

A·C·E·R

NEWSLETTER

Edited by John King

Program for Australian Stepfamilies

Living in a Stepfamily is a unique video-based program specifically written for Australian stepfamilies. It is a six-week program for couples who have children from an earlier relationship. It gives information, provides support, and helps develop parenting strategies that are appropriate to the special needs of stepfamilies. The kit contains:

- a forty minute video depicting three Australian stepfamilies, each with two episodes;
- leader's manual;
- hand book for stepparents;
- six wall charts;
- 12 activity cards;
- three genograms.

The Living In A Stepfamily program presents a positive approach to stepfamilies while still recognising the enormous difficulties stepfamilies encounter. For this reason, a large amount of time is given to the development of skills and techniques for improving interpersonal relationships. The problems facing stepfamily members as a result of these complexities are outlined. Suggestions are provided as to how stepfamily members may tackle these problems.

The video component of the Living in a Stepfamily program has been completed and those who have previewed it have found it challenging and stimulating. They consider the video has potential for multi-purpose use, such as in the training of counsellors and community workers.

Availability of Hand Book

The hand book, *Living in a Stepfamily*, will be available through bookshops as well as direct from ACER. This is an encouraging and useful book on the experiences of Australian stepfamilies.

About the Author

Ruth Webber, a lecturer in sociology at the Institute of Catholic Education, Christ Campus, Victoria, is a stepparent herself. She has led several educational

programs for stepparents and counsellors, and has conducted research into the dynamics of stepfamilies. She was invited by the Australian Council for Educational Research to develop the Living in a Stepfamily program.

Workshops

Successful introductory workshops were conducted at the Queensland Guidance and Counselling Association Conference held in Brisbane in September. Other workshops to be conducted by the author will be organised throughout Australia in 1989. Proceedings of the Brisbane conference, including Ruth's paper, are available for \$35 from Lorraine Wallis, Treasurer, QGCA, Balmoral SHS, PO Box 120, Morningside, Queensland, 4170.

With the program expected to be released in February 1989, further inquiries should be directed to Joanna Goldsworthy, Parent Education Consultant, ACER, 9 Frederick Street, Hawthorn, Victoria 3122; phone (03) 819 1400 or, toll free outside Melbourne, 008 338 402.



Ruth Webber, author of *Living In A Stepfamily* program, leading a workshop at the Queensland Guidance and Counselling Association Conference in Brisbane.



Publishing is a key function at ACER. Above are the people who make it work. From left to right: Roger Seddon, Colin Lowry, Judy Clark, Ian Fraser (Manager), Geraldine Morgan. The ACER imprint is an important and growing one. Ahead, there's an exciting publishing program of books, kits, journals and tests – most of these by Australian authors. Budding, or established, authors with book or test ideas or manuscripts should contact Ian Fraser.

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Discipline Review of Teacher Education in Mathematics and Science

The Discipline Review of Teacher Education in Mathematics and Science is being carried out as part of the Commonwealth Government's continuing program of assessments of major discipline areas in higher education. This program seeks, among other things, to identify whether any changes in teaching and research activities are needed in the interests of increased quality, efficiency and effectiveness.

The review follows assessments of the disciplines of law and engineering, and was foreshadowed by the Commonwealth Government in its Green Paper on higher education, which was released towards the end of last year. In the Green Paper the Minister of Education, Mr Dawkins, stressed the Government's commitment 'to the improvement of mathematics and science teaching at all levels . . . in particular, the important place of teacher education programs in these subjects.'

The review is being undertaken by a panel of three, which is chaired by Dr Graeme Speedy, the former Director of the College of Advanced Education and the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia. The deputy chairpersons are Dr Clem Annice, Head of the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Teacher Education at the Canberra College of Advanced Education, and Professor Peter Fensham,

Dean of the Faculty of Education at Monash University.

The secretariat for the review is based at ACER and is headed by Dr Leo West, who has been seconded from his position of Deputy Director of the Higher Education Advisory and Research Unit at Monash University. Miss Jenny Baker is the administrative officer of the secretariat. The senior research officers for the review are Dr Warren Jones of ACER and Dr Kathiravelu Navaratnam, formerly of the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. The review will be assisted by a steering committee composed of twelve people representing different interest groups. It is expected that the review will be completed by the end of October 1989.

