

**In the news**

**ITUNES SITE FOR STUDENTS**



**SHARED VIDEO:** Hackham East Primary School's Lachlan (Year 6) and Ben (Year 7).

SOUTH Australian public school students will be able to upload and share educational videos, slide shows and audio clips on the Education Department's new iTunes U site.

The department has a profile on iTunes U – an online space where students and teachers can post educational content and other files.

Chief executive Keith Bartley said the site encouraged students to use technology to learn, in a way that appealed to young people.

"iTunes U is a great way for our students to showcase the material they have made, including videos and audio," he said.

Currently, videos from last year's New Media Awards, including Hackham East Primary School students' winning entry, are featured on the site.

**AIDEN'S AN AMBASSADOR**



**WORLD GAMES:** McLaren Vale Primary student Aiden, 11, will travel to Sydney.

McLAREN Vale Primary School student Aiden, 11, is one of eight Australian ambassadors for the World Education Games.

The three-day event is the largest online education event in the world. There are 5.9 million students from 30,000 schools in more than 200 countries and territories expected to participate this year. Almost 1 million literacy, maths and science questions will be attempted between next Tuesday, March 5, and Thursday March 7.

As an ambassador, Year 6 student Aiden – who loves karate – is also helping to raise money for UNICEF School-in-a-Box kits. The educational resource can help up to 80 children resume schooling after an emergency or being displaced by conflict.

"(The best part of the games is) getting to support my state and country," Aiden said.

# Kids give stories a big thumbs up



**READING ROOM:** Summer, 3, Anshu, 3, and Aleisha, 2, at Stepping Stone SA Childcare in Happy Valley, where green leaves recording the children's response to a story are added to a "literacy tree". **Picture: STEPHEN LAFFER**

EARLY readers often show their approval of stories through body language, eye contact and requests to read the story over again, an early childhood educator says.

Stepping Stones SA Childcare director Darlene Woodhall said reading books with the children was a daily ritual and extended through their play program.

"Children do read at a young age – if we are reading a story over and over they pick up the line of the story," she said.

"They also role model sitting in the chair, opening the book and reading to others even if they don't understand what their sentence might be.

"We also have dress-up stories, where we dress up as a character, and we have stories in different languages."

One of the centre's recent literacy programs aims to interpret how well children engage with reading books by using a rating system.

**NIE MANAGER**

**MARTINA SIMOS**



The Literacy Tree project is a year-long program set up by the centre's educator, Jayne Denny.

Books are read daily and staff interpret the youngsters' level of engagement.

Parents are also encouraged to become involved by bringing in books to share or to read with the children at the centre.

These books are also added to the literacy tree.

Along with the author's name and the book's title, staff record a number from one to five on a leaf that is used as an indicator on how well the children understand the story.

The green leaf is then added to the literacy tree, which remains in the centre all year.

Mrs Woodhall said a five indicated that children were making eye contact and laughing or asking for a story to be read again. But if they were wriggling around their level of engagement was low.

"If (the rating) was low, the educators will read it again because they might understand the story a little bit better the second time around," she said.

"We read books inside and outside, in large groups and in small groups.

"There is a bookshelf in every room with books that are age appropriate, so that children are able to access books all the time."

The top five books the children have enjoyed this year are *Mr McGee Goes to Sea*, *A Particular Cow*, *Ten Fat Sausages*, *Where is the Green Sheep* and *There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Mozzie*.

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## Put your back into spine health

**KATRINA STOKES**

A NEW spinal health fact sheet needs to be distributed to all schools and parents, say orthopaedic experts and Family First MLC Robert Brokenshire.

Adult and paediatric orthopaedic surgeon Associate Professor Peter Cundy said he supported a spinal health fact sheet being distributed to schools in South Australia.

"Kids should carry lighter backpacks with the straps over both shoulders," he said.

"If back pain is present, it is advisable to lighten the load."

Mr Brokenshire said the State Government should promote good back care for children so they went into adult life with good posture and healthy backs.

"Children's spines are developing when they are young and I believe good habits for future life are best developed at that stage," he said.

"For instance, allowing children to leave heavy books at school, developing a policy towards bags on rollers if the

books' weight cannot be avoided.

"Or accelerating the take-up of technology, like tablet computing, so less physical resources for children are required."

An Education Department spokeswoman said a spinal health information fact sheet was currently available on their website, providing guidelines to school communities about back safety.

She said the department was currently reviewing the infor-

mation, which will then be promoted to schools and regional offices later this year.

The spokeswoman said secondary schools addressed back health in a number of ways, including:

**NO BAG** policies. Bags are not carried around during the school day.

**SETTING** homework that doesn't require books.

**ON-THE-SPOT** bag checks. **STUDENTS** using electronic equipment, including iPads and laptops.