

Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER)

**ACEReSearch**

---

[ACER eNews Archive](#)

[ACER Archives](#)

---

6-2004

## ACER eNews 06 June 2004

ACER

Follow this and additional works at: [https://research.acer.edu.au/enews\\_archive](https://research.acer.edu.au/enews_archive)



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

ACER, "ACER eNews 06 June 2004" (2004).  
[https://research.acer.edu.au/enews\\_archive/108](https://research.acer.edu.au/enews_archive/108)

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](mailto:repository@acer.edu.au).

Published June 2004

In this issue:

- [Reporting information on school performance](#)
- [Students sit scholarship exam](#)
- [ACER UPDATE](#)

## Reporting information on school performance

ACER's chief executive Professor Geoff Masters discusses the issues of reporting information on school performance and the important role that ACER is playing in developing and exploring improved systems for reporting the performances of schools and individual students.

School reporting is squarely on the national agenda. During May, Minister Nelson called on four states to release to parents information from their 2003 literacy tests to be eligible for the \$700 voucher for students not achieving the Year 3 reading benchmark. Public reporting against literacy and numeracy benchmarks is part of Nelson's broader agenda to improve the public reporting of school performances: on the Internet, in school Annual Reports or on 'school signs at the front gate'. The purpose, Nelson says, is to increase the level of information available for parental choice and decision-making, for holding schools accountable and for identifying under-performing schools. The information made public in these ways would include academic outcomes, school leaver destinations, teacher qualifications, professional development provision, staff and student retention rates and absentee rates.

In her recent book *Schools in the Spotlight*, Jennifer Buckingham makes a similar plea for better public information about the performances of Australian schools. While recognising the risks of encouraging unhealthy competition and isolating poorly performing schools, Buckingham sees the masking of 'substandard' school performance as an even greater threat to quality education. She calls for consistent, fair and meaningful systems of reporting and publishing comparative school performances - systems that would take into account the different socioeconomic and other circumstances in which schools work.

Published June 2004

The fact that schools and teachers are prepared to have their work externally scrutinised through schemes such as the National Awards for Quality Schooling, *The Australian's* Best Schools competition, the National Excellence in Teaching Awards and the Australian Business Excellence Awards is itself an indication of how attitudes toward excellence, recognition, transparency and public accountability have changed within the education profession. There is now a greater appreciation of the role and necessity of high-quality evidence in informed decision-making and an understanding that parents, school leaders, system managers and the broader profession require sound, dependable evidence to achieve ongoing improvements in learning.

ACER is playing an important role in developing and exploring improved systems for reporting the performances of schools and individual students.

In the area of judging and reporting school performances, ACER has been directly involved in the management of the National Awards for Quality Schooling and the judging for *The Australian's* Best Schools awards. But we also have worked to draw attention to the hazards of simplistic comparisons of school performances. Schools work in widely different contexts. They differ in the extent to which they are inclusive rather than selective, in the socioeconomic areas in which they operate, in the language backgrounds of their student intakes, and in the objectives they have for their students. ACER has pointed out that, at the very least, public comparisons of schools must be broad in their interpretation of success. If they are to be meaningful, school comparisons must take into account the different backgrounds and starting points of students, replacing or supplementing raw results with more sophisticated measures of the value schools add.

In the area of assessing and reporting individual student learning, ACER has been at the forefront of designing improved ways of monitoring and displaying student progress. ACER recently provided key input to a forum organised by the Student Learning Division of the Victorian Department of Education and Training. That forum was attended by a large and representative group of stakeholders from the Victorian education community. DET subsequently commissioned ACER's Research Director, Assessment and Reporting, Margaret Forster to develop her forum presentation into a discussion paper for still wider circulation.

**Published June 2004**

The paper discusses the desirability of providing parents with access to web-based information about a child's progress across their years of schooling.

With public reporting clearly on the national agenda, ACER will continue to provide leadership in the development and investigation of more informative ways of reporting student and school performances.

By Professor Geoff Masters, June 2004

Published June 2004

## Students sit scholarship exam

Around 18,000 students from around Australia take exams set by ACER in the hope of winning a scholarship to one of 250 independent schools. Close to 12,000 candidates sat for the Co-operative Scholarship Testing Program (CSTP) on 1 May for entrance to one of 150 schools. Results have now been compiled and provided to schools for use in making offers of scholarships to successful students.

The CSTP is an Australia-wide annual program of high-level ability tests used to identify academically gifted students for the award of scholarships. Approximately 150 independent schools in all Australian states use the program. All testing across Australia takes place on one testing day, although for religious reasons some schools can arrange to sit on another day.

