

# Curriculum coordinators e-news



## Volume 14 No 1 – March, 2018

**Welcome** to the first edition of the 2018 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](#)

## **VICTORIAN NEWS**

### **VCE-VCAL review of minimum standards**

The Victorian Government has launched a review of the VCE and VCAL with a focus on whether there should be a more explicit requirement for students to meet minimum standards of literacy and numeracy .



The Minister for Education, James Merlino, said that he wanted the review to look at ways to improve students' literacy and numeracy results but did not explain how any standards testing in senior secondary would achieve this.

John Hattie from Melbourne University who is often quoted in government and department documents as an authority on the effectiveness of educational policies pointed out that introducing minimum literacy and numeracy standards as a requirement for graduation from secondary school could discourage students from completing their education.

"I think the biggest issue is that one in five students who start high school don't finish school," he said.

NSW and Western Australia have introduced minimum standards for high school students, but the changes have been controversial as they have been linked to higher dropout rates and increased anxiety.

The NSW government recently scrapped the most contentious part of its policy – linking Year 9 NAPLAN results to students being awarded their HSC. Students now have to meet the standards through online reading, writing and numeracy tests from year 10.

When asked in 2016 whether Victoria would follow Western Australia and New South Wales by setting minimum VCE numeracy standards, Minister 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 his [February letter to the VCAA](#) the Minister stated:

"It is appropriate to review whether the conditions for qualification remain fit-for-purpose more than a generation on from the genesis of these certificates. A question of particular focus is whether there should be a more explicit requirement for students to meet minimum standards of literacy and numeracy in order to be awarded the VCE or the VCAL."

At present the VCE measures students' literacy and numeracy skills through study scores, graded assessments and the General Achievement Test. Students have to complete three units from the English group of studies to successfully complete their VCE. There is no maths requirement.

Students doing VCAL must successfully complete one numeracy unit and one literacy unit to receive their certificate.

The VCAA will publish an issues paper for consultation. Its review is expected to be completed by August.

## **AEU response to VCE-VCAL review**

The AEU does not support end-of-school testing as it is entirely unreasonable to test a student after 13 years of schooling and then tell them they have failed as a learner.

There is no evidence that more testing will raise literacy and numeracy standards and there is evidence that young people who are struggling with their learning are more likely to disengage and drop out if they know they cannot meet institutionally mandated attainment levels.

The AEU position is that schools must be resourced to help students who need additional literacy and numeracy support early on, well before the end of Year 12. Schools know what additional supports are needed to bridge achievement gaps. Governments need to stop abrogating their responsibility to properly fund public schools.

AEU President, Meredith Peace (pictured) said:

“When students struggle it is typically because they face multiple barriers to learning and their schools simply do not have the funding to provide the additional learning support that the individual student needs. Malcolm Turnbull has slashed the funding that allows schools to provide individual support to students who need more one-on-one assistance.”

Victorian public schools are the lowest funded in the nation.



## **Opposition prescription for school education**

The Victorian Opposition ended the culture wars ceasefire at the beginning of the Australia Day week when it launched their [School Education Values Statement](#).



The timing was no coincidence. A few days later, Opposition leader, Matthew Guy, warned that if he won the election at the end of the year any local council that did not celebrate Australia Day on 26 January would be sacked because he wouldn't tolerate anyone "talking down Australia".

The same "patriot blue" message runs through the Values Statement with a stylised Australian flag fluttering on the front cover and a promise that a Guy government would introduce a new Victorian curriculum based on respect for something called "Australian values".

It's a dismal document - basically 15 pages of cobbled-together ideological rhetoric masquerading as a new approach to improving Victoria's school education system. The 'ideas' in it lack substance or coherence and echo the unsuccessful Baillieu-Napthine policy documents (remember "From New Directions to Action"?) with some Abbott-Turnbull variations thrown in for good measure.

The document tries to create the idea that Victoria's education system is in a state of crisis as it neglects "the basics", has poor student discipline and lacks "inspiring (Australian) values". The 'evidence' for these claims are some planted stories in the Herald Sun and a few specially created graphs which seem to link an increase in funding for schools over the years with flat-lining test results.

The message is that school funding has no real effect on student success so why do schools need more of it, or for that matter why do they even need what they are getting at present? The original graphs from credible sources have been doctored in the document by the addition of unsourced funding data which was not in the original sources.

