

# Curriculum coordinators e-news



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## Spin offs!

### Prettier Packaging: Higher Price



"My advertising background informs my response to the (public v private) debate in two ways. First, I know that private schools are the branded products and public schools the generic. They are made in the same places by the same people with the same ingredients - it's just one has prettier packaging and a higher price."

[Jane Caro, author, broadcaster and award-winning advertising writer, interview in *Professional Voice*, Winter 2016]

### What's the Rush?

"Within research organisations one hears frustration that we publish research and teachers in the classroom do not apply the findings. Morris et al. (2011) estimate that in medicine it takes an average of 17 years for clinical research to be fully



## Dear Colleague,

Welcome to the third edition of the 2016 Curriculum Coordinators e-news. We welcome any suggestions about the content or format of the e-news.

If there is someone else at your school who should receive this e-news (and is an AEU member) please forward it on to them. They will be put on our Coordinators email network once we receive their email address.

Past copies of the Coordinator e-news are available [here](#).

## News: Victorian

### Proposals to reform teacher education in Victoria



The State Government is proposing to strengthen the selection criteria for entry into initial teacher education (ITE) courses.

In a Ministerial discussion paper - *Working Together to Shape Teacher Education in Victoria* - the Government sets out a reform package consisting of higher academic standards for course entry, the development of a Victorian teacher admission index/selection framework, a suitability to teach tool to assess non-academic qualities and the expansion of employment-based pathways.

It also states that it will "consider" introducing a graduate only entry to teacher education courses.

The paper outlines the need for changes to course entry to ITE because of a steady decline in ATAR scores. Entrants to teacher education courses with an ATAR of less than 50 doubled over the past four years. Students with low ATARs are less likely to complete their courses.

While only a minority (23.4 per cent) enter via ATAR, the scores are highly visible and prominent in media reporting. Research has shown that perceived low entry scores reduce course attractiveness to high achievers, have a negative impact on community confidence and adversely affect the status of teaching as a profession.

### Entry Requirements

The paper is short on details about any specific threshold level for entry via ATAR. It indicates that either ATAR scores or VCE achievement could form the basis for any new requirements.

New South Wales introduced new prerequisite standards of entry into accredited teacher education courses for 2016 using HSC results. It requires a minimum standard of three Band 5 (80 - 89%) HSC results, including one in English.

integrated into everyday practice."

[Pru Mitchell, Manager of Information Services Australian Council for Educational Research, in *Teacher Magazine*, ACER, 23/9/15]



## Legacy Issues

"I am retired and I am enjoying life. But if people want to rewrite history they can go their hardest. But I think the people of Australia know the facts."

[Ex-Premier Denis Napthine castigating ex-PM Tony Abbott who recently blamed state premiers for the failure of the \$30 billion of cuts to education and health in his 2014 federal budget. Napthine in turn accused Abbott of taking "an axe" and "a sledgehammer" to schools and hospitals and contributing to the defeat of his government in 2014.]

## Publications

### Professional Voice

The latest edition of *Professional Voice* (August 2016) has been mailed to all members of the AEU Curriculum Coordinator and PD Coordinator networks. This edition explores the context of teaching with a range of national and international academic experts.



Articles cover the importance of class size, the impact of digital technology on the work of teachers, the need to reassert the role and value of public education, the resources needed for an "adequate" education and the real story about the Safe Schools program. It also has an interview with the author, broadcaster and advertising guru Jane Caro.

### Back Copies

A limited number of hard copies of previous editions of *Professional Voice* are

The discussion paper, in line with national reforms to be introduced in 2017, calls for the inclusion of non-academic attributes and capabilities associated with effective teaching in selection criteria. The national (AITSL) capabilities include: motivation to teach; strong interpersonal and communication skills; willingness to learn; self-efficacy; conscientiousness; and organisational and planning skills.

Melbourne University is already using the Teacher Capability Assessment Tool as an add-on to student academic results.

### Other Pathways

Whatever selection criteria are chosen, they must ensure that disadvantage is not a barrier to entry and that candidates reflect the diversity of the Victorian community. The paper is concerned about the standard of some pathway and bridging courses into ITE and calls for a review and possible accreditation of these courses through the VIT.

The other pathways offered in NSW are: passing bridging units benchmarked to a Band 5 HSC result; enrolling in an accredited degree and passing a full year of academic studies in the subjects you will teach; or completing a NSW BOSTES (Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards) approved alternative entry pathway.

Other proposals canvassed in the Ministerial paper are:

- A broad-based Victorian Teacher admission index or selection framework (see example below);
- An expansion of employment-based pathways such as Teach for Australia, Melbourne University internships and career change options;
- Common practicum assessment tools linked to the Australian Professional Standards for all courses to help teachers assess ITE student performance;
- Support for a "capstone" teacher performance assessment for graduating ITE students (ie a multifaceted final academic assignment). This is presently being used by Deakin University;
- A more consistent statewide approach to induction and mentoring.

