

Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER)

ACEReSearch

[ACER eNews Archive](#)

[ACER Archives](#)

4-2010

ACER eNews 04 April 2010

ACER

Follow this and additional works at: https://research.acer.edu.au/enews_archive



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

ACER, "ACER eNews 04 April 2010" (2010).
https://research.acer.edu.au/enews_archive/38

This Article is brought to you by the ACER Archives at ACEReSearch. It has been accepted for inclusion in ACER eNews Archive by an authorized administrator of ACEReSearch. For more information, please contact repository@acer.edu.au.

Published April 2010

In this issue:

- [Students improve computer skills but gaps in achievement remain](#)
- [Recognising accomplished teachers](#)
- [Where is the profession in the national partnership on teacher quality?](#)
- [ACER UPDATE](#)

Students improve computer skills but gaps in achievement remain

The latest findings of the National Assessment Program- ICT Literacy, conducted for the by ACER under the auspices of the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs – (MCEECDYA) reveal mixed results in Australian students' proficiency with computers.

A nationally representative sample of approximately 11 000 students from around 600 schools across Australia completed computer-based assessments in October and November 2008. This was the second administration of the national assessment, which was first carried out in 2005. Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Julia Gillard released a detailed report on the 2008 national assessment on 22 April.

ACER's deputy chief executive and lead author of the report, Dr John Ainley, said the most pleasing result of the 2008 assessment was the considerable improvement made by Year 6 students.

In 2008 57 per cent of Year 6 students reached or exceeded the proficient standard developed with ICT experts as an indication of what students could reasonably be expected to do using ICT. This compared to 49 per cent in 2005.

A slight improvement was made by Year 10 students both in terms of test scores and the percentage of students reaching or exceeding the proficiency standard (66 per cent in 2008 compared to 61 per cent in 2005).

"ICT is part of life in modern society and students who do not develop proficiency in ICT are likely to be limited in their participation in later economic and social life," Dr Ainley said. "In general the results of this assessment indicate that Australian students are doing well in this vital area of their education."

At the other end of the scale, the percentage of students achieving at the lowest proficiency levels remained relatively unchanged from 2005. The report also highlighted a disadvantage for Australia's Indigenous students as well as those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and rural areas. These findings indicate a lack of progress where improvement was most needed.

Published April 2010

“On the downside, it would appear that there is a small group of students who are struggling to master ICT skills and this will require attention over time to ensure that these students are not left behind,” Dr Ainley said.

The full report, National Assessment Program – ICT Literacy Years 6 &10 is available from www.mceecdya.edu.au

Published April 2010

Recognising accomplished teachers

In an Australian Journal of Education article, ACER Principal Research Fellow Dr Lawrence Ingvarson looks at efforts since the 1970s to strengthen the teaching profession by making teaching a more attractive career, lifting the quality of teacher training, retaining and rewarding quality teachers, promoting effective professional learning and supporting workforce mobility.

There are two main purposes for teacher evaluation. One is for all teachers to meet basic standards of professional performance. The other is to provide high standards of professional accomplishment and incentives for teachers to attain them, usually through professional certification.

In 2008 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a set of reforms focused on teacher quality. COAG agreed to the development of a nationally agreed professional standards framework for teachers with four career stages: graduate teacher, competent (that is, registered) teacher, highly accomplished teacher and lead teacher – and a system for the assessment and certification of teachers who meet those standards at each stage.

The Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) was established in late 2009, replacing Teaching Australia. A high priority for this new body must be to have the profession on board. Teaching's most highly regarded practitioners must be centrally involved in developing and operating the certification system. The best way to achieve this would be for AITSL to build on the work of Teaching Australia and the professional associations to establish one national and profession-wide system for professional certification, not a plethora of different systems operated by government, Catholic and independent school employing authorities in each state and territory, potentially 24 different certification systems.

Australia has made several attempts over several decades to develop a system for identifying and rewarding accomplished teachers. The COAG agreement has the potential to revolutionise professional learning for teachers and school leaders and to create a much more effective system. The reforms will only be successful if a national certification system is valid, reliable and fair, and the rewards for high standards of performance substantial.

Recognising accomplished teachers in Australia: Where have we been? Where are we heading? appears in the Australian Journal of Education, Volume 54, Number 1 published this month. Further information about the AJE is available from <http://www.acer.edu.au/press/aje>

Published April 2010

Where is the profession in the national partnership on teacher quality?

In this opinion article ACER Principal Research Fellow, Dr Lawrence Ingvarson, explores the role of the newly created Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership and argues it has the potential to have a major impact on the quality of school teaching in Australia.

Julia Gillard, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, recently announced the establishment of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). The new body will be responsible for delivering reforms that promote the quality of teacher education and the attractiveness of the teaching profession.

AITSL has emerged as a key component of the COAG National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality. The Partnership recognises the need for much better coordination of policies to strengthen the teaching profession at state and national levels.

Australia is weak in this area. Countries that do better than Australia on international tests of student achievement invest more in assuring the quality and status of the teaching profession. They ensure that teaching can compete with other professions for the ablest graduates from secondary schools and universities. They offer career paths and salaries that provide substantial rewards to teachers who reach high standards of practice.

Current salary schedules for teachers in Australia need to provide stronger incentives for teachers to show evidence of increasing professional knowledge and skill. They need to give higher status to expert practitioners, the people most central to successful schools. They also need to ensure these experts are distributed equitably across schools and school systems.

