

MEDIA RELEASE

School improvement needs ‘no excuses’ approach

ACER Research Conference 2012

24 August 2012: Schools that make significant improvements in student achievement invariably are led by people who believe in the possibility of high performance regardless of a school’s circumstances or students’ socioeconomic backgrounds, according to the chief executive of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), Professor Geoff Masters.

In his opening keynote address to the 17th annual ACER Research Conference in Sydney on Monday, Professor Masters will tell more than 1200 delegates that school leadership teams are in powerful positions to influence the quality of classroom teaching and learning.

“Effective leaders are clear about what kinds of changes they wish to see and what it will take to bring about that improvement, and work to create a culture of high expectations,” Professor Masters said, speaking ahead of the conference.

“These leaders adopt a ‘no excuses’ policy and drive a strong and explicit agenda to improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. They also surround themselves with colleagues who share their commitment to improvement,” Professor Masters said.

Professor Masters will tell delegates that school improvement depends on a commitment and belief that performance can be further improved; a clear understanding of what improvement would look like; a way of establishing current levels of performance as starting points for action; a familiarity with evidence-based, differentiated improvement strategies; and ongoing processes for monitoring progress and evaluating improvement efforts.

“These are the characteristics of schools that are really punching above their weight: that are achieving excellent results for students, that are promoting high quality teaching, high quality leadership, and high quality practices and processes within the school,” Professor Masters said.

Professor Masters believes that system-level leadership is equally important for continual improvement.

“Improvements in systems’ practices and processes depend on a belief that, no matter how well a school system is performing, it can always do a better job of supporting and promoting quality teaching and learning,” Professor Masters said.

“However, using appropriate strategies is as important to system improvement as it is to student learning, the professional development of teachers and school improvement. Research into the world’s most improved school systems shows that the most effective forms of action to improve systems with low levels of student achievement are quite different from those needed to further improve schools with high levels of student achievement.”

The ACER Research Conference 2012, on the theme *School Improvement: What does the research tell us about effective strategies?*, takes place in Sydney from 26 to 28 August.

Further information is available from www.acer.edu.au/research-conference

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