

Performance & Development Culture:
The High Performing Schools Program

Welcome

This special edition of *Research eLert* focuses on research that supports the Performance and Development Culture accreditation initiative in the *Blueprint for Government Schools* <<http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/innovations/pandd/>>. This is an important initiative aiming at accreditation for all Victorian government schools by the end of 2008.

The lead article describes an empirical study in seven Victorian secondary schools of the school characteristics that have the greatest impact on student engagement, which is a significant factor in student performance. Its purpose is to provide advice to schools on systemic ways to modify teacher behaviour so as to achieve reliable high performance.

The findings highlight the key role of mutual respect between teachers and students, the need for the school to focus on the development of the whole child and for the school to have high and clear expectations of teachers' performance. The study is by Mr John Corrigan and was commissioned by the Office of Learning and Teaching.

This edition also includes a range of related research papers and reports that cover the key areas of student engagement, teacher effectiveness and parent and community involvement in schools.

Your views and contributions are most welcome and I encourage you to provide feedback via the edumail system at: <research@edumail.vic.gov.au>.

Dr Dahle Suggett
Deputy Secretary
Office of Learning and Teaching

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An Interview with John Corrigan

John, can you tell us what you set out to investigate in the *High Performing Schools Program*?

John: We set out to investigate what characteristics of a school have the greatest impact on student engagement levels, parental satisfaction levels and levels of both teacher effectiveness and satisfaction. The aim was to identify these characteristics and then to develop systematic ways to modify them to achieve reliable, high performance.



The program has a number of components to it; can you outline these briefly?

John: The Value Framework, was developed from a national scale poll of students, parents and teachers and is at the core of the research phase. It includes the use of surveys to stimulate engagement and the beginning of cultural change. The survey process involves teachers interviewing parents, parents interviewing students and the leadership interviewing teachers. The aim is to ensure that each group hears each others' stories as a way of validating and personalising the data. The quantification of the levels of school engagement, parent satisfaction and teacher effectiveness and satisfaction are also included in this part of the process. The research indicates that to be most effective, like other professionals, teachers need three things:

- interesting, challenging and meaningful work;
- a clear sense of purpose (focus on the whole, unique child); and
- clarity on what behaviours to express.

The first of these can be provided by an effective teacher performance and development system and it is the implementation of this that largely makes up the second part of the program.

What have been some of the responses expressed by school staff participating in the program?

John: The key messages expressed by school staff participating in this program have been:

- the interactions between parents and teachers alone have made the program worthwhile (and parents have echoed this);
- teachers have been surprised at how much they have enjoyed the interaction with parents, beyond their expectation;
- some apprehension – excitement that it is stimulating content but apprehension over its implications; and
- real enjoyment in having a non-threatening forum to discuss performance and how to improve it.

What are the findings and conclusions of the program?

John: The relevant conclusions are derived from survey results undertaken by school staff, students and parents. The conclusions include:

- There is the opportunity to raise the effectiveness and performance of a school's teaching staff.
- The source of current underperformance, low student engagement levels, is systemic in nature.
- To maximize student engagement teachers need the skills to engage students and to convert engagement into learning outcomes.
- Systemic issues at the level of the classroom can largely be overcome at the school level and a performance culture developed.

The teacher surveys add to this understanding by showing what teachers need to be effective:

- The school needs to provide a clear focus on the growth and development of the whole, unique child.
- The school needs to make clear that the behaviour of teachers and others must be based on mutual respect.
- The school needs to provide interesting and challenging work for teachers and set high expectations.

The full interview and further information on the program can be located at <http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/publ/research/publ/JohnCorriganInterview.pdf>

Related Research

Teacher Effectiveness

Committed teachers, passionate teachers: the dimension of passion associated with teacher commitment and engagement

This paper provides a thoughtful guide for teaching professionals as they balance their personal and professional commitment to teaching. Crosswell and Elliott suggest that the changes inherent in teaching today have created an environment where those who wish to succeed need to become involved in an increased rate of personal adaptation and professional development. This paper focuses on an Australian study that sought to map the collective mind of a group of teachers and characterise their commitment to teaching. The study reveals that teachers are moving beyond conceptualisations of teacher commitment based on external referents (such as students) and towards a more complex and sophisticated notion of passion, ideology and values. Focusing on teacher commitment as a passion, the paper suggests that it is a professional necessity for teachers to be emotionally committed to their work and this emotional connection may negate the risk of teacher burn out in an increasingly intensified work environment.

Leanne Crosswell and A/Prof Bob Elliott, paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Annual Conference, Melbourne, 29 November to 3 December 2004

<http://www.aare.edu.au/04pap/cro04237.pdf>

Inside the black box of high-performing high-poverty schools

In this research paper from the United States, the researchers investigate whether high-performing, high-poverty schools share common characteristics or practices that differ from those found in lower-performing schools. In comparison to low-performing schools, the schools that participated fared significantly higher in a range of areas. The success of the high-performing schools is linked to a number of factors including review and alignment of curriculum; tailored individual assessment and instruction; a caring, nurturing environment of high expectations for students; ongoing professional development for staff that was connected to student achievement data; and efficient use of resources and instructional time. The findings of this research offer great insight for teachers from high-poverty schools, as well as educators generally.

