

MEDIA RELEASE

Understanding what fosters or hinders social and emotional skill development

Research Conference 2019

2 August 2019: Trials of a new measure of social and emotional skills from the OECD suggest countries will soon have access to internationally comparable information on the wellbeing of their students, delegates to *Research Conference 2019* in Melbourne will hear on Monday.

Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) Deputy CEO (Research), Dr Sue Thomson, will present insights from field trials for the OECD Study on Social and Emotional Skills involving 14 000 students aged 10- and 15-years in selected cities in Canada, China, Colombia, Finland, Italy, Portugal, Russia, South Korea, Turkey and the United States.

Speaking ahead of the conference, Dr Thomson said, “There is an increasing recognition by policymakers that social and emotional skills are vital for modern life.”

“Children who have strongly developed skills in self-control or perseverance, for example, are more likely to finish reading a book, or finish their homework, which in turn contributes to further enhanced cognitive skills.”

“The OECD Study on Social and Emotional Skills will provide a huge amount of evidence to establish a baseline for social and emotional wellbeing for the participating locations and will provide insights on how to support students to develop these important skills.”

According to Dr Thomson, students participating in the study self-report against 19 specific social and emotional skills, and provide contextual information about their family and peer relations, school life and wellbeing, attitudes and aspirations. Parents and a teacher who knows the student well respond to the same questions, thereby allowing the study to compare across home and school domains, and paint a picture of skill development across childhood and adolescence.

“It is hoped that results from the main study will provide information about the conditions or practices that foster or hinder the development of these critical skills,” Dr Thomson said.

Dr Thomson is one of 29 speakers at ACER’s annual conference, which this year addresses the theme, ‘Preparing students for life in the 21st Century: Identifying, developing and assessing what matters’. Other speakers include:

- Dr Esther Care, Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution
- David Leng, Professional Adviser, Scottish Government Learning Directorate
- Dr Michele Bruniges AM, Secretary, Australian Department of Education and Training
- Professor Neil Selwyn, Monash University Faculty of Education
- Robert Randall, former CEO of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)
- Professor Barry McGaw AO, University of Melbourne
- Professor Geoff Masters AO, Chief Executive, ACER

Research Conference 2019 takes place at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre from Sunday 4 to Monday 5 August.

Further information is available from www.acer.org/au/research-conference

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Media enquiries: 03 9277 5582 or 0419 340 058 communications@acer.org

Australian Council for Educational Research

19 Prospect Hill Road (Private Bag 55) Camberwell VIC 3124 Australia
t +61 3 9277 5555 f +61 3 9277 5500 www.acer.org
ACN 004 398 145 ABN 19 004 398 145