Using these graphs is both misleading and strange as they show that when the Coalition was last in power in Victoria (2010-14) there were no improvements in student results using the education policies they now want to re-introduce. And what they don't make clear is that \$600 million was cut from the public school budget in that period.

There is no evidence to suggest that the three-fold formula for improvement they propose – more basics, tougher discipline and Australian values – will have any positive effect on student learning.

A concentration on 'the basics' has been a central element of Victorian government schools for many years, certainly since the introduction of NAPLAN. Forcing schools to spend even more time on just a few areas of learning will create a desiccated and unengaging curriculum.

The document calls for the end of the national cross-curriculum priorities - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia and Sustainability – because they “serve only to dilute the teaching of core competencies”.

The first shot in the culture wars however, will be to bulldoze the “radical post-modernist worldview on sex and gender” known as the Safe Schools program which “is seeking to replace parents in teaching students about controversial and sensitive issues”.

The third element of their policy prescription – to bring student discipline back under control – is just a drumbeat from their law and order campaign. This has been made explicit by their promise to embed police in schools.

If elected the Coalition states that it will initiate a review of the Victorian curriculum headed by Jennifer Buckingham from the right wing Centre for Independent Studies, a crusader for mandated Year 1 synthetic phonics testing.

## Police in Schools

Dedicated [police officers will be embedded in 10 “high-risk” Victorian secondary schools](#) if the Victorian Opposition wins the 2018 state election.



The schools are yet to be publicly identified and the program will initially run for a two year trial period. It is unclear if the police will be armed.

The Opposition promised to spend \$50 million on this initiative and to revive the police-in schools program which was axed in 2005. The money will cover the employment of 100 extra police to work as school resource officers.

Opposition leader, Matthew Guy (pictured) said the plan was to “tackle this violent scourge of youth crime, to keep Victorians safe” and linked it to his party's tough-on-crime stance.

The policy was launched soon after the Federal Government's security czar, Peter Dutton, got front page headlines for insisting that Victorians were now too afraid to go out for dinner.

## Phonics Test

The state Opposition has promised that every Victorian Year 1 student would have to undergo the Federal Government's controversial phonics test if it wins the November state election.



Based on the English model, [critics have identified a range of problems with the test](#) and what they term “synthetic phonics”. The Australian Literacy Educators Association (ALEA) concluded: “The standardised year 1 phonics test will result in precious teaching time being spent on teaching phonics in a stand-alone model and with nonsense words.”

They argue that phonics are important but should be taught in context rather than in isolation. The evidence is that phonics should be assessed and taught within meaningful texts – that meaning and grammar are essential for determining how phonics works.

The Opposition education spokesperson, Tim Smith, said that the new test was part of their “back to basics” policy. This includes hiring the main booster for introducing the English phonics test into Australia, Jennifer Buckingham, to review the whole of the Victorian curriculum.

According to Buckingham: “The reality is that the majority of kids with reading difficulties don't have dyslexia, they just haven't been taught properly.”

There is no indication in the Opposition policy that schools will receive follow-up additional funding to address the needs of students identified by the testing.

## Careers Education Inquiry

The AEU has made a submission to the [Victorian Parliament's inquiry into career education in schools](#). The submission argues that the whole area of careers education needs to be better resourced and have its status in schools upgraded.



This is a complex area of learning in schools; made more complex at a time when the future of work has become increasingly indeterminate.

Rather than being just a careers advisor identifying an immediate pathway for an individual student, careers education should be part of the school curriculum from the later years of primary school onwards so students can develop the skills to manage their progression in learning and work throughout their lives.

The [AEU submission](#) is based on research literature and the views of our members in schools who are working in various capacities related to careers education. The picture they paint is a patchwork of some very successful programs and many others where a lack of resources limits their effectiveness.

Some of the recommendations the AEU made were:

- All schools should have a full-time careers advisor.
- The State Government should re-introduce the study grant scheme to ensure that all school careers advisors have a post-graduate careers education qualification.
- The Government needs to increase its overall support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to improve their educational achievement and so expand their career opportunities.
- There needs to be a greater emphasis on TAFE as a post-school destination and action to increase the numbers of students in VET in schools programs after a major decline in participation over the past few years.
- More support is needed for rural students facing a range of interrelated economic, geographic and social factors which influence the nature and extent of careers education in the country.