The review will look at pre-service and post-experience award courses at higher education institutions in the teaching of mathematics and science at the early childhood, primary, and secondary levels. As part of this assessment each higher education institution that provides teacher education in the areas of mathematics and science will be visited by a panel composed of representatives of the review and experts in the fields of mathematics and science.

Specifically, the review panel shall:

- (a) review the current provision of teacher education award courses, including in-service award course, offered by higher education insti-

tutions in full-time, part-time, or external mode for the teaching of mathematics and science at early childhood, primary, and secondary levels;

- (b) examine the quality of teacher preparation in mathematics and science, in mathematics and science education, and in other aspects of professional development at each higher education institution, with particular reference to the levels of attainment expected of students by institutions;
- (c) having regard also to the likely demand for teachers with skills in mathematics and science, report and make recommendations on the future development of mathematics and science teacher education in Australia, including improvements which should be made to enhance the general proficiency of the teaching work force in these areas.

The review panel invites submissions on these matters, which should be sent by the end of November 1988 to:

Dr Leo West
Executive Secretary
Discipline Review of Teacher
Education in Mathematics and
Science
ACER
PO Box 210
Hawthorn, Victoria 3122.

For further information, including the detailed terms of reference, phone the Executive Secretary, Dr Leo West, on (03) 819 1400.



Members of the maths and science review panel at a recent meeting: (from left to right) Dr Navaratnam, Dr West, Professor Fensham, Dr Annice, and Dr Speedy.

Understanding Classroom Behaviour: (2nd Edition)

Maurice Balson has rewritten and updated his best-selling book *Understanding Classroom Behaviour*, which provides a framework for understanding the behaviour of students and discusses methods of relating to students in ways that are appropriate to a democratic society.

The new edition includes two new chapters. Chapter 8, Mastery Learning Strategies, discusses variables in learning that can be changed, types of learning strategies, and group-based mastery learning. Chapter 9, Adolescence, provides a much needed focus on principles and strategies for assisting adolescents.

This new edition of *Understanding Classroom Behaviour* takes into account current policies on school welfare and discipline. It is now available for \$14.95 (order code, 299BK).

Reports from the Institutes

Each of the Institutes for Educational Research offers a variety of services to members, and each utilises different strategies in seeking to provide interesting and challenging forums for the discussion of contemporary issues. Examples of some of those services and strategies are given in this issue of the *ACER Newsletter*, which features reports from the Institutes in Tasmania, South Australia, and Queensland.

Tasmania

The Tasmanian Institute for Educational Research has a membership now of 125. The Institute held a forum on the topic 'Setting an Agenda for Educational Research in Tasmania' in Hobart on 1 October. This was the first time the Tasmanian Institute has sponsored a meeting designed to bring together staff of the University and the Tasmanian State Institute of Technology, graduate students, and educational practitioners to debate this issue.

The purposes of the forum were to share information about current research activities, improve communication between researchers and practitioners, identify matters of immediate concern, coordinate research efforts, and improve the dissemination of research in Tasmania.

Recent publications in the Occasional Papers series include L. Yates, 'Who Said Research Just Tells Us What We Already Know? Reflections on Research on Girls in Education', and J. Owen and N. Johnson, 'Educational Improvement: Can Evaluators Help?'

South Australia

The March meeting of the South Australian Institute on the issue of teacher appraisal provided audience interaction with speakers who gave perspectives on teacher appraisal from the point of view of the researcher, the school teacher, and the union. In July, the Institute experimented with a workshop run especially for people who are undertaking post-graduate educational research. The workshop provided practical advice about the 'real world' of research and enabled the students to share their trials and tribulations with one another.

The Institute also took advantage of the influx of distinguished overseas researchers into Australia to attend the ACER Seminar on Intelligence in Melbourne. In August, Professor Rainer Kluwe, Professor of Psychology,

University of Defence, Hamburg, West Germany, gave the Institute a stimulating address entitled 'Learning by Doing' before going on to the ACER seminar.