The Deans of Education in Victoria are concerned about the impact of new standards for teacher education entry on enrolments. University education faculties are squeezed between pressures (including financial) from a demand-driven university access system and national and state demands for higher entry standards.

The AEU will make a submission to the Government about the issues in the Ministerial paper.

The State Government will announce its changes to ITE at the end of 2016 for implementation in 2018.

### Example of a possible Victorian Framework for Selection into Teacher Education

#### Admissions criteria for ITE Course

Pathways to ITE course	Capability	Suitability	Course-specific criteria
Year 12	An ATAR threshold or Study score thresholds for English and two other subjects	Victorian Suitability for Teaching Criteria (or similarly titled)	Additional admissions criteria as appropriate to specific courses
Completed higher	[Capability threshold met	Victorian Suitability for	Additional admissions

available. They contain articles by leading writers on education from Victoria, interstate and overseas. They also contain interviews with many of the most highly regarded educationists such as Linda Darling-Hammond, Andy Hargreaves, Richard Elmore, Pasi Sahlberg, Diane Ravitch, Alan Reid, Kenneth Leithwood, Bill Hannan, Raewyn Connell and Jill Blackmore.

To view the contents of past copies go to [here](#).

To request a copy of a specific edition send an email to Marlene McLean at [marlene.mclean@aeuvic.asn.au](mailto:marlene.mclean@aeuvic.asn.au) indicating the volume, number, and title of the edition and your postal address.

## TLN Journal

*The Journal of Teaching, Learning and Society (JTLS)*

is a new online peer reviewed publication, launched in 2016, through a partnership between the Teacher Learning Network (TLN), Victoria university, Melbourne (VU), and Australian Catholic University (ACU).

JTLS seeks to publish and promote work undertaken by teachers and academics working collegially on teacher practice; by teachers and academics working with their community; and/or innovative teaching practices that emphasise the social experience of learning.

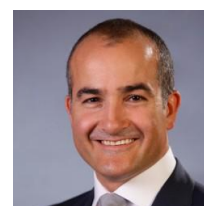
**Edition One: Teaching and Learning as social practices - Guest Editor: Dr Neil Hooley, Victoria University**

Contact Michael Victory [mvictory@tlm.org.au](mailto:mvictory@tlm.org.au) if you would like to contribute to this journal or you would like to access copies when it is published.

education course	once graduate status acquired]	Teaching Criteria	criteria as appropriate to specific courses
Incomplete higher education course	GPA (grade point average) in upper 50% of cohort	Victorian Suitability for Teaching Criteria	Additional admissions criteria as appropriate to specific courses
Alternate pathway	Successful completion of one year preparatory higher education program	Victorian Suitability for Teaching Criteria	Additional admissions criteria as appropriate to specific courses
International student pathway	Equivalent Year 12 or GPA and English language requirements	Victorian Suitability for Teaching Criteria	Additional admissions criteria as appropriate to specific courses

## No Minimum Numeracy Requirements for Victorian Year 12

Victoria will not follow Western Australia and New South Wales by setting a minimum numeracy standard for Year 12.



State Education Minister James Merlino said that the government wants to encourage creativity and critical thinking and doesn't think it's "particularly right" for subjects to be forced on final year students.

He said the government will focus on the Education State targets including: "Over the next five years for Year 5, and the next 10 years for Year 9, 25 per cent more students will be reaching the highest levels of achievement in reading and mathematics.

In July, the Minister for Education in NSW, Adrian Piccoli, announced that from 2020, students will need to demonstrate they have met a minimum standard in both literacy and numeracy to receive the HSC.

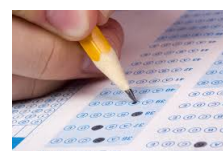
In 2017 NSW Year 9 students will have their first opportunity to meet this new standard by achieving minimum Band 8 results (on the Bands 1 - 10 scale) when they sit NAPLAN. Students who achieve at least a Band 8 in the year 9 NAPLAN reading, writing and numeracy tests will automatically be eligible for the HSC.

For students who do not, they will need to pass an online literacy and numeracy test in subsequent years to meet the requirements.

Those students who reach year 12 and still have not passed the test for the minimum standards will receive a Record of School Achievement, but still have five years to reach the benchmark and get their HSC.

## Victorian NAPLAN Results

The 2016 NAPLAN results for Victorian students were very similar to those from the past few years.



They showed Victoria as being either first, second or, in a couple of cases, third in reading, writing and numeracy at all year levels compared to the rest of Australia. In every case Victoria was comfortably above the Australian average.