In 2003, 11 802 candidates from capital cities, country centres, remote rural areas and overseas sat the tests on the same date. This year the number increased to approximately 12,000 with increased competition for scholarships.

CSTP provides for testing at three major levels:

- CSTP Level 1 tests are taken in the final year of primary school for students commencing their first year of secondary school.
- CSTP Level 2 tests are taken in the second year of secondary school for students continuing into third year and
- CSTP Level 3 tests are taken in Year 10 for students completing their secondary education.

Batteries of tests are used to assess student performance in the area of scholastic aptitude but unlike school curriculum based tests, the CSTP tests are designed to extend children past recently covered material. Candidates work through the following tests:

**Test 1** Written Expression (writing sample) 25 minutes

**Test 2** Humanities (multiple choice) 40 minutes

Published June 2004

**Test 3** Mathematics \*(multiple choice) 40 minutes

**Test 4** Written Expression (writing sample) 25 minutes \*For CSTP Levels 2 and 3 this test is Mathematics and Science.

New tests are written each year by a professional test development team using a rigorous process which includes: extensive review of all new questions by an expert panel; trial testing of the questions; and thorough question analysis to ensure that the final tests are robust and have predictable qualities.

ACER supplies schools with all test materials required, and in addition, can arrange testing centres for candidates in remote areas of Australia as well as overseas.

Candidates obtain registration forms, Candidate Information Bulletins and a Sample Collection of Questions directly from the schools they wish to enter.

Research carried out annually by ACER indicates that students awarded scholarships based on academic performance on ACER tests, are consistently located within the top two percent of students at the end of Year 12

Schools may obtain further information about the CSTP by contacting the CSTP Project Director on (03) 9277 5705

Published June 2004

## ACER UPDATE

### ACER acquires Educare

ACER has acquired the education publishing business known as *Educare*. Current *Educare* publications include the monthly magazine for government and non-government schools, *Educare News*; the *National Register of Independent Schools of Australia*; the *School Supply Guide*; and the *School Activities Guide*. The acquisition was completed in May.

### UK consultants appointed

Two part-time consultants were appointed during May to promote ACER in the UK. One of the consultants, who was closely involved in establishing graduate-entry medicine programs in UK and in the decision to use GAMSAT in the selection of students into these programs, will work to promote the two ACER medical tests already being used in that country. The other consultant will promote ACER's capabilities more generally, building networks, identifying business opportunities and marketing a range of our assessment services.

The new MSAT (Medical School Admissions Test) has been developed in consultation with UK medical schools for use in the selection of students into 4 and 5-year medicine degrees. It is a test of reasoning and communication skills. MSAT scores are used in conjunction with academic results and performance at interview. It will be mandatory for applicants for 2005 admission to three medical schools. Four graduate-entry medical schools use GAMSAT UK.

Published June 2004

## **Australian Science and Mathematics School evaluation**

A new ACER project is evaluating the impact of the interaction between academic staff at Flinders University and the teachers at the Australian Science and Mathematics School, based at Flinders University. The project is funded by Flinders University, as part of the Higher Education Innovation Program. The project is being undertaken by ACER's Teaching and Leadership research program. The evaluation is to be completed by December this year.

## **Trial of Aptitude Test of International Secondary Students (ATISS)**

ACER staff recently completed a pilot test of ATISS (Aptitude Test of International Secondary Students) in China. Teams of test supervisors conducted 24 versions of the test in 17 schools with 3600 Year 10 students in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. Test results are now being analysed at ACER.

The Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) commissioned ACER to develop the test in 2003. The ATISS aims to provide an indication of students' cognitive abilities by assessing general thinking and reasoning skills. During development, DEST also asked for the test items to be translated into Chinese, as substantial numbers of international secondary students are now coming to Australia from China.

## **ACER Research Highlights**

The latest edition of ACER's annual publication *Research Highlights* is now available for download from the ACER website. Print copies are expected to be available by the end of June.

Published June 2004

## International Test Users' Conference 2004

Registrations are still open for the International Test Users' Conference to be hosted by ACER in Melbourne on 19-20 July. The title of the conference is *Assessing intelligence, emotion and behaviour*. Keynote speakers are Thomas M. Achenbach of the University of Vermont's Department of Psychiatry, Gale Roid of Vanderbilt University, David R Caruso of Harris-McNully Associates and Katherine W Hirsch of the University of Minnesota.

[More information on the International Test User's Conference 2004](#)

## HR and Psych Livewire

ACER has introduced two email news bulletins for professionals working in psychology and Human Resources. *HR Livewire* and *Psych Livewire* provide subscribers with details of the latest product releases from ACER Press and other information from subscribers.

## 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](mailto: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](http://www.acer.edu.au)

