

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Effective mathematics education strategies for students with Down syndrome

**2 December 2014:** Research in Victoria and the ACT has found that effective support for students with Down syndrome in learning mathematics in inclusive classrooms addresses the skilful adjustment of the mathematics program. The research also reveals the critical importance of maintaining a clear mathematical focus so that teaching teams can adapt their approach to meet the individual needs of students with Down syndrome.

Project director Ray Peck, a Senior Research Fellow at the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), said the research indicates that the classroom layout and a team-based approach by the classroom teacher, learning support teachers and learning support assistants are vital in supporting students with Down syndrome while enabling them to remain integral members of their class.

Dr Rhonda Faragher from Australian Catholic University said the clear mathematics focus of teachers and teaching teams enables teachers and students in inclusive classrooms to understand the phases of mathematics lessons and ensures all students, including those with Down syndrome, learn key concepts.

“When teachers and students with Down syndrome have a clear and shared understanding of the focus of a maths lesson and its particular phases, students are better able to understand the particular aspects of the lesson, and teachers are able to provide seamless opportunities for whole-class learning, individual practice and group consolidation,” Dr Faragher said.

“Teachers and teaching teams also need a clear understanding of the learning and mathematical development of students with Down syndrome so that they can make decisions about when to persist, when to move on and when to make further adjustments. They also need skills in effectively developing student behaviours that promote mathematics learning.”

One outcome of the research will be an assessment instrument that can be used by classroom teachers to understand the learning and mathematical development of students with Down syndrome.

The research collaboration, led by ACER through the ACER Foundation with Dr Faragher and Professor Doug Clarke at Australian Catholic University and Associate Professor Barbara Clarke at Monash University, is funded by Gandel Philanthropy, one of Australia’s largest independent family philanthropic funds, with the support of Down Syndrome Australia.

The project team will be sharing interim findings at an event for research participants and stakeholders at Mackellar Primary School, 29-35 Goldsmith Avenue, Delahey, Melbourne (Melways Map 13, F6), at 4pm on 2 December. To attend, media are invited to advise Louise Hamilton, 03 9953 3836 or [louise.hamilton@acu.edu.au](mailto:louise.hamilton@acu.edu.au)

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