There were one year fluctuations between 2015 and 2016 - some up and some down. The 2016 results were better than 2008 results except in Year 9 reading, Year 3 numeracy and Years 5, 7 and 9 writing.

There were significant improvements from 2008 to 2016 in Years 3 and 5 reading, Year 5 numeracy and Year 3 writing. The only level where there was a significant fall in achievement from 2008 was Year 9 writing.

## VCAA Texts Review

VICTORIAN CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT AUTHORITY



The AEU wants any new VCE text guidelines to ensure that texts which address political issues about which there may be vigorous current debate within the community, are included as options for schools.

The AEU submission to the VCAA was in response to a review of the text selection process for VCE English, literature, drama and theatre studies ordered by the Victorian Minister for Education, James Merlino, after protests by Jewish lobby groups against the inclusion in the VCE drama list of the play *Tales of a City by the Sea* by the Palestinian playwright Samah Sabawi.

The Minister required the VCAA to review the existing guidelines "so it continues to ensure that views and sensitivities of cultural and religious groups are considered."

Our position is that the selection criteria should recognise the professional role of teachers and their expertise in using texts to promote and extend the learning development of students. Texts in VCE subjects are part of the teaching/learning process and not separate from it.

Central to the pedagogy of study in the senior years of schooling is a process of broad and challenging discussion, informed debate and the questioning of ideas and values - processes which deepen student understanding, develop the capacity for more complex thought and engage learners more fully in their learning.

Text selection criteria should be designed to encourage these processes.

The AEU supports the general principle that text lists for each study should be such that, where necessary, local level sensitivities can be met through judicious choice by teachers and principals, taking account of the diversity of their student population.

We welcome proposals by the VCAA to increase the level of information about the content and nature of each text to assist in this choice.

## Teacher Supply and Demand Report



A year after its completion, and using 2012-13 data as the basis for most of its findings, DET has finally released its [Teacher Supply and Demand Report](#).

No reason was given for the delay in publishing the report or why the data wasn't more up-to-date. Up until 2010 the Department would publish annual reports on supply and demand based on the previous year's data.

The report indicates trends in the teacher workforce

- More teacher education students were training online, with interstate providers.
- The part-time workforce was growing in all sectors.
- 80 per cent of first year out teachers were on short-term contracts.
- Almost all early childhood teachers were female. Among primary school teachers 80 per cent were female and among secondary school teachers 60 per cent were female.
- Around 20 per cent of teachers who were qualified to teach were not available to teach.

The report uses demographic data as well as school census data to forecast teacher supply and demand in the period 2014-2020

- Enrolments in kindergarten are forecast to rise from 72,941 in 2013 to 90,009 in 2020, or three per cent per year. The total number of kindergarten teachers is forecast to increase 40.3 per cent by 2020.
- Primary school enrolments are forecast to increase from 482,586 in 2013 to 573,073 in 2020, or 2.7 per cent a year.
- By 2020, demand (job openings for new entrants) for primary school teachers will be 2,500 per year. Victorian trained teachers may not be sufficient to meet demand. To a certain extent this will be affected by the net interstate and net overseas migration of teachers to Victoria, and Victorians graduating with an interstate provider.
- Secondary school enrolments will increase from 2017. Overall numbers will grow from 387,635 students in 2013 to 421,313 students in 2020.
- Demand for secondary school teachers is forecast to increase from 36,521 to 40,355 in 2020. Most growth will be in the Catholic and independent sectors.
- Special school enrolments have increased 43.3 per cent from 2006 to 2013. On these trends, enrolments are forecast to increase by 49.7 from 2013 to 2020; and demand for special education teachers is expected to grow by 33.8 per cent.

### Teacher Education Literacy and Numeracy Test

Victorian students completing an initial teacher education program on or after July 1 2016 must successfully complete the national literacy and numeracy test to qualify for [provisional teacher registration](#).



The decision at the end of June by the Victorian Minister for Education, James Merlino, clarified the situation for students completing their courses during 2016 after some universities had told these students they did not have to sit the test.

The decision to make the test a condition of provisional registration, rather than a requirement for university graduation, was due to legal problems as students were already enrolled under a different set of conditions. It was also argued that universities are unable to charge *additional* fees for students who are in a Commonwealth-supported place.

Graduates who have not passed the test prior to obtaining teacher registration will have a condition placed on their provisional registration that the test must be passed in the first six months of obtaining registration. This will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

The policy does not apply to an application for provisional early childhood teacher registration

Commencing ITE program students will be required to undertake the test prior to graduation.

Students will be able to re-sit each component of the test two additional times if not successful on the first attempt (three opportunities in total). They will be required to re-register and pay to sit the test each subsequent time. The cost of the test is \$185 (or \$92.50 for one component). The test is administered by [ACER](#).

