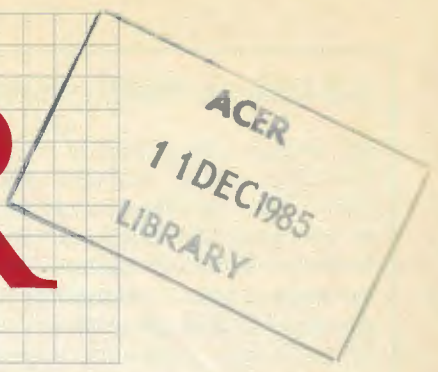


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NEWSLETTER



Edited by Peter Jeffery

Prize-winning Dissertation

Dr Mark Wilson's dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Chicago has been recognized by the award of two academic prizes. The Mare Perry Galler Prize is awarded annually by the University in each of its Divisions (Biological Sciences, Humanities, Physical Sciences and Social Sciences). The citation for Dr Wilson's award in the Social Sciences Division was for 'the most distinguished piece of scholarship in the year'. The Susan Colver Rosenberger prize is awarded triennially by the Department of Education of the University, and the 1985 citation read 'for constructive study and original research'.

The title of Dr Wilson's dissertation was: 'A Psychometric Model of Hierarchical Development'. Dr Wilson completed his doctoral study in June 1984 and rejoined the ACER staff shortly after-

wards. He is currently continuing the work begun in North America and working on the use of microcomputers in testing, diagnosis of student difficulties, and curriculum development.



Dr Mark Wilson

ACER Seeks Closer Relations With Departments of Education

The Director of ACER, Dr Barry McGaw, was invited to join the Directors-General of Education for part of their meeting in Adelaide in September. ACER is preparing a public statement of its purposes and the procedures by which it will establish its program. The meeting in Adelaide provided an opportunity to discuss a draft of the statement.

The Western Australian Minister of Education, Mr Bob Pearce, MLA, visited ACER on Friday 13 September. As current Chairman of the Australian Education Council, the council of Ministers, he was also interested in ways in which ACER and the Departments of Education could work more closely.

New Telephone Number for ACER

(03) 819 1400

Please note our new telephone number which changed when we installed a PABX for increased efficiency:

The 008 telephone number is for 'Parent Education' inquiries only and is not connected to the rest of ACER's telephone system.

ACER Director a Fellow

The Director of ACER, Dr Barry McGaw, has been elected a Fellow of the Australian Psychological Society. He has also become a member of the Council of the Society and Chairperson of its Committee on Psychological Tests and Testing.

Dr McGaw is also a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia and a Fellow of the Australian College of Education.

ACER Research and Development Projects

Details of current research projects at ACER are described in an annotated list published this month. It is available on request from ACER Consultant Services Division.

The annotations indicate expected activities over the next six months to April 1986. Persons wishing to visit ACER or to work with ACER staff can use these descriptions to identify projects in which they would be interested. For each project, all publications produced to date are also listed to give a further indication of the concerns and interests of staff.

Canadian Researcher at ACER

Professor Rod Clifton from the University of Manitoba, Canada, is spending his sabbatical leave at ACER. Professor Clifton and his family arrived in July and they will spend the better part of a year in Australia. His research interests are ethnicity and multiculturalism and models of teacher education. He is working on the Youth in Transition Project, and is examining the effects of ethnicity upon the educational attainment process in Australia. His research is supported, in part, by a Leave Fellowship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

ACER Publications

- Bibliography of Education Theses in Australia* 1983.....\$13
- Immigrant Australians and Education* by Andrew Sturman (Australian Education Review No. 22).....\$8.95
- Australian Education Index* Vol. 28, No. 3, September 1985

Cunningham Library - ACER



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Saf Lerman Visit a Success

Saf Lerman, the author of *Responsive Parenting*, visited Australia from the United States on a short promotional tour in September. Mrs Lerman teaches on the faculty of Wheelock College Center of Parenting Studies, in Massachusetts, and also writes a nationally syndicated column on parenting. *Responsive Parenting* is published by American Guidance Service for which ACER is the Australian agent. ACER already distributes two of their earlier parent education kits, *STEP* and *STEP/Teen*.