## NATIONAL NEWS

### NSW: changes to minimum standards



NSW has abandoned its use of Year 9 NAPLAN test results as an early way for students to demonstrate they are able to meet minimum standards for HSC completion.

The [NSW Government](#) announced that it had made this change “to ensure NAPLAN remains focussed on its diagnostic purpose and to reduce unnecessary stress on young people”. The idea that NAPLAN has an individual diagnostic function has almost no support among literacy experts.

To receive the HSC from 2020, students will need to meet minimum standards in three areas – reading, writing and numeracy. They will have to demonstrate they can meet the standards through sitting online tests. Students will have two opportunities a year in Years 10, 11 or 12 to pass any tests needed. They will also be able to take them for a few years after they leave school.

The tests will be set at the [Australian Core Skills Framework \(ACSF\)](#) Level 3 which describes the functional literacy and numeracy skills required for life after school, for work and further education. They will consist of:

- Minimum Standard Reading Test – 45 multiple choice questions
- Minimum Standard Numeracy Test – 45 multiple choice questions
- Minimum Standard Writing Test – one question based on a visual or text prompt with up to a 500 word-response

## National Review of Teacher Registration

A National Review of Teacher Registration was announced by the Federal Government on February 12 after agreement from the states and territories through the Australian Education Council.

The Review will look at the extent to which there is national consistency in teacher registration processes across the country, including identifying examples of best practice, challenges and barriers. It will also look at the rigour with which the agreed *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* are applied in states and territories,"



The review will include consideration of:

- the registration of early childhood teachers and how the Teacher Standards should be applied in this context,
- the registration of vocational education and training (VET) teachers in school settings and whether registration requirements create unnecessary barriers to the delivery of quality VET in schools,
- the transition of initial teacher education students into the profession and
- the responsibility of regulatory authorities to ensure that registered teachers fulfil the fit and proper person requirement.

It will not review the present national Teacher Standards (which will have a separate review this year) or the standards for initial teacher education programs.

A panel led by Chris Wardlaw, currently Chair of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority and Deputy Chair of AITSL, as well as a panel of nine education experts (including Marino D'Ortenzio Deputy Vice President at the AEU Vic. Branch and AP at Epping Secondary College) will carry out the Review. It will be supported by the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL).

Concern about the Review was created after Federal Education Minister, Simon Birmingham (pictured), indicated that it would be looking at short-cut pathways for "tradies" and other people with "real-world skills" to become teachers. This seemed to contradict the push by all governments around Australia to increase teaching standards and qualifications.

## Pledging loyalty

Peter Dutton (pictured), the federal Home Affairs Minister, wants all Australian school children to recite the citizenship pledge as part of his push for a greater commitment to "Australian values".



He told the National Press Club: "In my view, there is a place for the pledge in a broader rejuvenated civics effort with school-aged children, regardless of their background."

He wants his department to work with state and territory education departments to ensure that school students "talk more about our story, about our history and our core values".

The response from Victorian Education Minister, James Merlino, was less than enthusiastic pointing out to Minister Dutton that the states already teach civics and that: "I won't be taking advice from a man who doesn't visit our schools or know anything about what is happening in Victoria."

[from Primrose Riordan, Dutton wants kids to say citizenship pledge *The Australian*, 22/2/18]

## NAPLAN robot marking ditched

The [robot marking of essays in NAPLAN](#) was dumped at the Education Council meeting in December 2017.

State and territory education ministers rejected the push by Federal Education Minister, Simon Birmingham, and the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) to have computers rather than people deployed to grade writing assessments.

The AEU had lobbied strongly to retain human markers. AEU Federal President, Correna Haythorpe commented: "Our students write for an audience and with purpose,





and they deserve to have their written work reviewed and assessed by human markers, not by computers."

## Evidence Institute for Schools

Federal Labor has proposed an independent education institute to evaluate what works and what doesn't in Australian schools.

The institute, to cost \$73 million over the first four years or \$280 million over 10 years and similar to bodies in the UK, US, Denmark, Norway and Canada, will be charged with commissioning new research on educational methods, assessing programs promoted and sold into schools and helping teachers and schools stay up to date with the latest and best practices.