Patricia J. Kannapel and Stephen K. Clements, with the support of Diana Taylor and Terry Hibpshman, (2005) Inside the black box of high-performing high-poverty schools: a report from the Pritchard Committee for Academic Excellence

<http://www.pritchardcommittee.org/Ford%20Study/FordReportJE.pdf>

Linking teacher evaluation and student learning

What is the 'transformative power of an effective teacher'? Most of us intuitively know this through our own positive learning experiences. In this publication, authors, Tucker and Stronge, propose that highly effective teachers have an 'enriching effect' on students' learning, lifelong education and career aspirations. They review recent US research on a range of personal and professional teacher qualities associated with higher levels of student achievement and ask the question, 'How do we support and cultivate effective teachers for all our schools and all our children?' Accordingly, the advantages and disadvantages of four established models of teacher evaluation are reviewed.

Selected chapters of this publication and an accompanying Study Guide are accessible on the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) website.

Pamela D. Tucker and James H. Stronge, (2005) Linking teacher evaluation and student learning, ASCD

<http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/template.book/menuitem.b71d101a2f7c208cdeb3ffdb62108a0c/?bookMgmtId=e963da8f67ef2010VgnVCM1000003d01a8c0RCRD>

Student Engagement

Student disengagement from primary schooling: a review of research and practice. A report to the CASS Foundation

Most research on student engagement and retention has focused on the later years and, more recently, on the middle years of schooling, especially those years relevant to early adolescence. What distinguishes this report, commissioned by the CASS Foundation*, is its focus on primary school student engagement and disengagement. The report explores the multi-dimensional concept of 'engagement', provides a comprehensive summary of recent research relating to engagement, discusses relevant Australian and international educational programs and practices and, finally, makes recommendations for future research and programs.

The recommendations are well-considered, especially the recommendation for more longitudinal research that begins at early primary level and tracks students through upper primary and later years, charting changes in student engagement and analysing the effect of interventions over time.

Sally Murray, Jane Mitchell, Trevor Gale et al., (2004) Student disengagement from primary schooling: a review of research and practice. A report to the CASS Foundation, Centre for Childhood Studies, Faculty of Education, Monash University

<http://www.cassfoundation.org/reports.htm>

*The CASS Foundation is a private philanthropic Foundation which makes grants to support research and development in the fields of education, science and medicine in Australia.

<http://www.cassfoundation.org/>

Adolescent engagement with problem solving tasks: the role of coping style, self-efficacy, and emotions

Coping is an essential tool in managing the transition from childhood to adolescence. This piece of research examines the coping styles that students bring to problems, their beliefs about their competencies and their emotions during problem solving. The participants were 166 Year 7 to 10 students from co-educational government schools in Melbourne. The findings suggest that students tend to use adaptive coping strategies. The use of adaptive coping strategies is positively associated with an increased sense of one's own capabilities and positive emotional experiences.

Michelle Andrews, Mary Ainley and Erica Frydenberg, paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Annual Conference, Melbourne, 29 November to 3 December 2004

<http://www.aare.edu.au/04pap/and04761.pdf>

Relationships matter: linking teacher support to student engagement and achievement

What are the links between teacher support, student engagement and academic success? This study carried out in the US explores these links and provides information on various optimal and risk thresholds for students in the early and middle years of schooling. The study draws on an adapted version of the *Self-System Process Model*, which tests the linkages of a student's experiences of support, levels of engagement and academic achievements. Key findings include the importance of teacher support to student engagement and the need to create educational environments that are individualised.

Adena Klein and James Connell, (2004) Relationships matter: linking teacher support to student engagement and achievement, Journal of School Health 74:7, 262-273

<http://www.allaboutkids.umn.edu>

For further information contact the Office of Learning and Teaching at the following email address <research@edumail.vic.gov.au>.

'You have to view the child as a person and not a commodity': schools reinventing themselves for young adolescents

This paper looks at the ways in which a number of South Australian government schools are reinventing themselves as more learner-centred organisations which take seriously issues such as alienation, disengagement and educational disadvantage. It is argued that unless schools engage in 'capacity building' in the form of teacher development programs, very little pedagogical change will occur in the classroom. McInerney and Smyth focus on issues confronting teachers and conclude that the task of addressing educational disadvantage cannot be achieved solely through school reform in the middle years but requires a greater commitment by state and Commonwealth governments to support the work of schools as they seek to establish more socially just outcomes for young adolescents.

Peter McInerney and John Smyth, paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Annual Conference, Melbourne, 29 November to 3 December 2004

<http://www.aare.edu.au/04pap/mci04044.pdf>

Parent and Community Involvement

The communication requirements of democratic schools: parent-teacher perspectives on their relationships

Research on parent-teacher relationships often casts parents in the restricted role of school visitors, interested only in their own children's achievements. In this paper, Debra Miretzky, National Society for the Study of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago, argues that parent-teacher communication has a broader purpose, that of '...creating and sustaining democratic communities that support school improvement'.