## News: National

### Federal Funding and NAPLAN Results



Federal Education Minister, Simon Birmingham, has been in the news recently using the latest NAPLAN results to run a "money doesn't matter" line to justify his Government's refusal to honour the Gonski funding commitment.



He claimed that NAPLAN results had flat-lined despite Federal funding having increased by 23 per cent, with the biggest increases going to public schools.

In a just-published policy paper Trevor Cobbold, the ex-Productivity Commissioner and now head of the Save Our Schools organisation, describes Birmingham's claims as "unscrupulous duplicities".

He points out that the Minister's figure refers to total funding not per student funding, to nominal funding and not inflation-adjusted funding, and it ignores large cuts in state government funding of public schools.

The recently published report [Uneven Playing Field: the State of Australia's Schools](#) by Chris Bonnor and Bernie Shepherd, documents the outcome of government recurrent funding of Australian schools in the period from 2009 (when the Gonski panel began its review) to 2014.

Over that period combined state and federal government funding of *public schools* increased by an average of just under 3% per annum. Over the same period government funding to *non-government schools* increased by around 6% per annum, twice the rate of government schools and a figure well above inflation.

This funding unfairness becomes even more egregious when the distribution of students in each of the government, Catholic and independent sectors is examined.

In 2014 28% of government school students were in the most disadvantaged quartile. This is double the percentage in Catholic schools, which had 14% of students in this category, while independent schools had only 8%.

When you look at the other end of the spectrum, the most advantaged quartile, you find that 22% of public school students fit into this category compared to 29% of Catholic school students and 48% of independent school students.

#### Quotes

Shepherd: "Whatever the basis for the funding decisions might have been, student need appears to have formed little or no part of it."

Bonner: "Whether the NAPLAN results reflect on whether funding is the answer is too early to say. But making any claim that extra funding has not changed results because results have levelled-out is a nonsense."

Peter Goss School Education Program Director Grattan Institute: "International evidence is that for disadvantaged schools, increased funding can make a real difference just on its own."

OECD Report on low performing students: "A socio-economically disadvantaged student is five times more likely to be a low performer than an advantaged student."

Bonner: "We know from the experiences of other countries that if you implement a new barrage of tests like NAPLAN, results get better for the first few years as teachers get better at teaching to the test and then of course level out."

NSW Education Minister, Adrian Piccoli: "Evidence-based reforms cost money to implement and take time to take effect, especially in schools servicing disadvantaged students."

Bonner and Shepherd: "The results in the advantaged schools edge up a bit every year while the results of the strugglers head downwards. We won't lift our overall achievement in NAPLAN or anything else until we lift the strugglers. And we won't lift the strugglers until we properly target their schools and stop over-investing in schools that are already well-resourced."

## Increasing Competition in Human Services

In June of this year the Productivity Commission, whose work program is largely determined by the federal government, launched an "Inquiry into introducing competition and informed user choice into human services".



As education is the second largest area (behind health) in terms of expenditure in human services, it will be a focus for "improvement" through "increasing competition, contestability and user choice".

Link can be found [here](#).

## News: International

### Trump v Clinton on Education

Documenting the education policies of US presidential contenders Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton is not easy to do. They have not issued (so far) the sort of policy documents which political parties in Australia provide.



However, some of their views on education are on the record through their writings, speeches and interviews. Hillary Clinton, unsurprisingly, has had much more to say than Donald Trump on almost all issues.

#### Teacher Unions

Clinton has been endorsed as a presidential candidate by the two big American teacher unions - the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers.

She has said she wants to expand professional development opportunities for teachers and pay them more, without offering specifics. She does not back a federal requirement for teacher evaluations to be tied to test scores and has said she will support teachers when governors and legislatures try to take away their collective bargaining rights.

Trump has been highly critical of teachers' unions and their impact on education. He has written: "Our public schools have grown up in a competition-free zone surrounded by a very high union wall."

#### School Choice

Trump is a strong advocate of school choice: "Education reformers call this school choice, charter schools, vouchers, even opportunity scholarships. I call it competition-the American way." Clinton supports charter schools as a "supplement" to public schools and opposes private school vouchers.

Clinton supports standardised testing of students but has stated that it should be used to inform instruction and school improvement and opposes teaching to the test because it overtakes student learning. Trump has made no substantial statement on this issue.

Trump opposes federal gun-free school zones and has said he would get rid of them as president. He has stated that armed teachers would help improve school safety. "You know what a gun-free zone is for a sicko? That's bait." Clinton supports gun-free school zones.

Clinton backs a plan to allow students to attend four-year public colleges and universities tuition-free, if they come from families with annual incomes of up to \$125,000. The plan would begin by 2021 and cover about 83 per cent of families.