The policy is designed to spread the best teaching practices and educational programs, saving money by helping schools avoid products that don't live up to claims to boost educational outcomes.

Labor points out the government spends about \$20 million a year on grants for educational research compared with about \$600 million a year for medical research.

Shadow Education Minister, [Tanya Plibersek](#), (pictured) linked the proposed institute to Labor's promise to restore \$17 billion over 10 years to schools by reversing cuts in the 2014 budget and fully implementing needs-based funding.

"Our institute will help make sure Labor's extra investment achieves better results for our kids, so we can quickly scale up programs that work and dump those that don't," Plibersek said.

The new institute would be independent of government. "Politicians shouldn't tell teachers how to do their jobs, or be using schools as an ideological battleground," according to Ms Plibersek.

## Liberals lobby for more school chaplain money

A push is on within [the federal government to renew, and significantly boost, the "absolutely essential" school chaplaincy program](#) in this year's budget.

30 Coalition MPs have signed a petition to Treasurer Scott Morrison and Education Minister Simon Birmingham calling for the program to be not just maintained but significantly expanded and indexed.



The Liberal MPs are lobbying senior ministers to increase funding for the \$250 million scheme by 25 per cent, and make it a permanent, indexed commitment. They want funding per school to rise from \$20,000 to \$25,000.

The program was introduced by John Howard, amended but continued under Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard, and cemented by Tony Abbott in the 2014 budget. In government, Labor opened up the program to include secular youth workers, but this option was eradicated under Abbott.

One Liberal MP said the school chaplains program was "probably the most popular policy in the party room".

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### Teachers as human shields

After the recent shootings at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida where an ex-student gunman killed 17 people including three staff, teachers in the US are now discussing [what it means to have the role of "human shields"](#).



School staff union meetings have expressed alarm about how teachers and other employees in schools now have to take on the role of bodyguards and protectors as well as educators and raised questions about issues such as whether their classrooms are properly equipped to provide safe areas when a shooter is in the school, how to barricade their classroom doors, how to recognise a potentially dangerous student and

whether they would be prepared to jump in front of a bullet aimed at their students.

The 1.7 million member [American Federation of Teachers](#) issued the following statement about the Florida shooting:

“While we’ll continue to advocate for additional mental health supports, counselors and social workers in our schools, these massacres won’t stop until we do something about guns. Children, teachers and school staff should not have to prepare themselves against an attack with this type of weapon. And parents should never have to wonder if their child won’t come home because they were gunned down in their school by a military weapon.”

At the time of the Florida shooting (mid-February) there had already been 18 US school shootings in 2018. President Trump (pictured) ran for election on an education platform which included getting rid of ‘gun-free schools’, in line with the policies of the National Rifle Association which endorsed him.

The Trump ‘solution’ to the Florida shooting is to have 20 per cent of teachers carrying concealed weapons in schools. Those teachers who are armed would “have great ability with weaponry” and “get a little bit of a bonus”.

Lily Eskelsen Garcia the President of the 3.2 million member [National Education Association](#) said:-

“Let us be crystal clear and reiterate that our students need fewer guns in schools — not more of them — and bringing guns into our schools does absolutely nothing to protect our students and educators from gun violence. We must listen to the students, parents and educators, who have unequivocally stated they do not want more guns in schools and have overwhelmingly rejected the idea of arming educators.”

## Tech Billionaires taking over US schools

America’s tech billionaires are using their philanthropy dollars to alter education policies and influence teacher training, the subjects that schools teach, the classroom tools that teachers choose and fundamental approaches to learning, with millions of students serving as de facto testers for their ideas.



The tech billionaires include Facebook’s Mark Zuckerberg [see below], Netflix’s Reed Hastings, Salesforce’s Marc Benioff, Laurene Powell Jobs (Steve Jobs’ widow) and Bill (pictured) and Melinda Gates. Their efforts are reinforced by other entities such as Code.org, a non-profit group with \$60 million financed by Silicon Valley companies, which has gone around the US pushing states to change education laws and fund computer science courses.

Their philanthropy coincides with a larger Silicon Valley push to sell computers and software to American schools, a lucrative market projected to reach \$21 billion by 2020.

The tech companies and their founders have been rolling out programs in America’s public schools with relatively few checks and balances. Their power to change policy has been described by critics as subverting the democratic process in school reform.

