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Focus on... *the 2010 General Election*

There has been no escape from the General Election in the media since it was called just under two weeks ago, and the first SCHOOLS NorthEast Weekly Update of the new term is no exception! This week we wanted to look at what the General Election will mean for schools and teachers, and activities you might want to carry out with your students.

And don't forget - today is the last day to register to vote if you haven't already done so!

Party manifestos

Last week, the three major parties launched their 2010 manifestos, each laying out their differing approaches to education policy.

[The Labour Party Manifesto 2010](#)

The Labour manifesto says that "education is the key to personal fulfilment, economic prosperity and social mobility" and that their goal is 'educational excellence for every child, whatever their background or circumstances'. Their key education points are:

- Every young person will be guaranteed education or training until they are 18, with 75% going on to higher education;
- Every primary school pupil will have access to one-to-one tuition if they need it, meaning every pupil leaving primary school will be secure in the basics;
- A zero tolerance approach to poor behaviour will be introduced, including a transformation of education for permanently excluded pupils;
- Teach First will be extended to include primary schools as well as secondary schools;
- Parents would get the power to bring in a new leadership team if they are unhappy with a school's performance;
- Up to 1,000 secondary schools will be part of an accredited schools group by 2015;
- Spending will be increased in schools and on 16-19 learning.

[The Conservative Manifesto 2010](#)

The Conservative manifesto says that "improving our school system is the most important thing we can do to make opportunity more equal and address our declining social mobility". Their key points are:

- Parents, charities and private companies will be able to set up and run their own schools within the state sector, based on the Swedish 'free schools' model;

- The entry requirements for tax-payer funded primary school teacher training will be raised;
- Graduates would need at least a 2:2 to receive state-funded teacher training;
- Teachers would receive the strongest possible protection against false accusations;
- Teach First will be expanded with the introduction of two new programmes – Teach Now and Troops to Teachers;
- The National Curriculum will be reformed, making it more challenging and based on evidence about what knowledge can be mastered by children at different ages.

[The Liberal Democrat Manifesto 2010](#)

The Liberal Democrat manifesto says “Liberal Democrats want every child to receive an excellent education” and that “every child is different, so schools need to be free to teach children in different ways and get the very best from them”. Their key points are:

- An extra £2.5bn will be invested to boost education opportunities, which Head Teachers will be free to spend as they wish;
- Class sizes will be cut to ensure pupils get the required individual attention;
- SEN diagnostic assessments will be guaranteed for all five-year-olds, while SEN provision and training will be improved;
- Teach First will be expanded to attract more top graduates into teaching, and training for existing teachers will be improved to keep them up to date with best practice;
- Money will be set aside for schools to improve the energy efficiency of their buildings;
- The National Curriculum will be replaced by a ‘Minimum Curriculum Entitlement’ in all state schools
- A fully-independent Educational Standards Authority will be set up.

Further reading on General Election education news

- [Keep politics out of school and let us get on with teaching, say professors](#) (Guardian)
- [The worst classroom bullies? Politicians](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Election Debate: How can we encourage children to think for themselves?](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Playing politics with the three Rs](#) (BBC News)
- [The Observer election debate: Swedish-style ‘free schools’](#) (Observer)
- [Why My Party’s Best: the battle for the teachers’ vote](#) (TES)
- [What does the election hold for education policy?](#) (Guardian)

Mock Elections

With voter turnout among young people at an all time low, holding a mock election in your school is a fantastic way to get your students interested and engaged in politics and the General Election.

If you would like to hold a mock election in your school, you can register for free on The Hansard Society’s ‘Y Vote’ Mock Election website. You will then be placed onto the ‘mock election map’ and will receive support and additional resources, as well as being included in their national results after the General Election.

The website offers step by step instructions on how to run different types of mock election, as well as more resources and both pre- and post-election assembly plans. Click [here](#) to access the Y Vote website.

Google have also produced a UK School Elections site, which offers a step by step guide to running a mock election either in one class or as a whole school activity, as well as detailed lesson plans on democracy and the General Election. Like the Y Vote site, Google also have an election map where

you can upload your results and be part of their national survey into how young people would vote. The Google site is available by clicking [here](#).

Once you are ready for your mock election, the major parties have produced support and advice on how your students can stand as a candidate.

- The Labour Party pack contains 'Being a Labour Party Candidate' - a guide for students in mock elections, a 'Vote Labour' poster and rosette, and a simple to understand summary of the Labour manifesto. You can download a pack by clicking [here](#).
- Local Conservative Party candidates from each constituency have mock election packs available for schools in their area. If you would like a pack, get in touch with your candidate – you can find out who this is and how to contact them by clicking [here](#).
- The Liberal Democrats pack includes flyers, rosettes, stickers, posters, manifestos, bunting, whistles and balloons for your potential candidates to use. To request a pack email liberalyouthadmin@libdems.org.uk with the name and address of a contact at your school.