Trump, who opened the now-defunct Trump University, which is the subject of legal complaints that it defrauded students, wants student loans to originate with banks, not the federal government.

## English Academy Schools increase social segregation

A new analysis of academy schools in England suggests that they not only have reinforced existing patterns of social segregation, and in some cases exacerbated them, but performed poorly against their non-academy peers.

This evidence flies in the face of claims made by the UK Government when introducing the Academies Act in 2010 that these schools would raise standards and improve the chances of the poorest children.

Currently, 2,075 out of 3,381 secondary schools are academies, while 2,440 of 16,766 primary schools have academy status. The number grew dramatically under the coalition government, from 203 in May 2010, and has continued under the present Conservative government.

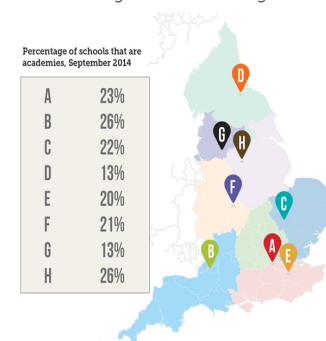
In the last UK Budget, Chancellor George Osborne announced a forced 'academisation' plan, under which all schools in England would either have to convert to academies by 2020 or be committed to converting by 2022. After widespread criticism the government backed down and made its plan a 'goal'.

Academies are independent, state-funded schools, which receive their funding directly from central government, rather than through a local authority. They control their own admissions process and have more freedom than other schools to innovate.

Their control over admissions has meant that many academies have a lower proportion of disadvantaged students than their communities.

An example is Canary Wharf College in London which has only 5.4% of students eligible for free school meals compared with 30% in their local community. Its admission criteria run to six pages and include proof of church association or baptism for 50% of its admissions.

The RSC regions across England



A just published report by the [Education Policy Institute](#) comparing the performance of schools run by either academy chains or local authorities found that the lowest performing school groups at both primary and secondary levels were academy chains. In secondary in particular, the chains make up a disproportionate number of the lowest performing school groups.

Recently, Sir Michael Wilshaw, the head of the body that inspects and regulates schools (Ofsted), criticised seven sizeable academy chains for failing to improve the results of too many students in their schools, while paying board members large salaries.

Article, The Guardian - ["School reforms widens poverty gap, new research finds"](#)

## Research Digest

### Low Performing Students

Student low performance is the result of a combination and accumulation of various barriers and disadvantages that affect students throughout their lives according to a new research report from the OECD.



The report - [Low Performing Students: Why they fall behind and how to help them succeed](#) - uses 2012 PISA data to identify the common factors shared by 15-year-old students who did not reach the baseline level of "proficiency to participate fully in modern society".

There are around 57,000 students in Australia who fall into this category in maths, and more than 26,000 who are low performers in all three subjects tested - maths, reading and science.

In 2012, 20 per cent of Australian students were low performers in maths; an increase of 5 percentage points from 2003. Over the same period the percentage of low performers in reading (14 per cent) and science (14 per cent) did not change.

The report identifies a list of barriers and disadvantages that increase the probability of low performance by students in maths with a specific analysis for Australia:

"In Australia, the likelihood of low performance in mathematics is higher for students who are socio-economically disadvantaged, girls, had no pre-primary education, had repeated a grade and are enrolled in a vocational programme."

The report found that a socio-economically disadvantaged student is five times more likely to be a low performer than an advantaged student. 33 per cent of disadvantaged students in Australia were low performers in mathematics in 2012, while only 8 per cent of advantaged students were.

On average across OECD countries, low-performing students play truant more often, spend less time doing homework, and are less perseverant than proficient students.

In 2012, low performers in Australia spent an average of 3.5 hours per week doing homework while students scoring at or above the baseline proficiency Level 2 spent about 6.6 hours per week.

Low performers in Australia tend to show less perseverance in school and also lower levels of mathematics self-efficacy than students who score at or above the baseline proficiency Level 2. The difference in perseverance and self-efficacy between low performers and proficient students is larger in Australia than on average across OECD countries.

Students in Australia attending schools where the quality of educational resources is lower are, on average, 13 per cent more likely to be low performers than students who attend schools where the quality of educational resources is higher (OECD average: 3 per cent more likely), after accounting for students' and schools' socio-economic status.

Australian students attending schools where mathematics teachers are less supportive are, on average, 25 per cent more likely to be low performers than students who attend schools with more supportive teachers (OECD average: 6 per cent more likely), after accounting for students' and schools' socio-economic status.

#### Reducing Low Performance

Countries as economically and culturally diverse as Brazil, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Tunisia and Turkey reduced their share of low performers in mathematics between 2003 and 2012.

The analyses on low performers in the PISA 2012 show that it is important to make tackling low performance a priority in the education policy agenda - and translate that priority into additional resources.