There are also concerns about the dearth of research validation as to whether the tech giants’ programs have actually improved students’ educational achievement and whether some of their initiatives involve a conflict of interest in that they directly benefit the tech industry.

Many teachers are less than enthusiastic about some of the tech entrepreneurs’ initiatives such as promoting the notion that algorithms could be better than skilled teachers at adapting to students’ abilities. They see this as a push to disrupt and diminish the role of teachers as experts.

[from Natasha Singer, [The Silicon Valley billionaires remaking America’s schools](#), New York Times, 6/6/17]

## Facebook founder’s foray into school reform

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg (pictured) and his wife Priscilla Chan have set up the [Chan Zuckerberg Initiative \(CZI\)](#), a private company that will eventually be used to funnel 99 per cent of the couple’s Facebook stock into programs that build or improve schools.



When the initiative was announced in 2015 that amounted to a commitment of \$US45 billion. As Facebook's stock has risen in the two years since, the value has likely grown.

Zuckerberg is most interested in funding "personalized learning", using software his company helped build. Students use technology to work at the speed and difficulty best suited for them. They cluster together working at laptops and use software to select their own assignments. The model sees teachers only intervening when students struggle at teaching themselves.

Some critics have described this as "self-pacing to failure" and question whether it develops deep learning.

Zuckerberg's ambition is to "help" the majority of the 25,000 public secondary schools in America to "upgrade to personalized learning and then start working globally as well. [Giving a billion students a personalized education is a great thing to do.](#)"

Zuckerberg's first foray into education reform was in 2010 when he donated \$100 million to reform [Newark](#) (a city in New Jersey) public schools. The proposal was to dramatically expand charter schools, getting rid of teachers whose evaluations found them to be weak, judging other teachers by their test scores and rewarding them with bonuses, and streamlining the management of the school district so that it ran more like a business.

The first time teachers and parents learnt about these plans was when Zuckerberg and the mayor of Newark announced them on Oprah's show. The \$100 million became part of a foundation run by donors who had to give at least \$5 million to be on its board. Teachers and parents were not part of the decision-making processes.

Instead of using the funds to address the public school needs identified by school communities, over \$20 million went to consultants and the number of children in charter schools doubled from 20 percent to 40 per cent. Zuckerberg now says the lesson he learnt at Newark was that his future school reform efforts needed to include the community in their development.

## **REPORTS and RESOURCES**

### **In our classrooms**

DET has created a new web-based resource for teachers titled [In Our Classrooms](#) "that offers practical and hands-on, evidence-based resources and guidance that aligns to the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO)".



### **Peer Observation**

DET has published a two page paper: [Peer observation, Feedback and Reflection](#) as part of its Professional Practice resources.



The paper sets out the whys and hows of peer observation. It states that peer observation should focus on practice improvement, not assessment and "is best implemented within the context of a supportive, collaborative team structure".

Two options are described:

- Team members identify an area of teaching practice, develop a shared understanding of effective teaching in that area and use this understanding to inform the feedback provided following an observation. The feedback should be constructive, developmental and actionable.
- A teacher might identify an area of his or her practice on which to focus, and engage peers in observing a lesson related to that area of practice. The teacher should engage with the observer beforehand to ensure that all parties are aware of the focus areas of the lesson, how observations will be recorded and determine the opportunities to reflect and provide feedback.

The paper states that teachers need to be engaged in establishing peer observation arrangements including nominating who will conduct the observation and the timing of the observation prior to any observations occurring.



School leaders are advised that having a culture that is “respectful, trusting and supportive” provides the preconditions for success in peer observation.

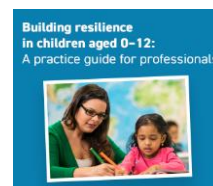
“School leaders should engage collaboratively with staff to establish protocols, procedures and structures that support peer observation, feedback and reflection as a core part of school-based professional learning.”

The agreed consultation arrangements within the Victorian Government Schools Agreement (2017) cover peer observation as part of the organisation of teachers’ work (clause 12:5(a)).

DET peer observation guides and templates can be found [here](#).

## Resilience Guide

A new practice guide, released by *beyondblue*, seeks to provide teachers, families and other professionals with everyday strategies to build resilience in young people and teach them to think positively.



