

ACER Foundation

LATEST NEWS

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN LESOTHO

We are pleased to share the news that the five classrooms for Mollele Primary School are complete and classes began in February 2018.

In September Project Director Pam Munro-Smith travelled to Lesotho to attend the grand opening of Mollele Primary School - a great event for the kids and community.



The ACER Foundation is proud to be able to make a difference to the students of Makhalong village.



The vegie garden is up and running and now a productive garden for the community to enjoy. While in Lesotho Pam made a visit to some of sponsored students who attend Kolonyama High School. This was the first time a visit has taken place at their school. In the past the visits have always taken place at the sponsored students' village. Non-fiction books were taken for each student. As they had no books at all, the students decided to swap the books between themselves so that they now each have access to 48 books.

It was great to see four of our sponsored students completing their studies this year, talk about their hopes for the future.



The young man on the far left hopes to study medicine so that he can help his people, particularly with AIDS.



Within this group of young women, one hopes to become an accountant, another hopes to study business management and to have her own business, while another hopes to become a nurse.

There are currently a number of students requiring sponsorship the cost to sponsor is \$261AUS per year. If you are interested in supporting one of our students please contact Pam Pam.Munro-Smith@acer.org all donations are tax deductible.

The ACER Foundation extend our thanks to all those that have contributed to our Lesotho project, and acknowledge the hard work and dedication of Pam Munro-Smith in co-ordinating all the aspects of this initiative.



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SUCCESS FOR LITTLE J & BIG CUZ

Little J & Big Cuz has been well received after its screening on both the ABC and NITV in 2017 and 2018. Over the course of the last year the series has won an SAE ATOM Award for Best Children's Television Program. The 2018 Logie for Most Outstanding Children's program, and finally the series received the inaugural SDIN award. The SDIN Award recognises the contribution the series has made to diversity and inclusion within the Australian screen industry.

In July it was announced publicly that the second series is underway. The new season, will be broadcast on NITV and ABC Kids, with catch up on SBS On Demand and ABC iview. It has been financed with the support of ACER, Screen Australia, Screen Tasmania, Film Victoria, and the Australia's Children's Television Foundation (ACTF).

ACER continues to provide input into the series throughout scripting and animation and is in the process of developing resources for educators, which will support their work within classrooms.

Series one has been loved by children across Australia. Dominating the audience share for five to nine year olds in its time slots. It has reached into remote Indigenous communities through six language versions, with more Indigenous languages to follow in the second series.

The evaluation funded by Dusseldorp Foundation is nearing completion and should be available soon, we look forward to sharing this work in 2019.





STEM VIDEO GAME CHALLENGE 2018

Winners of this year's STEM Video Game Challenge were presented with their awards at a ceremony at PAX (Penny Arcade Expo) on the 27 October 2018. The PAX event itself was a great success with the stand being busy from opening to close each day across the weekend.

There was some significant growth in the number of students engaged in the competition in 2018 with whole classes submitting games in some cases.

The awards and panel discussion were a terrific success, hosted by Rae Johnston, Editor of *Junkee* and host of *That Startup Show* alongside Benjamin Law. It was attended by approximately 200 people. The students all spoke wonderfully and were a credit to their schools and ACER.

The panel discussion focussed on the merits of the 'Challenge' as a learning tool, and if girls and boys develop games differently. This topic was generated from the great outcome this year, that of the six categories, 3 were won by girls and 3 were won by boys.

Watch this video from the ABC program *Behind the News* that follows the journey of Anastasia, Paige, Ava and Lucy as they travel to Melbourne to receive their award and enjoy the fun of PAX <http://www.abc.net.au/btn/story/s4919920.htm>



The inaugural STEM Video Game Challenge Arcade at Scienceworks is open until 21 December 2018. We encourage everyone to go and check out our 2018 winning games for themselves.

The STEM Video Game Challenge was also listed by Victorian Chief Scientist, Dr Amanda Caples on her newly released STEM Ecosystem map for Victorian teachers.

A big thanks to all the ACER staff, family and friends that assisted in the running of the 2018 STEM Challenge. Your support in judging games, volunteering on the stand and general assistance really makes all the difference and allows us to run a successful event year on year.

Thanks also to our 2018 challenge sponsors and supporters.

MATHEMATICS ANXIETY & ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY (MAES)

Early in 2018 the ACER Foundation Board approved the establishment of a new project to our suite of Foundation initiatives. MAES builds on previous and current research on mathematics anxiety and is an initiative designed to take a multidisciplinary approach to improving mathematics teaching and learning in the early years and beyond.

Research suggests that early mathematics skills are more predictive of later success at school than literacy, socioemotional and attention-related skills. Therefore, it is critical that every child's environment provides the opportunities to positively engage with mathematics and develop these important mathematics skills. However, research also shows that primary teachers often report high levels of mathematics anxiety that can impact negatively on teaching and student learning. Furthermore, early childhood educators are often unaware of the importance of early mathematics skills and anxious at the prospect of having to develop these skills in children. This pattern of negativity towards mathematics is often also found in the home with parents.

Building on ACER's current work addressing mathematics anxiety in practising primary teachers (supported by the Sidney Myer Fund) and previous work with pre-service primary teachers (in the Science of Learning Research Centre), the proposed project would expand our focus to address engagement with mathematics in the early years.

Project Director Dr Sarah Buckley is leading a talented team of researchers working hard to remove the barriers to engagement (e.g. mathematics anxiety) using a range of preventative, educational and psychological principles.



EVALUATION OF THE KIMBERLEY EDUCATION EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

ACER completed its work with the evaluation of the Wunan Foundation's Kimberley Education Excellence Program (KEEP), which has operated in NSW since 2011. The evaluation is a partnership between the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) and Social Compass. The focus of the evaluation was on the boarding school program for students from the East Kimberley attending Mercy College and Parade College in Melbourne.

You can access the final report from the ACER Foundation website.

WHAT'S OUR NEXT BIG IDEA?

We are keen to hear from anyone who has a brilliant idea for a new initiative to address educational disadvantage in the community, particularly in the 'Early Years'. We are looking for another ambitious project that addresses a significant need that the ACER Foundation could champion.

If you have an idea please come and have a chat with Lisa, or email lisa.norris@acer.org