An agenda to reduce the incidence of low performance can include several actions:

- Create demanding and supportive learning environments at school.



- Provide remedial support as early as possible.
- Identify low performers and design a tailored policy strategy.
- Encourage the involvement of parents and local communities.
- Provide targeted support to disadvantaged schools and/or families.
- Tackle gender stereotypes and assist single-parent families.
- Reduce inequalities in access to early education and limit the use of student sorting.

## Brain Training Program Has Little Effect

The Murdoch Children's Research Institute has urged caution on the widespread use of 'brain training' programs, after new research reveals they are not effective in preventing learning difficulties in primary-school-age children.



The research study by the Institute focused on Cogmed the most widely used memory training program owned by the huge multinational Pearson. The study found that the program does not improve learning outcomes for children identified through screening as having low working memory.

Cogmed training has been implemented by schools around the world to support children with low working memory, including around 200 schools in Australia.

Children with low working memory often struggle with common classroom activities and are at high risk of low academic achievement. Previous research has shown over 90 per cent of six to 11 year old children with poor reading ability have low working memory. Low working memory is also more likely to predispose a child to difficulties with mathematics.

Products such as Cogmed are designed to improve working memory, and are commonly advertised as a solution for students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and learning difficulties.

The randomised clinical trial - the world's largest working memory intervention trial to date - compared the effects of Cogmed, an adaptive working memory intervention program, with usual classroom teaching in Year 1 classrooms in 44 schools across Melbourne. Researchers assessed whether using the program had any impact on the Year 3 academic outcomes of the children with low working memory.

Researchers screened over 1700 students and identified 452 students with low working memory; half of these students were randomly assigned to receive the Cogmed intervention over 20 to 25 sessions, delivered over a five to seven week period during school hours.

At 12 months and 24 months after the program was delivered, researchers analysed whether Cogmed had long-lasting impacts on student skills in reading, spelling, mathematics, memory and behaviour.

In the findings researchers reported there was no evidence of improved academic outcomes in the group using the program and a lack of evidence to justify the use of Cogmed in classrooms for children identified as having low working memory.

"This is the largest study to evaluate the effectiveness of Cogmed delivered following screening. Using rigorous methodology, including randomisation and long-term follow-up, we discovered that this intervention makes little difference to important real-world outcomes such as academic skills," said lead researcher Associate Professor Gehan Roberts.

"We cannot recommend screening children for low working memory in order to implement Cogmed. Given the cost of the intervention - at over \$1000 per child - and loss of 15 to 20 hours of classroom time, this is not enough evidence to justify its use in preventing learning difficulties in children with low working memory."

### Brain Training Market

Cogmed is part of a world wide \$1 billion brain-training market, according to SharpBrains, a San Francisco research house that forecasts growth to \$6 billion by 2020.

Pearson bought Cogmed in 2010 from Sweden's Karolinska Development AB, a commercial arm of the Stockholm research institute of the same name. The price was around US\$100 million. Cogmed's sales were more than US\$15 million in 2014, making it the largest brain-training product aimed at learning difficulties

Pearson has stepped up marketing to schools, including in Australia. Schools pay a price per student. *The Age* reported that a primary school in Broadmeadows paid around \$5,000 (\$231 for each of 22 students) for three years of training but dropped the program after two years because there was no evidence of student improvement.

A meta-analysis of 23 studies of Cogmed and two other working memory training programs found that they were not increasing people's working memory capacity in such a way that they benefit whenever they engage in any kind of

task that leans on working memory.

Rather, people who complete the training simply seem to have improved at the specific kinds of exercises used in the training, or possibly even just at computer tasks - effects which wear off over time.

The researchers concluded: "there is no evidence that these programmes are suitable as methods of treatment for children with developmental cognitive disorders or as ways of effecting general improvements in adults' or children's cognitive skills or scholastic achievements."

Article - Murdoch Childrens Research Institute - ["Brain training may not be the answer for learning difficulties"](#)

Article - Bloomberg Technology - ["Braining Training Seen as Dud for Attention-Deficit Children"](#)

Article - The British Psychological Society - ["Working memory training does not live up to the hype"](#)

## Autism Research Report

A two year national study of the educational needs of students (5-18 years) on the autism spectrum within school settings found that the social/emotional needs of students had the most impact and required the highest levels of support.

Next, in order of importance, were behavioural, communication and sensory needs. Academic and learning needs were rated as having the least impact and required the lowest levels of support.

The study surveyed educators, specialists, students on the autism spectrum (11-18 years) and parents. The report - [Australian Autism Educational Needs Analysis: What are the needs of schools, parents and students on the autism spectrum?](#) - was led by Queensland University's Dr Beth Saggars and Professor Suzanne Carrington.