The guide – ***Building Resilience in Children aged 0-12*** – draws on new research and how it can be applied in schools, early childhood settings and at home with families.

The [strategies](#) are based on a 12-month research project which reviewed academic research and generated expert consensus on resilience concepts. This research was complemented by consultations with parents, children and practitioners from around the country.

The guide defines resilience as “doing well during or after an adverse event, or a period of adversity”. The resource seeks to provide strategies for teachers and others to help build children’s resilience so they can better manage life’s adversities.

Experts consulted in the research agreed that resilience interventions should focus on both the child and environment. They found that interventions operate at multiple levels, including the individual child, their environment and the interaction between the child and their environment over time.

The guide suggests two distinct approaches can be applied to build children’s resilience:

*Everyday strategies*, which are incorporated into routine practice and service delivery and are designed to be used whenever an appropriate opportunity arises. These strategies rely on the same skills you might use every day when working with children and families.

*Structured resilience interventions*, which typically require intervention-specific training and are often accompanied by a guide or manual. Structured resilience interventions differ from everyday strategies as they are delivered over a specific period of time.

## Report Card 2018: The wellbeing of young Australians

The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) has published its third report card on the [well-being of young Australians](#). Previous reports were published in 2008 and 2013



The report card looks at Australian performance compared to other OECD countries on 75 indicators under the headings: being loved and safe; having material basics; being healthy; learning; participation.

The report concludes that Australia performs “moderately” in relation to child and youth health and wellbeing indicators compared with other OECD countries.

Australia is ranked in the top third of OECD countries for around one-third of the indicators (26 out of 75 indicators). It continues to lead the world in areas such as low youth smoking rates, the amount of time parents spend with their children daily and life expectancy at birth.

Australia is ranked in the middle third of OECD countries for just over one-third of indicators (28 out of 75). This includes for areas such as the duration of paid paternity leave and Year 4 performance in maths and science.

Australia is ranked in the bottom third of OECD countries for just under one-third of the indicators (21 out of 75). Areas of concern include levels of bullying experienced by year 4 students, food insecurity, low and declining immunisation rates, and the cost of childcare.

Some outcomes have worsened since the last Report Card. A health indicator of particular concern is that the number of children who are fully immunised has fallen from 92.6 per cent in 2008 to 90.5 per cent in 2017. Australia is currently ranked near the bottom of the OECD for immunisation against measles and whooping cough.

Mental health is a growing issue for young Australians. In 2014-15, 15.4 per cent of Australians aged 18-24 years suffered high or very high psychological distress - up from 11.8 per cent in 2011. The rate of mental illness is even higher amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth aged 15-19, with a third having a probable mental illness.

Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are over three times more likely to commit suicide than non-Indigenous youth. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children also suffer higher rates of educational disadvantage, with far fewer being able to reach international benchmarks in reading, mathematics and science than their non-Indigenous peers.

Additionally, when viewed separately, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are almost ten times more likely to be in out-of-home-care, more than four times more likely to die of injury before the age of 14. Rates of teenage pregnancy are six times higher than the national level.

## **RESEARCH DIGEST**

### **Collaborative problem-solving**

15 year-olds in 52 countries participated in a computer-based, collaborative problem-solving test as part of the [2015 international PISA testing program](#).



This was the first time PISA had assessed these skills. It measured students' ability to work with two or more people to reach a solution by pooling their knowledge, skills and efforts.

Australian students performed well, coming in 10th with 532 points, just behind New Zealand in ninth (533).

Singapore topped the international rankings with a mean score of 561 points – the OECD average is 500 points. Japan (552 points), Hong Kong-China (541), Korea (538) and Canada (535) round out the top five.

Girls outperformed boys in collaborative problem solving in every participating country and economy. The gender gaps are largest in Finland (48 points), Sweden (42), Australia (41) and New Zealand (41).

Students tackled three types of tasks:

*Jigsaw or hidden-profile* tasks where the group members all have different information and skills and need each other to arrive at the solution.

*Consensus-building* tasks where groups have to come to a consensus after considering everyone's views, opinions and arguments.

*Negotiation* tasks where not all group members share the same goal and so the task is to find a win-win situation for individuals and the group as a whole.

The report notes although some countries are now including collaboration in their curricula, it's not a skill that's taught explicitly, rather through the teaching of other subjects.

