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Effect of geographical location on student performance

A recent study examined the effect of geographical location on the performance of students from schools from all parts of Australia who participated in the OECD/Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2000).

Almost 5500 students from 231 schools across Australian major cities, inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote areas participated.

In PISA, students in remote areas were not achieving at the same level as their city counterparts. Results for Australian schools located in major cities and inner regional areas were above the OECD average in reading literacy. Outer regional areas and remote and very remote areas were at or below the OECD average.

Levels of proficiency were described, with Level 1 being the most basic and Level 5 the most complex. It was found that 27 per cent of students from remote areas were achieving at the two lowest levels, compared to 12 per cent of students from major cities. At the other end of the scale, 18 per cent of remote students achieved at the two highest levels, compared to 46 per cent of the city students.

The most important factor positively associated with success in reading literacy was students' engagement with reading. This was measured by asking students about their reading habits including how often they read, what material they prefer reading and their interest in reading. Students from remote areas scored lower on this factor than students from city areas.

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Although the pattern of use of school libraries was similar in all areas, students from remote locations did not have access to cultural activities such as live theatre. Cultural activities have been found to be positively correlated with performance in reading.

The study also found that females outscored males in reading literacy in all locations; the level of parent education attained was associated with higher student performance in all locations; students in remote areas have access to well-qualified teachers, although they reported the highest level of teacher shortage; and schools in remote areas tended to have a lower level of resources.

After a number of factors such as engagement with reading, gender and home background were taken into account, the effect of location was much less significant.

The full report, *Location, Location, Location: Implications of Geographic Situation on Australian Student Performance in PISA 2000*, by John Cresswell and Cathy Underwood is published as [ACER Research Monograph number 58](#).

Print copies of the report can be purchased through ACER Press.

[Online at ACER Shop](#)

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Educational Researchers Australia database launched

ACER recently launched the *Educational Researchers Australia* database, the latest interactive database developed by Cunningham Library.

Educational Researchers Australia is an interactive database of biographical information and research interests, publications and projects about researchers engaged in educational research in Australia and overseas.

Cunningham Library manager Ms Margaret Findlay hopes the database will provide a comprehensive guide to researchers.

"Searchers can locate researchers working in specific areas of educational research and/or by geographical locations," she said. "The user can search by researcher name, institution, country and state, as well as research interest areas. The database also provides details of academic qualifications and contact details."

The database was developed by Cunningham Library following a request from ACER's senior researchers to develop a database that would allow researchers around Australia, and possibly overseas, to enter their details, interest areas, recent research projects, publications and conferences.

The database was thoroughly trialled and tested by ACER researchers before being launched on the ACER website.

Researchers are encouraged to enter data on their own research into *Educational Researchers Australia*. There is no charge for doing so. Information can be entered and updated through the password controlled edit screens. Researchers can include links to their own web sites, online publications and conference proceedings and may nominate up to 10 'areas of interest' when inputting their data.

The database will be moderated by staff at [ACER Cunningham Library](#).

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ACER UPDATE

Evaluation of Restart initiative

ACER's Learning Processes and Teaching and Leadership research programs will jointly run a new project to conduct an evaluation of the Restart Initiative for the Victorian Department of Education and Training. The specific questions being addressed by this evaluation are:

1. What has been the impact of Restart on the literacy achievement and engagement levels of participating Year 7 students in 2002, 2003, and 2004?
2. How has Restart funding been utilised in schools?
3. What strategies are used by Restart teachers to support student literacy learning, and how effective are these strategies?
4. What are the satisfaction levels of participating students, parents, teachers and principals?
5. To what extent is the program cost effective?
6. What are the risks associated with the conclusion of the initiative in December 2004?
7. What recommendations can be made regarding options for the next stage of middle years literacy intervention in the current context of Victorian education?
8. Has the methodology and management of the initiative been effective?

Evaluation of a Continuing Professional Learning Framework

ACER's Teaching and Leadership Program has begun a new project to assist the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists to conduct an evaluation of a Continuing Professional Learning Framework for medical practitioners.

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ACER Research Monograph 59 released

Australia's Indigenous Students and PISA 2000: Results from an international study by Lisa de Bortoli and John Cressell was released on 13 October. The report presents the analysis of the results of the PISA 2000 study for the Australian Indigenous students in comparison with other Australian students and in relation to other countries. It also examines some of the characteristics of the Indigenous students. The study is published as ACER Research Monograph 59.

Philippine Australian Quality TVET Project

ACER has been contracted by AusAID to provide the consultancy services of Professor Leo Maglen under a period contract with AusAID. The work will involve a review of the Philippine Australian Quality TVET Project and will involve two weeks consultancy work in the Philippines. It is expected that there will be three visits to follow over the next six months as a new program in technical and vocational education is prepared.

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