There was strong agreement across educators, specialists and parents that noise was the sensory experience which had the greatest impact on the student's ability to participate, learn and perform in the school environment. This was followed by sensory experiences related to touch as well as the ability to stay still.

Students listed the most difficult activities they experienced at school. The top ten in order were: 1) planning for assignments; 2) working as part of a group; 3) handwriting and being neat; 4) coping with change; 5) coping with bullying or teasing; 6) the speed at which they completed handwriting; 7) copying information from the board; 8) doing homework; 9) staying calm when other kids annoyed them; 10) staying calm when the classroom is very noisy.

When students were asked what things they thought would help them at school they identified being able to use technology (eg to type) as very important. Other highly rated support options were being able to take a break, having time away from others, being reminded of pending changes, getting copies of things teachers wrote on the board, using special interests to do projects and help with organizing themselves.

## Statistics

### Class Sizes - Victoria, NSW and Queensland

Comparable interstate data about class sizes is not readily available because it is not part of the National Schools Statistics collection. However Victoria, NSW and Queensland each publishes some form of average class size data.

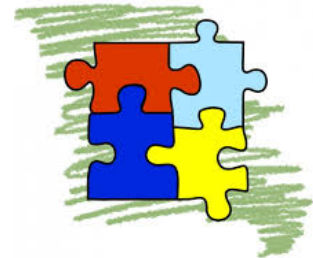
#### Average class sizes Victorian government schools 2009-2015

	2009	2011	2013	2015
Prep - 2	20.5	20.5	20.8	20.9
Years 3 - 6	23.3	23.2	23.3	23.5
Years 7 - 12 (English classes)	21.6	21.4	21.4	21.3

[Source: DET Vic]

#### Average primary class sizes Victorian and NSW government schools 2015

	Victoria	New South Wales
Prep (NSW K)	19.5	19.2
Year 1	21.0	21.3
Year 2	21.5	22.7



<b>Year 3</b>	22.9	25.9
<b>Year 4</b>	23.1	26.2
<b>Year 5</b>	23.3	26.5
<b>Year 6</b>	23.4	26.4
<b>Average all levels</b>	23.3	24.1

[Source: DoE NSW; DET Vic]

### Queensland class sizes 2015

<b>Primary class sizes</b>	
Prep - Year 3	21.0
Years 4 - 7*	22.1
<b>Secondary class sizes</b>	
Years 7* - 10	22.4
Years 11 -12	18.3
Victoria Year 11	19.9
Victoria Year 12	19.2

\*Queensland in transition moving year 7 to secondary

[Source: DET Queensland; DET Vic]

## Contract and CRT Employment

The proportion of teaching staff in government schools employed fixed-term varied by 2.6 percentage points from 2003 to 2013, from a low of 16.8 per cent in 2006 to a high of 19.4 per cent in 2008. Between 2009 and 2013 the proportion of government school teaching staff employed fixed-term was between 18-19 per cent.

A higher proportion of primary school teachers are employed fixed-term than their counterparts in secondary schools. In 2013 12.8 per cent of secondary teachers in government schools were employed fixed-term compared to 22.2 per cent of teachers at primary level. Part of the explanation is the higher proportion of primary teachers on family leave - 2013 8.7 per cent of primary teachers compared to 5.3 per cent secondary teachers.

In 2013 there were 6,890 CRTs employed in government schools: 25.1 per cent were unemployed and looking for work; 20.1 per cent had resigned/preferred casual work; 18.3 per cent were retired teachers; 9.7 per cent were on LWOP (including Family Leave).

[Source: Teacher Supply and Demand Report, DET, 2015]

## Professional development at the AEU

### AEU training, conferences and events

The AEU runs a large number of conferences, industrial and professional training sessions and member forums. A full list of these activities, dates/times and venues can be found on our website. You are able to book your activity online.

The AEU also runs online webinars and member forums throughout the year.

These events are free to AEU members but you must register to attend. All events can be found in the [AEU Events Calendar](#).

If there are topics you would like us to cover that would also be relevant to other members, please let us know.

## AEU Professional Learning Centre

### Professional Leadership

Based on the largest-ever analysis of research on effective school leaders, McREL's school-level leadership PD called '**Balanced Leadership**' guides school leadership teams in choosing the right focus for school improvement efforts; effectively leading changes in your school; and transforming your school culture into a purposeful community that believes it can make a difference.



The Professional Learning Centre believes the McREL programs offer a great pathway for schools to effectively do the key work expected in the DET Framework for Improving Student Learning Outcomes. Teachers, teacher-

leaders and school leaders should consider doing McREL's Balanced Leadership or Classroom Instruction that Works.

The Professional Learning Centre of the AEU facilitates McREL programs either at the AEU Building in Abbotsford or in your own school or with a cluster of schools.