Further information on the initiatives and program of the South Australian Institute can be obtained from the Secretary, Bill Griffiths, St Pauls College, Grand Junction Road, Gilles Plains, S.A. 5086; phone (08) 266 0622.

Queensland

The Queensland Institute held two meetings in April that attracted audiences representative of a wide range of educational institutions and interests. The first, 'The Dawkins Green Paper on Higher Education - Green, White or a Blue Print', was led by Dr Peter Botsman, Special Advisor on Post Compulsory Education to the Queensland Minister of Education. Professor Eileen Byrne, University of Queensland, led the second meeting with a paper titled 'The Future of Education in Queensland: The Need for a New Principal Education Act'.

The 1988 J. A. Robinson Memorial Lecture was presented on 10 May by Dr Barry McGaw, Director of The Australian Council for Educational Research. The lecture was titled 'Assessing Accountability in Education: Is there a Sensible Role for Testing?'

The second issue for 1988 of the Institute's journal, *Queensland Research* (Vol. 4, No. 2), was distributed in July. The issue featured a guest editor, Associate Professor Noel Loos from James Cook University of North Queensland, and focused on aspects of education in the Torres Strait region. Reaction to this issue has been very positive with a number of requests for copies. The third issue is in preparation with the feature article devoted to the 1988 J. A. Robinson Memorial Lecture.

The ACSPRI 89 Summer Program

This year's Summer Program for the Australian Consortium for Social and Political Research Incorporated (ACSPRI) will take place from 5 to 17 February 1989 at the University of New South Wales. Dr Trevor Williams, Associate Director, ACER, will conduct part of the two sets of week-long courses. A booklet containing descriptions of the courses and application details is available from Social Science Data Archives, Australian National University, GPO Box 4, Canberra, ACT 2601; phone (062) 49 4400.



Phyllis Staurengi Retires

After 35 years at ACER, Miss Phyllis Staurengi, the Business Manager, has retired. She is pictured above at one of the numerous social events that marked her retirement, a cocktail party given by the Staff Association.

Dr Barry McGaw, Director of ACER, described Phyllis as 'a wonderfully effective manager of ACER's finances - always in control but never losing sight of the big picture of what the organisation was trying to do'.

Psychological Test Bulletin

The *Psychological Test Bulletin* (formerly the *Bulletin for Psychologists*) is the only periodical in Australia dealing exclusively with psychological tests. Each issue includes independent test reviews, research reports, articles on testing and Australian norms, and descriptive information on new tests.

The *Psychological Test Bulletin* is edited by Dr Jo Jenkinson and published twice each year by ACER. Subscription rates are \$25 (Australian residents), \$30 (overseas, surface mail), and \$35 (overseas, airmail). Subscriptions (Australian currency) should be addressed to ACER Psychological Test Bulletin, ACER, PO Box 210, Hawthorn, Victoria 3122.

New Zealand Subscribers

This Bulletin will be distributed to New Zealand subscribers by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research. Inquiries should be directed to Test Advisory Services, NZCER, 178-182 Willis Street, Wellington, New Zealand.

National Guide to Literacy: Project Enters a New Phase

Work has begun on the next stage of the National Guide to Literacy project. The last few months have seen the distribution of the 'oral opinionaire' materials, and the return by some 50 teachers of tapes and other materials. What has come to light is a vast quantity of opinion and practice about literacy education at the various age levels with which the project is concerned. A network of teachers and others concerned with Aboriginal literacy has also emerged, and the group has been particularly generous in contributing materials and expertise.

All these materials are being reviewed, and a program of visits to teachers in their classrooms to see these practices 'on site' has begun. From this stage of the study will emerge the core materials of the project – the studies in practice, with their assessments and statements of the criteria teachers actually use in their working day. It is hoped they will provide informed and practical insights for others – teachers, parents and employers – into teaching for literacy. Drafts of these materials will be available for comment in the near future.

More Teachers Needed to Contribute

Teachers working with classes of children about eight years of age, and who believe that their program reflects good practice, are encouraged to contact Graeme Withers at ACER. The contribution each teacher makes is not particularly onerous or time-consuming, but these contributions are enormously valuable, given the quantity of work that has been seen so far.