## Student identity affected by online pressures



A new research study of 13-17 year olds in the UK has revealed how [online pressures](#) to conform could be affecting young people's sense of self and changing the way they develop their identity.

63 per cent of the young people participating in the research say people behave differently online to the way they do offline. 49 per cent of participants feel pressured to reply to people's messages quickly, and 25 per cent of them feel they have to 'like' a post or picture that they don't actually like.

The 2018 YouGov poll identifies the amount of pressure teens face online at a critical time when they are exploring and developing their identity. Despite being able to talk to more people than ever before, online judgement and pressure to fit in with a vast online audience limits young people's ability to be themselves online.

[The Diana Award](#), which commissioned the research, stressed the importance of teachers and parents helping young people to develop resilience. It has launched new resources for parents and teachers to help young people be themselves online.

## Students regulating their own learning



New research from Melbourne University shows that [high performing Grade 5-8 students](#) in mathematics and reading exhibit greater self-regulated learning (SRL) skills than their lower performing counterparts.

Students who are able to regulate their own learning can modify and monitor their behaviour using metacognition, motivation, self-awareness, and self-efficacy to reach a desired learning outcome.

3,741 Victorian public school students in Grades 5-8 answered a multiple-choice, 30-item, self-report questionnaire designed to capture their learning motivations and self-regulated learning strategies. Students were also tested on their mathematics and reading comprehension abilities.

Levels of self-regulated learning competency were compared with achievement levels in mathematics and reading. Results indicate that the top 25 per cent of students academically in both mathematics and reading are also those who are best able to regulate their own learning.

It is likely that the students with the strongest ability to regulate their own learning accumulate understanding and gain an advantage over their peers, so that by the time these students reach Grade 5 those with the highest self-regulated learning skills have also become the highest achievers. These students gain more from their learning experience compared with students who are not as able to regulate their own learning.

The research found that students who were regulating their own learning were setting challenging goals for themselves, reflecting on their plans and adapting them when needed. They submitted completed tasks and did extra work to learn more.

When they encountered difficult tasks, they used automated regulation processes so they could be successful. When they become distracted, they found ways to refocus.

Importantly, not all high performing students in the study were found to regulate their own learning, and not all low performing students struggled to regulate.

This evidence strongly supports the notion that students should be taught how to regulate their own learning so that they have the capacity to become lifelong learners at school and into adulthood.

Students who need support in using self-regulated learning skills in the research project schools are being taught about the skills involved, how their learning motivations will affect their performance, and how to implement better learning practices.

## **STATISTICS**

### **Report Card 2018: The wellbeing of young Australians**

*Report Card 2018: The wellbeing of young Australians* includes a range of data about how Australia compares with other OECD countries in various categories including education, health, safety, employment etc.



In education, Australia does really well in some areas (such as participation in 15-19 year-old study) and not so well in others (such as wellbeing at school).

#### **15-19 year-olds in Australia enrolled in study for a qualification (%)**

|      |      |
|------|------|
| 2007 | 77.8 |
| 2012 | 80.3 |
| 2016 | 83.2 |

Report Card 2018: Australia's OECD rank

|      |              |
|------|--------------|
| 2013 | 16 out of 33 |
| 2018 | 5 out of 34  |

#### **Children reporting school as a place where they feel happy (%)**

|        |      |
|--------|------|
| Year 4 | 88.6 |
| Year 6 | 89.7 |
| Year 8 | 79.2 |

Report Card 2018: Australia's OECD rank

26 out of 34  
[2014 data]

#### **Children feeling some or a lot of pressure from homework (%)**

|              |      |      |      |
|--------------|------|------|------|
| Year 6 Girls | 34.2 | Boys | 33.3 |
| Year 8 Girls | 55.0 | Boys | 47.1 |

Report Card 2018: Australia's OECD rank

24 out of 26  
[2014 data]

## **SPIN-OFFS**

### **Groucho on Liberals' Values Education policy**

"Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly and applying the wrong remedies."

[Groucho Marx (pictured), who, if he was still alive, could have been posting a Twitter comment on the Victorian Liberals' Values Education policy using the hash-tag 'culture wars'.]



## Mateship Studies

"Studying the theory and practice of mateship. How to make mates and how to be a mate. The history of mateship, special study of great mates throughout history, including Ned Kelly, Weary Dunlop and Denise Drysdale. Students tested on practical application: must demonstrate their ability to have and keep mates, as well as avoidance of dobbing. Beer included as an elective."