### **Support for School**

The PLC can assist in developing tailored professional learning to meet the needs of the school. If you are looking for support to arrange professional learning for the school around developing leadership skills and instructional leadership then the PLC can work with you to find the appropriate presenters and co-develop engaging programs. Please call David Tyson on 9418 4939 to talk about the possibilities and options that are open to the PLC supporting you in developing meaningful, relevant and engaging professional learning on leadership for your network.

### **McREL Balanced Leadership Program**

Often in schools the different layers of leadership are going in different directions because there is a lack of common purpose and a common language to build cohesion and consistency.

This is where the McREL Balanced Leadership program offered by the Professional Learning Centre at the AEU is worth considering because it provides a framework for leaders at all layers in the school's leadership structure to access a compelling common narrative about how to implement and manage change. Focused on the 'right' classroom and school practices, leaders can have a positive and powerful effect.

#### **Dates:**

- Wednesday, 31 August
- Thursday, 1 September
- Tuesday, 13 September
- Wednesday, 14 September
- Thursday, 13 October
- Friday, 14 October

This is a six day program.

**Time:** 9.00am - 4.00pm

**Location:** AEU Building, 126 Trenerry Crescent, Abbotsford

**Cost:** \$1450 (member): \$1550 (non-member) includes GST

Course materials, morning tea and lunch provided.

**To register:** Click <http://www.aeuvic.asn.au/calendar?EventId=1460> or contact Anne Huggins on 9418 4847 or [anne.huggins@aeuvic.asn.au](mailto:anne.huggins@aeuvic.asn.au)

### **Applying and Interviewing for Leading Teacher Positions**

These one-day workshops help you to recognise your strengths and skills, and translate them into effective applications and interviews that make links to your daily practice. These can be used to construct effective responses to key selection criteria for leading teacher positions.

Facilitators, Peter and Krys Hendrickson are widely experienced and former long-serving school leaders. They have worked closely with teachers and principals in consultancy roles over many years.

For more information and to register please see links below.

[7 September, 2016](#)

[27 October, 2016](#)

### **Applying and Interviewing for Principal Positions**

This workshop assists serving and aspiring school leaders to articulate a personal response to leadership and develop their application writing and interview skills for principal positions.

The workshop looks at leadership styles, the role of leadership in nurturing change, building the capacity of school leadership and the role of emotional intelligence in achieving quality outcomes.

Participants are encouraged to recognise their strengths and skills and translate these into effective applications and interview presentations.

Facilitators, Peter Hendrickson and Robin Adamson are widely experienced and former long-serving school leaders. They have worked closely with teachers and principals in consultancy roles over many years.

For more information and to register please see links below.

[14 September, 2016](#)

[18 October, 2016](#)

## Professional development with TLN

### Teacher Learning Network

#### Support for teaching learners with disability

As part of the government Special Needs Plan teachers will be required to build their capacity to teach learners with disability. The VIT website reads:

*When you renew your registration by 30 September 2016, you will be asked to identify the PD you've engaged in to build your capacity to teach learners with disability. Activities selected by you to meet the requirement for PD about learners with disability should reference the standards descriptors 1.5, 1.6 and 4.1.*

Many courses conducted by TLN meet these Standards including:-

#### **Disability developed or diverse - Tuesday 30 August, 5.30pm - 6.30pm**

(Using technology for differentiation)

The Workshop will cover the use of general ICT devices e.g. iPads and specific assistive technologies and how they can benefit all students from gifted through to those with a learning disability.

#### **Positive Behaviour Support - Tuesday 30 August, 7.00pm - 8.00pm**

(Identifying the behaviours you want)

Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) is a framework for understanding the cause of inappropriate behaviours and how to respond effectively. The presenters will show how they have used PBS to plan classroom strategies to get the preferred behaviours in their work with students with physical and intellectual disabilities.

#### **Working effectively with families of students with special needs - Tuesday 25 October, 4.00pm - 5.00pm**

(Q & A)

Working closely with the families of children with special needs is key to achieving success with them. Families know better than anyone else their child's strengths, learning dispositions and likely triggers.

These courses are all free for all staff in schools that are members of the TLN. They are also available as recorded on-demand programs after the initial presentation - accessible by your staff at any time.

At the TLN we have spent years building the capacity of teachers to present interesting, engaging and effective online programs and we now have reliable online software and skilled staff who can maximize your PD experience. It is worth investing your school resources in a membership with TLN. It is a one-stop-shop professional development service. See the full range of programs and resources at [www.tln.org.au](http://www.tln.org.au)

Contact TLN at the AEU Building, 126 Trenerry Crescent, Abbotsford, 3067 or 9418 4992 or Michael Victory at [mvictory@tln.org.au](mailto:mvictory@tln.org.au)

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