In a participative inquiry study, incorporating interviews and focus groups, fourth and eighth grade teachers and parents from three Chicago schools took the opportunity to decide on issues for exploration and discussion. Both groups believed that the adoption of values identified as important including investment in the school community, direct and honest communication, trust, respect and mutual goals, resulted in better teacher-parent collaboration and school improvement.

Debra Miretzky, (2004) The communication requirements of democratic schools: parent-teacher perspectives on their relationships, Teacher College Record, 106:4, 814-851

For further information contact the Office of Learning and Teaching at the following email address <research@edumail.vic.gov.au>.

The challenges and tensions in reconstructing teacher-parent relations in the context of school reform: a case study

Any organisation that opens itself to public scrutiny and comment steps into the unknown. You might just find out things you didn't expect, or want to hear. So what happens when a school does this to see how it can improve student learning via improved teacher-parent relationships? This report looks at a school in the US that did just this. Using a parent survey and in-depth interviews it explored 'the conception of the schools obligations towards families in connection with responsibilities that parents have toward their children's learning'. This case study is one school's story of how it responded to the challenges and possibilities of introducing change across a school community; from school process to parent-teacher stereotypes.

Maria Teresa et al., (2001) The challenges and tensions in reconstructing teacher-parent relations in the context of school reform: a case study, Teachers and Training: theory and practice, Vol. 7, No. 3

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Further Reading

Teachers make a difference – what is the research evidence?

John Hattie

http://www.acer.edu.au/workshops/documents/Teachers_Make_a_Difference_Hattie.pdf

Teachers matter: attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers

OECD 2005

http://www.oecd.org/document/52/0,2340,en_2649_201185_34991988_1_1_1_1,00.html

Summary of chapters only

VICCSO Research Project Summary Report: School Councils in Victoria 2004

<http://www.viccsso.org.au>

High Performing Schools Program

Further information about the work of John Corrigan, including information on his forthcoming book, can be accessed from the Group 8 Education website:

<http://www.gr8education.com/>

Reflections and Action

Below are some questions to assist in reflective practice and to explore future actions.

- The High Performing Schools Program focuses on key values. How can my school use this information to reflect on our school's values and beliefs?
- Which research papers would be worth tabling for professional reading in my workplace? How will I facilitate this?
- What are we currently doing that supports current pedagogical research? Do we have strategies in place that would be worth sharing via the *Research eLert*?
- What new knowledge have I gained in the area of pedagogy? How can this learning be used to inform and support school/organisational transformation?
- What research information would I like to share with others? How will I do this?

Contributions and Feedback

- Do you have or know of a research paper that you think would be worth considering for inclusion in *Research eLert*?
- Are you currently undertaking education research that you would like to share with our readers?
- Is there a particular topic or theme you would like *Research eLert* to cover?
- Do you have information on new publications, upcoming events or interesting websites that would be of interest to education researchers and practitioners?
- Would you like to provide feedback – including suggestions to improve *Research eLert*?

If you answered yes to any of the above – then we'd love to hear from you.

Please forward your information, suggestions or comments to research@edumail.vic.gov.au.

Can you help?

Research eLert No. 2 included information about a DEMOS paper titled *About Learning: Report of the Learning Working Group*. Huw Derwentsmith, Principal of Myrtleford Primary School has found the paper to be 'exceptional' and is using it to generate teacher discussion and reflection.

Huw is keen to make contact with other schools that are using the paper to engage in similar discussions.

Huw can be contacted by email at derwentsmith.huw.h@edumail.vic.gov.au or by phone on 03 57 521 174.

The DEMOS paper can be accessed at:

<http://www.demos.co.uk/catalogue/aboutlearning/>

Next edition

The next edition of *Research eLert* will be available in late Term 3, 2005. It will feature a paper titled *Research@Work*. The growing focus on the importance of evidence-based policy as the most effective way to leverage innovation and reform means that it is vital that Departmental staff at all levels of the organisation engage with quality research in a variety of ways. This paper supports the integration of a research-based approach into Departmental planning.

We are keen to include information on how schools and other learning organisations are using research to inform and guide their practice and would like to include some of this work in the next *Research eLert*. If you are interested, please contact the Research and Development Branch at [<research@edumail.vic.gov.au>](mailto:research@edumail.vic.gov.au).

Upcoming Events

Adult Learners' Week 10th Anniversary

1-8 September 2005

Events to be held in all Australian States and Territories

<http://www.adultlearnersweek.org>

Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA): Biennial Conference: Blurring the Boundaries: Sharpening the Focus

21-23 September 2005

Gold Coast, Queensland

<http://www.idp.com/aiec2005/>

Australian International Education Conference

11-14 October 2005

Sunshine Coast, Queensland

<http://www.acsainc.com.au/article.php?id=30>

Centre for the Economics of Education and Training, Monash University (CEET) 9th National Conference

28 October 2005

Ascot House, Melbourne

<http://www.education.monash.edu.au/centres/ceet/conferences/>

**Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Conference: Creative Dissent:
Constructive Solutions**

27 November-1 December 2005

Parramatta, New South Wales

<http://www.aare.edu.au/conf2005/index.htm>

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