

MEDIA RELEASE

Personalising learning for school improvement

ACER Research Conference 2012

27 August 2012: School improvement can be supported through a clinical approach in which teachers ‘diagnose’ individual student learning and provide appropriate ‘prescriptions’ for improvement, Professor Stephen Dinham will tell delegates to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) annual conference today.

More than 1200 teachers, policymakers and researchers are gathered in Sydney today for the 17th annual ACER Research Conference. Addressing the theme *School Improvement: What does the research tell us about effective strategies?* the conference covers not only what schools can do to improve outcomes for students but also how they can do it most effectively.

The conference features four keynote addresses and 17 concurrent sessions. A number of these sessions will address school improvement in terms of customised or personalised learning.

In his address to the conference, Professor Dinham from the University of Melbourne will explain why educators need to take a clinical approach to teacher pre-service education, and why they need to ensure school leaders have a thorough grounding in instructional leadership for clinical teaching.

“Teachers have been told for decades that they need to cater for individual student differences and to ‘personalise’ learning, yet generally, have not been shown or taught how to do this,” Professor Dinham said, speaking ahead of the conference.

ACER’s Dr Michael Timms will discuss a possible solution to this issue tomorrow, when he presents research on how computer technology can assist teachers in personalising learning for every student. Dr Timms will report on the development and trialling of simulation-based science assessments that monitor student learning against established instructional goals and produce informative reports to both the learner and teacher.

“Computer-based assessments can help teachers to provide differentiated instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners,” Dr Timms said.

Also at the conference, Professor Helen Timperley from the University of Auckland will present a model of inquiry that can be used to personalise learning for improved individual student outcomes, and can be used for whole-school improvement. In her address, Professor Timperley will show why school improvement depends on building the professional capability of all those involved in the education system at all levels so that all, from policy makers to students, understand the part they need to play in the improvement effort.

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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