General Election resources

- The Parliament Education Service have an excellent section on their website explaining what the General Election is, what happens after the General Election, and other types of election as well as facts, figures, resources, games, lesson plans and activities to use in school. Click [here](#) to access the information.
- The TES have created a very in-depth range of Government and election themed resources covering everything from famous elections in history to the recent MP expenses scandal, via party politics, the importance of voting, different electoral systems and a virtual tour of Parliament! To access the resources, click [here](#).

In the news

Regional news

Darlington

- [Darlington student makes Lego Amy Winehouse](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [Star Radio DJ Chris Hakin quits job after schoolgirl contact](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [DJ quits for contacting girl of 14 on Facebook](#) (Northern Echo)
- [Industrial contamination found in new school's playing fields](#) (Northern Echo)
- [School expands thanks to new classrooms](#) (Darlington Borough Council)

Durham

- [Top scores for school's business idea](#) (Durham County Council)
- [Schoolgirl goalkeeper Sophie Losh stars in E.ON photo exhibition](#) (Journal)
- [Headmaster to run the Wall](#) (Northern Echo)
- [New school could offer more places](#) (Durham County Council)
- [North schoolchildren stuck in China until May](#) (Journal)
- [Consett academy protesters' fury at billboards](#) (Evening Chronicle)
- [Barnard Castle students win public speaking contest](#) (Northern Echo)
- [Head Teacher runs along Hadrian's Wall](#) (Northern Echo)
- [School welcomes green guest](#) (Durham County Council)
- [Political scuppering of primary curriculum is a farce](#) (Letter in this week's TES from Wendy Smith, Head Teacher in Durham)

Gateshead

- [Pupil amazed after he gets letter from Queen](#) (Evening Chronicle)

Hartlepool

- [Inspectors praise Hartlepool primary school](#) (Hartlepool Borough Council)
- [Pupils in wildlife project](#) (Hartlepool Borough Council)

Newcastle

- [North youth gets a voice](#) (Journal)
- [New voice for Newcastle youth as city creates UK's first independent Youth Council](#) (Newcastle City Council)
- [Cheryl Cole invited to talent show at old school](#) (Evening Chronicle)
- [School buildings a class apart worth keeping](#) (Journal)
- [Mum of truant children bailed for appeal](#) (Evening Chronicle)
- [Newcastle mum of seven jailed for truant kids](#) (Evening Chronicle)
- [New Executive Director of Children's Services announced](#) (Newcastle City Council)

Northumberland

Hexham and Tynedale

- [Students help out at school](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [School is rightly proud of its green credentials](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Ben meets his Black Cats hero](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [High school charity day is strictly fun](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [New law clears the way for mobile phone mast ban](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Council knew station site had school field status](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Branching out for experiment](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Pupils make music with hands and feet](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Maths market adds up to success](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Pupils unveil new wooden play hut](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Maths quartet are runners-up](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Belsay garden grant blossoms into award](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [Super savers join water campaign](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [School charity day under fire](#) (Hexham Courant)
- [School digs deep for Tibet fund](#) (Hexham Courant)

Morpeth

- [School bus routes given major overhaul](#) (Morpeth Herald)
- [Teachers drum up interest in new band](#) (Morpeth Herald)
- [Ex-classmates invited to take a school trip down memory lane](#) (Morpeth Herald)
- [Cash on the menu for winning school](#) (Morpeth Herald)
- [Curious kids swap classroom for building site](#) (Morpeth Herald)
- [Success is sweet for fund raisers](#) (Morpeth Herald)
- [Victoria's voice puts her at top of the class](#) (Morpeth Herald)
- [Pupils get court up in trial](#) (Morpeth Herald)

Other Northumberland

- [Plans to extend Scremerston school backed by planners](#) (Berwick Advertiser)
- [Bid to help tiny Northumberland schools stay viable](#) (Journal)

- [County launches its schools food strategy](#) (News Post Leader)
- [Pupils dig in with tree planting to create woodland](#) (News Post Leader)

Teesside

- [Guisborough Head Teacher nominated for Gazette award](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [Teesside students shine in regional test](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [Eco-friendly youngsters get a lesson in going green](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [Ofsted report hails outstanding Brotton school](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [Young Americans bring performing arts glee to Teesside schools](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [Boost for kids as 100 spaces created over 5 years](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [KIT team helping Middlesbrough buck the national rise in 'NEET' teenagers](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [The King's Academy works to raise £25k](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [£10m cash pledged for Stockton schools](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [Report praise for Ormesby School despite notice to improve](#) (Evening Gazette)
- [Plans unveiled for Oakfield Community College](#) (Evening Gazette)

