

MEDIA RELEASE

NAPLAN results show importance of early learning, says ACER

09 September 2011: This year's NAPLAN results highlight the importance of providing all children with good early learning opportunities, according to Professor Geoff Masters, Chief Executive of the Australian Council for Educational Research.

“The greatest gains in literacy and numeracy levels between 2008 and 2011 in Australia occurred among Year 3 children in Queensland, following the introduction of a Prep year in that state,” Professor Masters said.

“Standout improvements also were made in the performances of Year 7 and Year 9 students in Western Australia over this period, suggesting that the introduction of Prep in that state had an impact into the secondary years.”

Unlike West Australian Year 7 and Year 9 students in 2008, the 2011 cohorts had the benefit of the additional Prep year.

One of the most effective strategies for closing gaps in school achievement was to provide strong foundations in the pre-school years, according to Professor Masters.

“NAPLAN shows that students in the Northern Territory make good average progress from one school year to the next. The problem is that so many students begin school with relatively low levels of English literacy and numeracy and, despite their good progress at school, never catch up.”

The challenge, Professor Masters said, was to identify children's levels of progress and learning needs as early as possible so that all children could be placed on a trajectory of successful learning.

Professor Masters noted that greater gains in literacy and numeracy over the period 2008 to 2011 had been made in some states and territories than in others. Where significant improvements had been made, they appeared to be the result of deliberate changes in system policies and arrangements.

Professor Masters is the author of a 2009 report to the Queensland government and a 2011 report to the Northern Territory government on system-wide strategies for improving literacy and numeracy levels in schools.

*****ENDS*****

Media enquiries: Megan Robinson, Corporate Communications

Phone: (03) 9277 5582 Mobile: 0419 340 058 Email: communications@acer.edu.au