Further inquiries and expressions of interest can be made directly to Graeme Withers at ACER, PO Box 210, Hawthorn, Victoria 3122; telephone (03) 819 1400.

Computer-assisted Career Guidance System for Australia

Articles on topics such as 'What Technology Can Do for Guidance', or 'The Computer: Guidance Tool of the Future', started appearing in books and journals in the early 1970s. Several people were experimenting with computers to aid the process of career guidance by the mid-1960s in the USA, and the first conference of these innovators was held just over 20 years ago. Several very ambitious projects were set up, but almost all of them failed to get beyond the pilot stage, usually because of their tendency to require resources well beyond the initial estimates. For this reason, in considering what might be feasible for Australia, ACER has decided to build on one of the American projects that managed to survive beyond the pilot stage to evolve into a comprehensive and advanced system.

Computer programs that are developed as aids to career guidance can usefully be thought of in terms of the functions they perform and along a scale from systems designed mainly for the retrieval of pre-stored information to systems designed to simulate virtually the entire range of career guidance activities. Information retrieval systems, which are less difficult to construct, are now relatively common, but there are only a few of the higher interactive systems currently in operation. These kinds of systems usually make use of information retrieval features, but they also try to teach their users something about how to make decisions. Typically, users are provided with a variety of pathways through sections which lead them to think about a wide range of issues related to their general adjustment in addition to focusing more specifically on exploring careers and making choices.

The system that ACER has decided to adapt is SIGI PLUS (System for Interactive Guidance and Information, Plus), one of the most advanced computer-assisted career guidance systems, which was developed at the Educational Testing Service in Princeton, New Jersey. SIGI PLUS was first released in the USA in 1985 with versions to run on a number of microcomputers and one minicomputer. The origins of this system go back more than 15 years when work first began on its mainframe predecessor, SIGI. Both SIGI PLUS and SIGI have undergone extensive field trials and evaluation in America, and some smaller scale evaluation of SIGI PLUS is now in progress in Australia. These evaluations have shown that the program (even the US version in Australia) is useful and valued in a variety of educational settings.

Flexibility

SIGI PLUS has nine sections, which can be accessed in any order and any number of times:

- **Introduction:** provides an overview of the whole system and helps users to select appropriate sections or pathways.
- **Self-assessment:** allows users to consider work-related values and decide how important these are or will be in their lives; helps users decide which major fields of knowledge are of most interest to them.
- **Search:** allows users to specify one at a time the attributes they want in an occupation; produces lists of occupations for each set of specifications that is entered.
- **Information:** provides specific answers to up to 27 questions (as re-

quired) about any of the occupations in the data base.

- **Skills:** shows users which skills tend to be required for certain kinds of work, and helps them rate themselves in terms of these skills.
- **Preparing:** allows users to see typical preparation paths, including types of education, for the occupations they wish to explore; leads them to decide what additional preparation they may need and estimate their chances of achieving it.
- **Coping:** allows users to examine some of the practical issues related to preparing for and holding a job; recommends strategies for coping with common problems.
- **Deciding:** helps users to examine the rewards and risks associated with their potential occupational choices and to evaluate each choice in terms of these factors.
- **New Steps:** helps users to develop action plans for moving towards their goals.

The main task in adapting SIGI PLUS is to replace its US data bases with Australian ones. The occupational data base is being converted by staff at ACER, while the educational data base is being adapted by staff of the TAFE Counselling Department of the Western Australian Ministry of Education. Partial support for the project has been provided by IBM Australia in the form of computer equipment. It is expected that the adaptation and publishing stages of the Australian SIGI PLUS will require about a year to complete, so the program will be available towards the end of 1989. Requests for further information should be directed to Dr Jan Lokan or Ms Marianne Fleming at ACER.

Skilled Interviewing

Daphne Keats

Daphne Keats draws on years of experience in running workshops on interviewing, and in being an interviewer herself. She points out that interviewing is part of the day-to-day activities of people in a wide range of occupations and has written this book to help these people develop and improve their interviewing skills.