The new kit widens the range of parent education materials available in Australia. Its value lies in its focus on positive approaches, the variety of helpful methods it teaches, and the wide range of topics it addresses. It is comprehensive, versatile, and eclectic, and suitable for use with parents from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. It can be used both in group discussion work and individual counselling.

While in Melbourne and Sydney, Mrs Lerman gave three seminars on 'Responsive Parenting' to selected audiences as well as making herself available for media interviews. The Director of ACER, Dr Barry McGaw, introduced Mrs Lerman at the seminars and stressed the commitment of ACER to parent education.

In Melbourne, Saf Lerman's seminar at The Rialto was opened by the Victorian Minister of Education, the Honourable I. R. Cathie. Professor Don Edgar, Director of the Institute of Family Studies, speaking after Mrs Lerman's presentation, placed the launching of *Responsive Parenting* into the wider context of the urgent need for parent education in Australia. Citing the massive changes in society that are affecting family life, he pointed out that, while parents remain the most crucial and significant figures in their children's development, parenting skills have diminished with the decrease in family size, the participation of women in the work force, the neglect of an active parenting role by fathers, the increase in marital breakdown, and the rising poverty in single parent families. Meanwhile, there is increasing government expenditure in areas such as the Family Law Court and in marriage counselling. Professor Edgar said that parent education could be a major step forward in placing the emphasis back on the educational role of parents in developing children's skills in socializing, and in developing basic skills that engender confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of responsibility. Within this framework, Professor Edgar endorsed the humane approach of *Responsive Parenting* and welcomed ACER's commitment to parent education.

Channel 10 News was present at the

Melbourne seminar, and media coverage included interviews on 3LO and 3AW. Both the *Sun* and the *Herald* featured Mrs Lerman's visit. In Sydney, ABC Canberra, ABC Rural, and Radio 2UE interviewed Mrs Lerman, as did the *Daily Mirror*. ACER's new toll-free number for telephone inquiries on parent education was publicized.

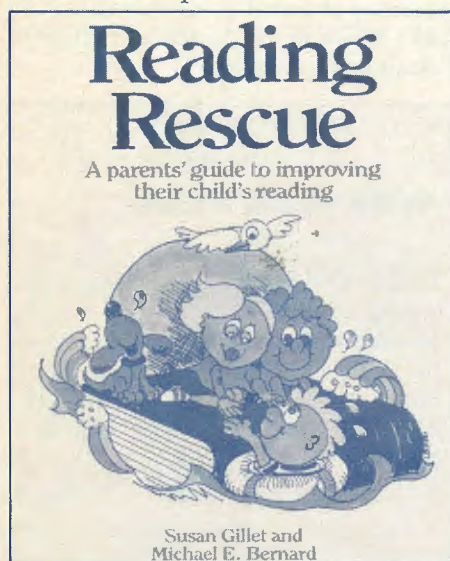
Attendance at the seminars was by professionals working in the field of child care and parent education. Feedback from seminar participants about the *Responsive Parenting* material has been enthusiastic and positive.



Mrs Saf Lerman

Reading Rescue

No rescue is needed for *Reading Rescue* — the book is a great success. It has been praised in several quarters for its timely contribution of help for parents or teachers in working with children having difficulty with reading. This is the book to have in every school when parents ask, 'How can I help?'



International Information Network for Education

ACER Librarian Elizabeth Oley attended a meeting in educational documentation and information convened by the International Bureau of Education (IBE). The meeting was held at the International Conference Centre, Geneva.

Organized in collaboration with UNESCO headquarters units, the meeting was attended by specialists from twenty member countries of the International Network for Educational Information, observers from international organizations, and those responsible for educational documentation at UNESCO headquarters and regional offices.

A number of directors of existing networks attended the meeting. These included EUDISED, the European Documentation and Information System for Education, EURYDICE, the Education Information Network in the European Community, Euronet DIANE, Direct Information Access Network for Europe, and ERIC, Educational Resources Information Centre of the United States Department of Education.