[Ben Pobjie, "LEAKED: Matthew Guy's 'Australian values' school curriculum", *Crikey*, 29/1/18]

## Standardised Failure

"The worst part is that many students believe that these tests tell them how smart they are and how smart they'll be when they grow up. This could well lead to "learned helplessness" after several years of poor assessments."



[Professor Carol Dweck (pictured), the developer of the growth mindset approach to learning, speaking about standardised tests in an interview in the next *Professional Voice*]

## PUBLICATIONS

### Professional Voice

The latest edition of the AEU's professional journal – *Professional Voice* – was mailed to all members of the union's Curriculum Coordinator and PD Coordinator networks in November. If you have joined one of the networks since then or did not receive a copy contact Marlene McLean [marlene.mclean@aeuvic.asn.au](mailto:marlene.mclean@aeuvic.asn.au)



Individual articles from *Professional Voice* can be downloaded from [here](#).

The next edition of *Professional Voice* will be published in the first half of this year. It has articles about values education, phonics testing, dealing with difficult students, early career teacher drop-outs, Ontario as a model for the Victorian education system, the future of teacher unionism and an interview with the distinguished academic Carol Dweck, the originator of the growth mindset approach in schools.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Professional Learning Centre

#### PROFESSIONAL LEARNING CENTRE PROGRAMS

##### Term One 2018

Listed below are three activities from our term one program to be held at Abbotsford. Further information can be found on our website or by contacting David Tyson, Manager, Professional Learning Centre [david.tyson@aeuvic.asn.au](mailto:david.tyson@aeuvic.asn.au) or call 9418 4939.



| DATE                        | PROGRAM   |
|-----------------------------|---|
|                             |   |
| Mar 19<br>5.00pm-<br>7.00pm | <a href="#"><u>Application and Interview Skills for Classroom Teacher Positions in Preparation for Leadership</u></a><br>(A short course) |
| Mar 21<br>9.00am-<br>4.00pm | <a href="#"><u>Women in Leadership : Application Writing and Interview Skills</u></a>   |
| Mar 22<br>9.00am-<br>4.00pm | <a href="#"><u>Leading Learning (In your School) as a Teacher- Leader–Day 1</u></a>   |
| Mar 26<br>9.00am-<br>4.00pm | <a href="#"><u>Building Your Skills as a YLC</u></a>  |

### McREL Balanced Leadership

The McREL Balanced Leadership program 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.

This highly regarded six day course helps school leaders and leadership teams to become more effective by focusing on what research says matters most to improve student achievement.

Dates: 1 and 2 May 9.00am – 4.00pm  
15 and 16 May 9.00am – 4.00pm  
29 and 30 May 9.00am – 4.00pm

Location: AEU Building at 126 Trenerry Crescent, Abbotsford

Cost-Member: \$1,450.00 | Non-Member: \$1,550.00 (including GST)

To register interest contact David Tyson on 9418 4839 [david.tyson@aeuvc.asn.au](mailto:david.tyson@aeuvc.asn.au)

### Time to book On Site Professional Learning for 2018

The Professional Learning Centre can assist your school plan its professional learning around leadership, wellbeing and school improvement.

In 2017 we helped over 4,000 teachers and school leaders access quality activities on site for professional learning days or staff meetings.

We have done a lot of work with individual schools to enhance their leadership team's skills while at the same time addressing school improvement issues that have been identified in the Department's Education State policies.

Over the last couple of years, the PLC has assisted many schools (primary, secondary and special setting) to deliver engaging and meaningful targeted professional learning around their **work on the F.I.S.O** at a very low cost.

The Professional Learning Centre can provide the sort of support you need when you're facing a mountain of work with lots of meetings to attend, and you know you have a professional learning day to plan.

Please contact David Tyson, Manager, Professional Learning Centre [david.tyson@aeuvc.asn.au](mailto:david.tyson@aeuvc.asn.au) or call 9418 4939.

## Teacher Learning Network (TLN)

For more information go to [www.tln.org.au](http://www.tln.org.au) (you can join online) or (03) 9418 4992 or email Michael Victory at [mvictory@tln.org.au](mailto:mvictory@tln.org.au)

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