

MEDIA RELEASE

School improvement driven by culture and collaboration

ACER Research Conference 2012

27 August 2012: When responsibility for professional development and school improvement lies with schools and school leaders, the building block of the school system is no longer a free-standing school but a cluster of schools in partnership, a conference in Sydney will today hear.

Cambridge University academic Professor David Hargreaves will this afternoon explain to delegates to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) annual conference how such clusters are pursuing school improvement in England.

The 17th annual ACER Research Conference addresses the theme *School Improvement: What does the research tell us about effective strategies?*, and features four keynote addresses and 17 concurrent sessions. A number of these sessions address the importance of a shared learning culture and collaborative approaches to school improvement.

“For many schools the task of establishing and maintaining deep partnerships and strategic alliances with other schools is proving to be a major challenge,” Professor Hargreaves said, speaking ahead of the conference.

“Some of the prerequisites of a self-improving school system are being established, but other features of the education service are inhibiting this project,” he said.

Professor Hargreaves said the shift of responsibility for professional development and school improvement is a profound change for the teaching profession, for local education authorities, for inspection systems and for university schools of education and research centres.

The role of strong school–community engagement in school improvement and the way such engagement benefits students and teachers and the wider community will be discussed in a session co-presented by Dr Michele Lonsdale, Ms Sharon Clerke and Dr Michelle Anderson from ACER. Together, they will present research evidence and practical tips for developing strong and productive school–community partnerships that ultimately support better outcomes for students.

One such example of successful collaboration, to be presented by Professor Brian Caldwell and Dr Tanya Vaughan from Educational Transformations, is the powerful impact of an arts program on student wellbeing and on achievement in other areas of the curriculum – including a gain in achievement in reading of approximately one year. Professor Caldwell and Dr Vaughan will also identify the social and economic consequences of sidelining the arts.

Also at the conference, Mr Brian Giles-Browne from Principals Australia Institute ‘Dare to Lead’ and Ms Gina Milgate from ACER will share parent and carer community voices in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in school communities.

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

*****ENDS*****

Media enquiries:

Megan Robinson, ACER Corporate Communications

p: (03) 9277 5582

m: 0419 340 058

e: communications@acer.edu.au