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Leaders exchange expertise through Principal for a Day

Improved partnerships between schools, businesses and the community are expected to be key outcomes of the Principal for a Day event held on 31 August.

This year's program involved 84 "Principals for a Day" matched with school leaders in primary, secondary and special schools in metropolitan and regional Victoria. Honorary principals new to the program included Victorian Education Minister Bronwyn Pike, Victorian Treasurer John Lenders, his Federal counterpart Peter Costello and President of the Western Bulldogs Football Club David Smorgon. Repeat participants included ABC radio presenter Jon Faine, celebrity chef Gabriel Gate, Australian Television Foundation CEO Jenny Buckland, and ACER's chief executive Professor Geoff Masters.

The program, which is delivered by the ACER Leadership Centre in partnership with the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, builds relationships between government schools and the corporate world by enabling business and community leaders to spend a day running local government schools, where they meet with students, staff and the wider communities, and are able to experience first hand the issues facing schools.

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For schools, the program provides an opportunity to showcase the successes of state education, and opens doors for principals into business and community networks. For business and community leaders, the program provides insight into and better understanding of the young people who represent the future of Victoria. Principals for a Day report that the program is fun and opens their eyes to the sophistication of students' attitudes, knowledge, and engagement in current affairs.

"Research points to the importance of strong leadership in schools, and the Principal for a Day program tackles this issue head on," Professor Masters said.

"The Principal for a Day program allows schools to benefit from the expertise of business leaders who in turn learn what government schools are all about. The program assists in building relationships between business and educational leaders based on mutual respect and shared knowledge."

The links forged through the Principal for a Day program last more than a day: 93 per cent of business and community leaders and principals maintain ongoing partnerships following the event, according to an independent evaluation of the program conducted by Deakin University. This year, 84 business and community leaders, more than 3,000 school staff members, and approximately 50,000 students will benefit from involvement in the program.

For further information visit <http://www.acer.edu.au/leadership/principal-for-a-day>

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Education reform requires increased resources

High expectations for the reform of school education can only be met if there is a dramatic increase in resources, according to former University of Melbourne Dean of Education Professor Brian Caldwell.

Professor Caldwell called for leadership for radical transformation in schools education at the annual ACER research conference held in Melbourne last month.

According to Professor Caldwell, there are high expectations in Australia and comparable countries for the reform of school education — but significant, systematic and sustained change is required if these outcomes are to be achieved. Success for all students in all settings can only be achieved if there is a dramatic increase in resources.

This does not mean an exclusive reliance on more money, however: while financial capital is vital, intellectual capital, social capital and spiritual capital are also important. Some schools are in more challenging financial circumstances than others, but may be rich in other areas, such as having a highly skilled staff, strong community links, or a clear whole-school vision, all of which should be valued.

“This means building the level of knowledge and skill of all staff, getting the support of the wider community including business, and having a strong moral purpose and conviction that all students can do well even in challenging circumstances. All of this requires very effective leadership not just by the school principal but by a team of leaders in the school,” Professor Caldwell said.

“Some schools do this outstandingly well and we need to highlight and acknowledge how well some schools do this even in challenging circumstances.”

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Building strength in each and securing their alignment have profound implications for leadership and governance in schools. There is a need for transformation in approaches to governance, especially in the public sector, and for transformation of programs for the preparation and professional development of school leaders.

Professor Brian Caldwell is the Managing Director of Educational Transformations, the Associate Director of iNet, a Professorial Fellow at the University of Melbourne, and the author of *Re-imagining Educational Leadership*.

The ACER Research Conference 2007, on the theme *The Leadership Challenge: Improving Learning in Schools*, took place in Melbourne from 12 to 14 August. Conference papers can be downloaded from the [Professional Learning](#) section of this website.

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Good education depends on shared values

A shared moral purpose and a sense of community values are fundamental necessities for effective education, says Australian Catholic University academic Michael Bezzina.

Michael Bezzina presented the findings of his study into the connection between moral purpose and shared leadership at the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) annual conference in Melbourne in August.

According to the study, an explicit, shared moral purpose is needed to bring about the kind of change and improvement that will deliver desirable student learning in schools.

