchange is in the process of being redeveloped and integrated with the Learning Place. Log onto the Learning Place and you'll immediately have access to resource collections; subject gateways; links to CX services and easy access to popular curriculum related sites within the Education Queensland website. Plus – access to the resources of learning partners like The Learning Federation, the State Library of Queensland, the John Oxley Library and EdNA. Other local and national cultural institutions, community organisations and government departments will soon be on board.

favourite resources are still available through the existing CX website and can be accessed from home using your AccessClub login. All of the CX collections should be moved over to the new Learning Place by June 2006.

- Existing CX website: http://education.qld.gov.au/tal/curriculum_exchange/
- AccessClub password information (Intranet): <http://www.qed.qld.gov.au/information/acquisition/subscription/accessedclub/passwords.html>

What does this mean for teachers?

It means you can use an incredible range of quality resources that you'll be able to access from school or home. New resources will be added regularly, and new partnerships will be coming on board.

Teachers who've road-tested the new system have this to say:

"It's like being able to take my school's resource centre home with me!"

"These resources are coming to us from the real world, and that's as exciting for me as it will be for my students. Now I can connect students to authentic content, in the same way I want to connect them to real people."

"While constructing WebQuests, or other online research activities, I always search in the EduSites collection for websites which have been thoroughly evaluated for relevance and suitability of content for use with Queensland students. What a fantastic timesaver for busy teachers!"

"The TLF Learning Objects are fantastic resources which can really help to engage students' interest in a topic. I have used these learning objects to allow students to experience situations or events which it would be impossible or dangerous for them to experience in real life, such as controlling a nuclear reactor, or testing a vehicle's stopping distance with various weather and road conditions."

Matt Dray and Colin Thompson? Chat online with these and six other special guests!

Easter online activities, April 10-13 – Featuring a very special guest! Chat online with the Easter Bunny and find out about Easter celebrations and customs all over the world.

What's happening in term 1, 2006?

Schools can register students to take part in any or all of these exciting online events throughout the year. It's as easy as logging on to the Learning Place.

Australia Day chats, January 23-25 – Students chat online with famous and fascinating Australians.

Commonwealth Games online events, March 6-24 – What are your students' favourite sports? Chat online with athletes and coaches!

Somerset Celebration of Literature, March 7-11 – Do your students' favourite authors and illustrators include Morris Gleitzman, Michael Bauer,

Learning Place mentors here to help

Learning Place Mentors are ICT-savvy people who know the answer almost before you've asked the question. They are experienced teachers with a special interest, and expertise in learning online. To support effective use of the Learning Place, there's a Learning Place Mentor in every district in the State. You can find out who your Mentor is through their Professional Learning Community website. <http://www.learningplace.com.au/en/showcase/lpmentors>

The Mentors can offer you curriculum support and strategies; help you to run online events and guide your planning. For example, Sunshine Coast North District mentor Helen Penridge recently suggested a way to share documents online to the principals of her District. The principals' monthly teleconferences are now supported by interactive, changeable documents, through their Professional Learning Community meeting area on the Learning Place.

As well, Learning Place

Mentors plan exciting statewide online events throughout the year. Teachers and students take part in chats and forums with people they might never, otherwise, have the chance to meet. Just a few for 2006 are:

- Anzac Day
- River Journey and Irrigation Australia 2006
- World Shakespeare Congress
- United Nations International Year of Deserts and Desertification events
- Commonwealth games activities
- NAIDOC week
- National Treasures State Library travel buddies
- Queensland Day
- Under the Sea week
- National Literacy Festival
- Careers Expo
- Christmas Around the World.

We are proud to announce our 2006 Learning Place mentors:

Far North Queensland: Nicola



The 2006 Learning Place Mentors.

- House, Chris Honan
- North Queensland: Susan Fleming, Julianne Cervellin
- Mackay Whitsunday: Cheryl Mandryk
- Fitzroy-Central West: Denise Scherer, Gavin Ross, Peter Edman, Lisa Hoolahan
- Wide Bay: Darlene Hill, Cathy Mangan, Tina Haylocks
- Sunshine Coast: Helen Penridge, Hazel Orr
- Greater Brisbane: Lauren Bunch, Andrew Swales, Bronwyn White
- South Coast: Lyndall Obridge
- Moreton: Lindy McKeown
- Darling Downs: Tania Angus (note: South West Queensland to be announced)