

MEDIA RELEASE**For immediate release 15 August 2011***Teaching and learning oral language skills*

More than one in every five children entering primary school lacks the oral language skills necessary for successful school learning, particularly in literacy and numeracy, according to the author of an ACER Press book being launched in Melbourne on Thursday.

Teaching Oral Language: Building a firm foundation using ICPALER in the early primary years by Dr John Munro, Head of Studies in Exceptional Learning and Gifted Education in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne, provides schools and teachers with an explicit guide for teaching and monitoring oral language development.

“Many teachers hear their students talking and assume that they have the language competence for academic learning,” said Dr Munro. “This is not always the case. Teachers need the knowledge and tools required to analyse the quality of students’ oral language and to teach it.”

In his book, Dr Munro identifies four key ways of assessing the quality of a student’s ability to use language: the ideas they can talk about and understand; how they use language rules; how well they use language to communicate with others; and how they use language to think and learn. *Teaching Oral Language* shows teachers and schools how each aspect operates, how to recognise it in children and how to teach it in order to enhance student outcomes overall.

Dr Munro’s approach is a foundation of the successful literacy program that has significantly lifted literacy outcomes in Northern Metropolitan Region of DEECD over the last four years. Further, a study conducted by the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria in 2010-11 revealed that Prep students whose teachers taught the oral language program showed an annual improvement in reading comprehension that exceeded by more than one year the growth made by a matched group whose teachers were not trained to use the program. Indigenous students and students from low socio-economic contexts made the greatest gains.

Dr Munro stresses that international research shows oral language ability distinguishes between students who will be more successful and those who will be less successful.

“Students learn by listening and speaking and by thinking in words and sentences,” said Dr Munro. “Their oral language determines how they develop social skills and friendships, how they deal with problems, their self confidence and ultimately who they are.”

“Teaching oral language knowledge in a systematic and regular way addresses one of the most critical foundations for successful learning and for dealing with educational disadvantage,” he said. “In the past it has often not been recognised practically as a major cause of underachievement in learning. However we now know that, if it is not targeted through explicit and on-going teaching, it is likely to restrict severely successful learning at school.”

The official launch of *Teaching Oral Language: Building a firm foundation using ICPALER in the early primary years* (ACER Press, 2011) takes place at the University of Melbourne on Thursday 18 August 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

*****ENDS*****

Media enquiries: Louise Reynolds 03 9277 5582 or 0419 340 058 reynolds@acer.edu.au