North Tyneside

- [New Head Teacher passes test set by her pupils](#) (Evening Chronicle)
- [TyneMet College now starting to make grade](#) (Evening Chronicle)

South Tyneside

- ['Despicable' drug dealer targeted schoolgirls](#) (Shields Gazette)

Regionwide News

- [Sats opposition puts unions at loggerheads](#) (Journal)
- [Families can support schools](#) (Journal)
- [Who is top of the class?](#) (Journal)

National education news

Sats boycott

Members of the NAHT and some members of the NUT have voted for a boycott of this year's Year 6 Sats. 64% of those members asked backed the boycott, with union leaders making an announcement later this week as to whether the action goes ahead. Just under half of all NAHT members and 34% of the NUTs members cast a vote, with the two unions representing about 80% of England's 17,000 primary schools.

- [Head Teachers to vote on Sats boycott](#) (Guardian)
- [Vote for Sats boycott, teachers urged](#) (BBC News)
- [For and against: The Key Stage 2 boycott](#) (Times)
- [Sats row threatens 'Summer of discontent' in schools](#) (Independent)
- [Sats tests limit children's education, says teachers' leader](#) (BBC News)
- [Sats exams promote 'teaching to the test'](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Testing can undermine children's' rights, says teachers' leader](#) (Independent)
- [Should Sats tests be scrapped?](#) (Guardian)
- [Heads ballot backs Sats boycott](#) (BBC News)
- [Head Teachers vote to boycott Sats tests](#) (Guardian)
- [New Government faces school tests boycott](#) (Independent)

- [New Government to face Sats boycott after teacher vote](#) (Times)

Dropped education reforms

A number of much-publicised education reforms, including compulsory sex education for 15-year-olds, were shelved last week in order to push the Children, Schools and Families bill through Parliament before it was dissolved for the General Election. Other key plans that have been abandoned include one-to-one tuition, a home education register and school report cards.

- [Sex education and primary curriculum reforms abandoned](#) (Guardian)
- [Ed Balls drops key education reforms](#) (BBC News)
- [Ed Balls forced to drop key reforms](#) (Guardian)
- [Compulsory sex education scrapped](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [Tories kill off compulsory child sex education law](#) (Times)

Click [here](#) for a full round-up of all the education news from over the Easter break, as well as all the General Election education policy news.

Events and opportunities

Whole Education Expo event

SCHOOLS NorthEast are supporting Whole Education, a new organisation bringing together a group of leading non-political education organisations to promote practices that ensure every young person has access to an education that will equip them with the skills and knowledge to succeed. The organisation's active partners so far include [RSA](#), [Innovation Unit](#), [Human Scale Education](#), [Oxfam](#), [UK Youth](#), [Futurelab](#), [Young Foundation](#), [ASDAN](#), [Co-Operative College](#), [Flow Foundation](#) and [Campaign for Learning](#).

We have secured an exclusive early bird discount for SCHOOLS NorthEast members to attend Whole Education's North East Expo event at St James' Park in Newcastle on Tuesday 8 June, 10:00am to 4:30pm. The event will allow school leaders to learn about the innovative projects and programmes run by Whole Education's partners. All Whole Education projects are free and adaptable, are focused on supporting development of the competencies, skills and knowledge young people will need in the future.

Click [here](#) to download the Expo flyer, and to take advantage of the discount and book your place for just £70 click [here](#) quoting the discount code SNE080610 before 14 May, and if you would like further information email Charlotte at info@wholeeducation.org or.

FILMCLUB events in the North East

FILMCLUB helps teachers set up inspiring film clubs which provide a free, simple and effective solution to the extended schools initiative. The scheme offers thousands of films delivered free to your school, one-to-one teacher support and a resource-rich website that provides a platform for pupil voice.

Start-up sessions for schools interested in signing up to the scheme will be held at the following North East locations in the next couple of months:

- Stockton – Wednesday 12 May
- Middlesbrough – Tuesday 25 May
- Sunderland – Thursday 23 June

For more information or to register visit www.filmclub.org or call 020 7288 4520.

Grants and funding

Europe Direct grant

Small grants of up to £50 are available to support Europe Day activities taking place in schools around the North East. Europe Day takes place on 9 May, the anniversary of the day in 1950 when the European Union was conceived.

They are looking to support projects and activities that stimulate students to think about Europe and the wider world, and could include such ideas as celebrations of diversity, raising the profile of the international dimension within your school community, challenging stereotypical attitudes or raising the profile of foreign languages.

Click [here](#) to access the very short and simple application form but hurry - applications need to be emailed to the Europe Direct team by 5pm on Thursday 22 April.