This is where AITSL comes in. It has the potential to have a major impact on the quality of school teaching in Australia. One of its first tasks will be to gain agreement on a National Professional Standards Framework for Teachers. A draft Standards Framework has been put out for public consultation until the 7th of May.

The standards describe what teachers should know and be able to do at four stages in a professional career: Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher. They include three main areas: Professional Knowledge (what teachers should know about their students and the content they teach), Professional Practice (planning, teaching and assessing student learning as well as establishing supportive learning environments) and Professional Engagement (professional development and contributing to the professional community).

At this stage, the standards are very broad and generic. The consultation process will show general agreement with this Framework, and only a few minor quibbles. We've been through this stage many times before.

It is what the profession is not being consulted about as yet that will reveal less agreement. How should teacher performance against the standards be assessed and who should do it?

The Minister has indicated that the standards will provide the basis for an "agreed system of national certification of teachers" at the Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher levels.

Published April 2010

This means that a valid, reliable and fair system for assessing teacher performance against the standards will be essential. This will only be possible when the meaning of the standards is fleshed out in more detail (e.g. what opportunities to learn mathematics or history should a highly accomplished primary teacher be able to provide, and so on?)

Setting up such a system is as complex as setting up a national system for assessing student achievement, perhaps more so. There is no system currently in place in any state that is based on sound research and development to ensure its validity. The public is only going to support significantly higher salaries for Highly Accomplished teachers if it is convinced that the certification system is rigorous.

Can this be done? International research clearly demonstrates that trained expert teachers can assess teacher performance in ways that are reliable and valid, but one question needs to be resolved quickly before work starts on developing an certification system.

Should AITSL operate one profession-wide certification system, as in other professions? Or, should employing authorities and unions in each state and territory develop their own assessment methods using AITSL's standards only as a framework? Should there be one certification system for teachers in independent schools, one for teachers in Catholic schools and yet another for teachers in government schools?

This would seem very odd if applied to other professions (imagine different Royal Colleges of Surgeons for doctors in State, Catholic and Independent hospitals), yet this is the direction in which some employing authorities appear to be moving already. Most professions have a single national body for providing advanced certification. Why should teaching be different?

A fragmented system would be inefficient and would almost certainly undermine comparability and its ability to provide teachers with a respected portable professional certification, a key objective of the National Partnership on teacher quality.

Also, developing and operating a rigorous professional certification system requires considerable expertise. It would be wasteful to duplicate this work in each jurisdiction. Any doubts about comparability in the assessment process would spell death to the reform. Failure to demonstrate the psychometric quality of the assessment system is one of the most common reasons why so many attempts to recognise accomplished teachers have failed.

It is not appropriate for employing authorities or state teacher registration bodies to control a system for the certification of highly accomplished or lead teachers. That is the proper responsibility of a national body like AITSL, based on standards and assessment methods developed by experts in the teaching profession. However, it is perfectly appropriate for employing authorities to demand that such a system demonstrates its rigour before they are expected to provide salary rewards and career recognition for nationally certificated teachers.

AITSL's certification system must gain the respect of teachers. At present, only two of the 17 members of the AITSL Board of Directors is a school principal or a practising teacher. AITSL's certification system will be more likely to gain respect and achieve its reform objectives if teachers and their associations are deeply involved in its development and operation. Minister: let the profession be a full and genuine partner in your National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality.

Published April 2010

ACER UPDATE

ACER celebrates 80th Anniversary

April 2010 marks the 80th anniversary of the establishment of ACER. 80 years ago, on 1 April 1930, two staff members, Ken Cunningham, the inaugural chief executive and secretary Mary Campbell, established ACER's first office in two rooms of the T&G building on the corner of Collins and Russell Streets in central Melbourne. By the end of the 1930s ACER's total staff had expanded to five.

From that humble beginning ACER has grown into one of the world's leading educational research bodies with an expanding national and international presence. Eight decades after the organisation was founded, ACER has more than 300 staff working in offices in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide, Dubai and Delhi. This article briefly outlines the ACER journey. A brief outline of ACER's history has been [posted on our website](#).

Kids who walk on track to better health

Results from an ongoing study being undertaken by ACER for VicHealth suggests that children who walk to school are significantly more connected with their local community. ACER researcher Catherine Underwood presented the first findings of a three year evaluation of VicHealth's Streets Ahead initiative at the inaugural International Healthy Parks Healthy People Congress in Melbourne last month.

The research presented to the Congress involved analysing surveys and pictures drawn by 659 primary school aged children between the ages of 9 and 12. Twenty-six per cent of children surveyed had walked to school in the previous five days. Children who walked to school drew detailed elements of green space such as parks, trees, grass, flowers, sporting ovals and children playing football, people riding bikes, walking their dog and playgrounds. In contrast, children who travelled to school by car tended to depict abstract, isolated images of their neighbourhood environment with the car and the road as the central theme. Further Information on the Streets Ahead initiative is available from the [VicHealth website](#).

Published April 2010

Copyright © Australian Council for Educational Research 2015

All rights reserved. Except under the conditions described in the Copyright Act 1968 of Australia and subsequent amendments, no part of this electronic publication may be reproduced, stored in retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without written permission. Please address any requests to reproduce information to communications@acer.edu.au

[Subscribe](#)

Australian Council for Educational Research
Private Bag 55, Camberwell, Victoria Australia 3124
Tel: + 61 3 9277 5555
Fax: + 61 3 9277 5500
Web: www.acer.edu.au

