

We can learn from US on schools, says Gillard

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THE Education Minister, Julia Gillard, is enthusiastic about the prospects of greater collaboration between Australia and the US on ways to improve schools.

Ms Gillard signed a memorandum of understanding with the US Education Secretary, Arne Duncan, during her recent visit to Washington, under which policy officers from both nations will come together regularly to share ideas.

Ms Gillard said the two countries faced similar challenges

and shared common views on how they should be tackled.

“It will mean at the political level and a departmental level, we

‘We are doing so much better than they are.’

Save Our Schools

will be regularly bringing policy people together to focus on education reform agendas,” she said.

Ms Gillard said Mr Duncan

was particularly interested in Australia’s plan to publish a range of data on every school in the country, including test results and staff numbers, on a website by early next year, and the national curriculum, which is due to be introduced in 2011.

She said she was interested in US ideas on improving the quality of teaching. She has borrowed from a US program to set up Teach for Australia, which recruits high-performing non-teaching graduates, gives them accelerated training and places them in disadvantaged schools for two years.

“There are good shared things

to keep learning from each other on and sparking the next idea and the next development.”

But Trevor Cobbold, a spokesman for the public education advocacy group Save Our Schools, said it was “bizarre” to look to the US for ideas on education.

“Why would you sign a memorandum of understanding with a country that’s so far behind us on average results and on dealing with low socio-economic students and minority students?” he said.

“We are doing so much better than they are.”

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