Hilton in the Community Foundation grants

Grants of up to £10,000 are available to schools from the Hilton in the Community Foundation, for projects that help or support young people. Last year grants included a school who were awarded a grant to supply every pupil with a 'healthy living' water bottle, and a primary school who were awarded almost £1000 to support their resource unit for disadvantaged pupils and outdoor equipment.

For full information and to apply for a grant, click [here](#). The next deadline for applications is Wednesday 5 May.

Resources and ideas

Local and Community History Month 2010

May 2010 is The Historical Association's Local and Community History month, and a great opportunity to carry out events celebrating the North East's past. This could include a school trip to one of the region's fantastic museums, which include:

- [Beamish Museum](#) has a dedicated education team who offer educational visits, educational activities and a range of downloadable resources to use in the classroom.
- [The Great North Museum](#) also have an education team who facilitate school trips, workshops and a unique 'loan boxes' scheme where schools can borrow special themed boxes of exhibits from North East museums and learn about different stages of history from the medieval times via the Victorians and right through to 1980s Sunderland!

For more information on Local and Community History Month from the Historical Association, click [here](#).

St George's Day

This Friday, 23 April, is St George's Day, and the TES have collated a range of useful resources, lesson plans, assembly plans and activities to use in school including an illustrated story of St George and the Dragon, the interactive 'Dragon Slayer' game as well as worksheets, a quiz, newspaper outlines, poem worksheets and a 'make your own armour' kit!

If you're feeling patriotic, click [here](#) to access the resources.

National Pet Month 2010

National Pet Month 2010 started on 3 April and runs until 3 May, and aims to promote responsible pet ownership, make people aware of the benefits of pets, increase public awareness of pet support services and raise awareness of working companion animals such as guide dogs for the blind.

The National Pet Month website has a dedicated schools area which includes a wealth of information about keeping a school pet, the benefits of a pet to your school and pupils, information on pet protocol, lesson plans and other resources. Simply visit www.nationalpetmonth.org.uk/schools for all the information.

Star pupil... *student voice and leadership*

Congratulations to Victoria Najafi, Leadership and Enrichment Co-ordinator at King Edward VI School in Morpeth, who has won a national BT Seen and Heard Award for her role in the school's Student Voice and Leadership Programme. The programme was set up to encourage students to take on their own projects, and to ensure that all opportunities offered to the school are shared with pupils through a network of Student Voice Ambassadors. Miss Najafi received her award at the Houses of Parliament, where she also took part in a panel discussion questioning MPs on the issues that matter to them and to their communities.

Could try harder... *volcanic ash cloud*

The ongoing delays in air travel caused by the Icelandic volcano eruption have meant chaos at the start of the summer term as teachers and pupils find themselves stranded overseas and unable to return to school, meaning some classes and art practical and language oral exams have been delayed. The NASUWT has urged schools not to penalise teachers who fail to return following flight suspensions, while the schools themselves have set work online for pupils, many of whom are preparing for GCSE and A-level exams in the next couple of months. The furthest away we have heard a North East Head Teacher stranded is Hong Kong – can anybody top that?! Let us know at think@schoolsnortheast.com.

- [Don't penalise teachers stranded by ash, union urges](#) (BBC News)
- [Volcano ash flight ban set to cause chaos in British schools](#) (Guardian)
- [School chaos as families are stranded by ash cloud](#) (Observer)
- [Classes shut and exams threatened as ash cloud clogs working Britain](#) (Times)
- [Exam change for stranded pupils](#) (BBC News)
- [Ash cloud forces schools to suspend classes](#) (Guardian)
- [Volcanic ash cloud forces school closures](#) (Daily Telegraph)
- [No 'volcanic ash holiday' as schools set exiled pupils work online](#) (Times)

And finally...

It may not seem like what you would traditionally call a sport, but 'speed stacking' is fast becoming a classroom craze, with the activity now taking place in over 4,500 schools in the UK, and 30,000 schools globally. The 'sport' revolves around stacking and unstacking pyramids of plastic cups as quickly and efficiently as possible, and allegedly improves perseverance, concentration and coordination. The Guardian visited a school in London where the pupils have embraced speed stacking, which you can watch by clicking [here](#).

For more information on speed and sport stacking visit www.speedstacks.com, and click [here](#) to watch a video of the World Champion in action...

Have a great week!

The SCHOOLS NorthEast Weekly Update goes out to every Head Teacher in the North East every Tuesday, but if anybody else in your school or LA would like to receive the Update, please send their name and email address to a.morris@schoolsnortheast.com.

Plus if you have any issues you would like to see covered in the Update, or any other comments, I would love to hear from you at the above address.