MEDIA RELEASE

ACER resource aims to build resilience in dyslexic students

19 October 2011: A new ACER Press resource being launched in Melbourne tomorrow aims to assist students who have dyslexia to develop more effective coping skills and feel a greater sense of well being.

*Success and Dyslexia: Sessions for coping in the upper primary years*, by Melbourne-based academics Dr Nola Firth and Associate Professor Erica Frydenberg, is an evidence-based program that assists students with dyslexia to increase their ability to take control of and cope with the problems that occur in their lives. It is estimated that one in ten students in Australia have dyslexia.

Speaking ahead of the launch, Dr Firth said research has shown that it is the way people cope, rather than the extent of the dyslexia, that has the greatest influence on outcomes.

“Dyslexia is a genetically-based, lifelong condition that is highly resistant to change, even with excellent teaching,” she said. “*Success and Dyslexia* shows students that there are many ways of coping with difficulty that they can choose from, according to their individual need.”

Dr Firth explains that, because dyslexia is not related to intelligence, it can affect students at all levels, including those who are gifted. Research shows it is a major cause of stress and is associated with negative life outcomes such as disruptive behaviour in school, social isolation, school drop-out, juvenile delinquency, unemployment and depression.

However, Dr Firth stresses that many people who have dyslexia have forged successful careers and fulfilling lives. Some well-known examples include actor Tom Cruise, businessmen Richard Branson and Kerry Stokes, Australian sailor and youngest person to circumnavigate the globe, Jessica Watson, and the 2009 Nobel Prize winner in medicine, Carol Greider.

“*Success and Dyslexia* teaches students the strategies used by successful people who have dyslexia,” said Dr Firth.

Delivered in an inclusive model of both whole-class and small group settings, the program concentrates on developing all children’s coping skills, positive thinking and assertiveness before they undertake the challenge of transition to secondary school. It teaches students to think positively by challenging self-defeating thoughts, discovering what they want, and asking for that appropriately.

“Positive thinking, assertiveness, goal setting and problem-solving strategies help students to control their feelings and actions when things are difficult,” said Dr Firth.

Nola Firth is a Research Fellow in the Centre for Adolescent Health at the Royal Children’s Hospital. Erica Frydenberg is an Associate Professor in the University of Melbourne’s Faculty of Education.

The official launch of *Success and Dyslexia: Sessions for coping in the upper primary years* (ACER Press, 2011) will take place at SPELD Victoria on Thursday 20 October at 5:30pm. Print copies can be purchased from the ACER Online Shop or by contacting customer service on 1800 338 402 or via email on sales@acer.edu.au

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