The study reinforces the importance of a shared sense of purpose, and emphasises the need for this purpose to be clarified through a common conceptual framework and consistency in the use of language. There needs to be clarity and detail in the way the purpose is understood – and in particular about the values that underpin it.

“There is a need for this shared sense of purpose to be grounded in a shared commitment to explicit values,” Professor Bezzina said.

“It is not sufficient to have a broad aspiration. The challenge is to find a way to surface this moral purpose and then to make it part of the discourse of the school so that it can be embedded in practice.”

Professor Bezzina advocates the need for an important shift in the meaning, perspective and scope of leadership in schools in order to build organisational cultures that promote, nurture and support shared leadership that goes beyond the practice of investing control solely in individuals, and that is based on whole-school vision, community values and a shared moral purpose.

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Michael Bezzina is an Associate Professor in the School of Educational Leadership at the Australian Catholic University and an author of the Leaders Transforming Learning and Learners program.

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ACER honours Isabelle Adams

ACER has honoured Ms Isabelle Adams on being associated with the organisation for 21 years. Ms Adams, a member of the ACER Council and the founding chair of its Aboriginal Education Advisory Group, was honoured with a special presentation by the Board of ACER on 8 June.

Ms Adams began her association with ACER in 1986 when she joined the ACER Council. Since that time Ms Adams has contributed to a number of ACER research projects and publications including the ongoing *Indigenous Longitudinal Literacy and Numeracy Study* and is co-author of two ACER Research Monographs on Indigenous education research.

ACER chair Professor Paige Porter paid tribute to Ms Adams's first-hand knowledge and experience of the diversity of Aboriginal culture, lifestyles and aspirations and her commitment to improving Indigenous education outcomes.

"As an educator, senior manager in the public service, and consultant, Ms Adams has demonstrated high levels of competency and has gained the respect and support of people across all levels and of different cultural groups," Professor Porter said.

Ms Adams, a specialist in early childhood education and Indigenous education, has had significant and successful experience as a teacher and senior manager in school education authorities. Ms Adams recently retired as District Superintendent for the Perth South District in the Education Department of Western Australia. She now works as a private consultant and remains a board member of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and has served on a number of policy committees at State and Commonwealth level.

ACER undertakes and promotes research that focuses on key issues related to the improvement of educational outcomes for Indigenous students. The Standing Committee on Indigenous Education (SCIE) provides expert advice to the ACER Board on the areas of Indigenous education most in need of research, and ways in which ACER expertise could be put to best use in these areas.

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Further information about ACER's Indigenous education research program can be found at

http://www.acer.edu.au/indigenous_education/index.html

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ACER UPDATE

Gabrielle Matters appointed IAEA executive secretary

Professor Gabrielle Matters, Principal Research Fellow and General Manager of ACER's Brisbane office has been selected by the International Association for Educational Assessment (IAEA) as the organisation's next Executive Secretary. Her term begins at the next IAEA conference, in Baku, Azerbaijan, this month (September). Gabrielle has been linked with the association for about 15 years, first while with the Queensland Board of Studies and then through the Queensland Department of Education and the Arts, and has attended and presented at a number of annual conferences at different world venues.

The broad purpose of IAEA is to assist educational agencies in the development and appropriate application of educational assessment techniques to improve the quality of education. IAEA organises annual conferences on assessment themes of international significance and, in cooperation with UNESCO, IAEA organises round tables on the impact of assessment on education. For further information on the IAEA visit <http://www.iaea.info/>

AIM professional development workshops

ACER has been successful in its bid for the delivery of the professional development services for the Victorian AIM tests. This contract with the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) involves the delivery of 60 half day workshops and 10 full day workshops to between 1,000-1,500 teachers at locations across Victoria between mid October and Early December 2007. The project will be managed from ACER's Centre for Professional Learning.

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Development of Indigenous mental health textbook

ACER has been commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing to develop a textbook on culturally appropriate approaches to assessment and interventions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional well being and mental health issues. The textbook is to be developed by clinicians, cultural and educational experts. Researchers from the Kulunga Research Network of the Telethon Institute of Child Health Research will assist with the project. The project is expected to be completed in June 2008.

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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