The meeting was held to examine the development of the International Network for Educational Information (INED) and the resources of UNESCO in the field of educational information and how these could be used more fully by members.

Following the presentation of papers and discussion on these topics, the 67 participants divided into three working groups to discuss network norms and management, network user needs in developed and under-developed countries, and services and techniques for systems interface.

The working groups drafted recommendations for the implementation of the network, emphasizing that where possible existing standards should be followed.

With its *Australian Education Index* database on AUSINET, ACER is in a good position to contribute machine readable data to the network. The database is also available for online access from any country with access to TYMNET or TELENET.

A final report of the meeting containing an account of the discussions and recommendations adopted by the participants is to be published by IBE.

Consultant Services Division

We are taking steps to become more 'available' than ever. ACER Advisory Services have been replaced by a Consultant Services Division and several staff have been recruited to the team.

The first appointment to be made in the expansion of our service wing was that of Mrs Joanna Goldsworthy as Consultant (Parent Education). In September, Mr Peter Jeffery was the successful candidate for the position of Head of Consultant Services Division. His former position of Senior Advisory Officer will become Senior Consultant (Education) in the new division. An appointment is pending also for Psychologist (Personnel and Careers) in the division. Another new appointment is Mrs Anne Lowry as assistant to Mrs Pam Burns, Test Librarian.

All these people join the experienced

educators and psychologists who have been supporting ACER's work for years through the Advisory Services Unit, Mrs Jo Jenkinson, Mrs Sue Bell, and Mrs Judith Eppinger (the last two are part-time). Together the staff of Consultant Services Division will now fully develop support for all ACER's varied activities in Australian education.



Mrs Jo Goldsworthy

Parenting Resources Chart Available

There is now an attractive wall chart, 60 × 40 cm, that outlines some of the parenting resource materials available from ACER.

The chart is illustrated with large colour photographs depicting parents spending time with children, and outlines the contents of three parent education kits, *STEP*, *STEP/Teen*, and *Responsive Parenting*, and one book, *Becoming Better Parents*. It also publicizes ACER's toll free telephone number (Australia-wide 008-338402), which is intended to facilitate the exchange of parenting information and the placement of orders.

The chart is available free from ACER and is suitable for display at any centre dealing with child welfare or parent education.

Sizing Up Class Size

In the last *Newsletter* (No. 54 August 1985), we published part of an interview with Dr Sid Bourke of the ACER about teacher questioning in a study of primary classrooms. This is a follow-up of that interview, and focuses on the vexed question of the relationship between class size and achievement. The interviewer is again Peter Jeffery.

I'll be blunt — did you find that class size affected achievement?

Yes. For students of equal ability, those in smaller classes had higher achievement. This is what most people would expect — and the reason is that teachers who have smaller classes do different things. What teachers actually do is the link between smaller classes and achievement.

What size classes are we talking about here?

In this part of the study, the Year 5 classes ranged from 12 to 34 students with an overall average of 25 students per class.

Going back to what teachers do — last time you pointed out that teachers with smaller classes seem to have more time to probe students' answers to questions, to help them give a better answer. You said at the time that when teachers probed more, their classes enjoyed mathematics more. Did you also look at whether more probing led to higher achievement?

Yes, more following-up of questions with probes did lead to higher achievement. — I should also mention that the extent to

which teachers waited for a response from students was also important. Teachers were considered to have waited for a response if they allowed more than five seconds to pass after a question before they prompted, probed, or turned to another student for an answer. Teachers with smaller classes tended to wait more often (and longer), and their classes had higher achievement.

Apart from questioning, was there anything else teachers did that was different in smaller classes, that was also linked with achievement?

Several things. In smaller classes, teachers more often taught the class as a whole, and achievement in these classes was higher. Conversely, in larger classes, teachers tended to form small groups which they taught independently during maths lessons, and these classes had lower achievement. My assumption is that grouping in many circumstances led to fragmentation of lessons, and consequently to an inefficient use of teachers' time when instruction and explanation had to be repeated for different groups of students.

I imagine the extra amount of time that teachers would have to spend managing larger classes is also relevant.