Both students and practitioners in fields such as psychology, social work, counselling, personnel, and management, among others, will find this book a useful guide to the complex skill of interviewing.

The author discusses the psychological bases of interviewing, focusing on such areas as communication, social context, and inhibiting and facilitating processes in the interviewee. She then looks at different types of interviews and ways to structure them for maximum effect. Chapters on techniques of interviewing and on non-verbal communication further the practical emphasis of this book. Difficult cases are discussed, along with suggestions for handling them. The cases include interviews with the hostile, the over-anxious, the submissive, the very young or the very old, and those where language is a barrier.

The book concludes with a chapter on interviews as research tools—a boon for researcher and student alike!

Daphne Keats is Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Newcastle.

Code 291 BK Price \$13.95

Paraprofessionals: Training for the Classroom

American Guidance Service 1988

This long awaited inservice program is designed for both beginning and experienced paraprofessionals in regular and special education facilities. The general aims of the four-session program are to:

- Train paraprofessionals in the knowledge and skills they need to effectively assist teachers in the classroom.
- Help teachers and paraprofessionals work together to build and strengthen their team.

November 1988

NEW FROM A·C·E·R

- Help teachers better lead the classroom team.
- Assist paraprofessional coordinators in creating productive teacher-paraprofessional teams and in evaluating paraprofessionals effectively.

The first session focuses on the classroom partnership, and is attended by paraprofessionals, teachers, and administrators. The subsequent sessions are attended by the paraprofessionals, and cover understanding normal and exceptional children; helping children by managing their behaviour, building self-esteem, being alert to signs of abuse and neglect; assisting the teacher through informal assessment and observing and recording academic and social behaviour; and helping with instruction in the classroom.

The materials include a leader's guide, a set of 12 overhead transparencies, a set of 11 photocopy masters, and a videotape. In addition, each paraprofessional participant needs a paraprofessional's hand book, and each teacher participant a teacher's hand book. The video is currently available only in NTSC format, but ACER is negotiating to produce videos compatible with the Australian system.

	Code	Price
Complete Kit	990HM	\$311.00
Paraprofessional's Hand Book	500HM	\$10.50
Teacher's Hand Book	501HM	\$8.50

Self-Directed Search Australian Edition

The Self-Directed Search (SDS) is one of the main instruments arising from John Holland's theory of vocational personalities and work environments. It is understandably popular with career counsellors because of its design as a self-administered, self-scored, and, to a large extent, self-interpreted vocational guidance procedure.

ACER has now adapted and published the SDS for Australian use by arrangement with the American publisher, Psychological Assessment Resources. The Australian adaptation was done under the direction of Dr Jan Lokan.

The SDS yields six scores: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. The *Professional Manual* of the US edition explains Holland's RIASEC theory, discusses administration and scoring of the five sections in the assessment booklet (occupational daydreams, activities, competencies, occupations and self-estimates), and contains counselling strategies and normative data. The Australian edition includes the *Australian Supplement* to the *Professional Manual*, which presents the important details of the local adaptation and standardisation. The Australian standardisation was based on a nationwide sample of almost 2000 students in Years 9, 10, and 11 who were tested during 1983.

There is a booklet, *You and Your Career*, which shows students how they may use the results from the SDS and its related inventories.

American SDS materials are detailed in the ACER Psychological Catalogue and include computer software, Vietnamese and American Spanish translations, and the SDS Form E for individuals with limited reading ability.

	Code	Price
Assessment Booklet (expendable) pkg. of 25	100QA	\$35.00
Occupations Finder (reusable) pkg. of 25	101QA	\$32.00
<i>You and Your Career</i> (reusable) pkg. of 25	103QA	\$10.00
Australian Manual Supplement	500QA	\$18.50
Specimen Set (one each of the above)	000QA	\$21.60
Professional Manual (1985, US edition)	500VA	\$23.25
Professional Manual Supplement (1987, US edition)	501VA	\$17.45

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- ACER Special Education, Health, and Community Services Price List
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- ACER Catalogue of Psychological Tests Price List
- ACER Current Projects 1988/1989
- ACER Psych News (free updating information)

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