Classroom management was found to be related to class size and to achievement in two ways. In smaller classes, students asked fewer questions of teachers. Student questions were, more often than not, requests for clarification of the task they

had been given, or requests for other help from the teacher, so it's not surprising that more student questions were linked with lower achievement. Measurement of the time teachers spent in non-academic arrangements for running lessons showed that larger classes needed more of this time than smaller classes, and this time spent managing classes took time away from student learning.

What else about the classes differed?

Teachers with smaller classes gave more and longer homework assignments, and this practice was linked with higher achievement. As teachers normally marked assignments, it's understandable that those with smaller classes would be prepared to set more homework. Finally, larger classes were noisier than smaller classes, and this seemed to detract from the students' learning of mathematics. The most interesting thing here, to me, is that we can identify some of the reasons for smaller classes producing higher student achievement. Teachers are capable of changing their practices to some extent when they have smaller classes — perhaps fewer than 25 students — and at least some of these changes are important for student learning.

Readers who have a particular interest in this topic may send for a copy of a brief paper, 'Class Size, Teaching Practices and Student Achievement'. The paper is free on request from Dr Bourke.

School Psychology Goes National: The First National Guidance Conference

A highly successful conference, bringing together guidance officers and school counsellors from all over Australia, was organized by the Queensland Guidance Officers Association, at Surfers Paradise, Queensland, from 27 September to 1 October 1985. The conference provided an opportunity for Jo Jenkinson, Senior Psychologist, Consultant Services Division, to contact guidance staff from various education departments to discuss issues in relation to psychological assessment and to alert test users to some recent publications, especially for assessment of behavioural problems and development.

Keynote speakers at the conference were

Professor Jack Bardon, from the University of North Carolina, former editor of the *Journal of School Psychology*, Professor Ted Glynn, from the University of Otago, New Zealand, Professor I. Kolvin, Professor of Child Psychiatry, University of Newcastle, UK, and Dr C. Murray, Director of the Centre for Youth Studies, University of Manchester. Papers and discussions focused both on general issues relating to the role and function of the school psychologist, and on more specific topics in relation to behavioural and learning problems with which the psychologist is required to deal. Several thought-provoking ideas were presented concerning the role of the guidance officer as a professional consultant, training of school psychologists and the development of professional competence, the provision of guidance services in remote areas, evaluation of services, and the function of research in a 'scientist practitioner' model

of educational psychology. Other papers dealt with topics such as acquisition of literacy skills, childhood depression, stress management for teachers, working with parents, and problems faced by youth in education, employment, and society. In general, the range of topics reflected the scope of the problems presented to guidance officers in contemporary society, and suggested some directions that ACER might take in the future development of its consultant services in educational psychology.

Although the majority of delegates were Queenslanders, the value of bringing together the perspectives of services provided by different state education systems was evident. The formation of an Australian Guidance Association at the conference will, it is hoped, help to ensure that this will be the first of many equally successful conferences in the future.

ACER Hosts In-service Seminar

Thirty teachers recently spent two weekends at ACER in an in-service activity organized jointly by George Parkin and Peter Jeffery on 'Discipline and Pastoral Care'. Addressing the participants, Barry McGaw said that he hoped the workshop was the first of many that would be held at ACER or, with our co-operation, at venues with larger facilities.

The first In-service Seminar had Kevin Clarke (New South Wales Guidance Branch, South Coast Region) as a visiting leader for group work on affective strategies and resources and research input from Ramon Lewis (La Trobe University) speak-

ing on his work to investigate effects of differing discipline strategies. Toni Trewenick (Institute of Early Childhood Education) contributed information on the use of *STEP* in teaching young professionals new ways of dealing with discipline of children. Resource materials were examined by the participants, and preparations made for detailed study of these materials by each participant after the workshop.

The workshop group will prepare a Resources Guide after the second weekend so that their work in the area of social and emotional development programs for discipline and pastoral care requirements can be shared with a wider audience.

In-service organizers who would like to join with ACER staff in mounting activities at ACER are invited to contact Consultant Services Division. This offer is not limited to Victorians as ACER Consultants can travel interstate when invited. Contact Peter Jeffery in the first instance.

New Telephone Number for ACER

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