

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## *National assessment data meaningful for schools*

National assessment programs are useful for improving education, University of Western Australia Dean of Education Professor Helen Wildy will tell the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) annual conference on Tuesday.

Professor Wildy has drawn on the experience of several projects conducted in WA over the last 10 years that have aimed to improve the skills of primary and secondary school teachers and leaders to interpret the results of student assessment in meaningful ways.

She found that where skilled teachers and school leaders have used comparable information on student achievement, such as that from the local WALNA and now the NAPLAN programs, in a meaningful way, they can improve teaching, learning and school management.

“In our work we provide each school with WALNA and NAPLAN data in such a way that allows teachers and principals to examine its long-term performance. This powerful overview of school performance allowed school leaders to address weaknesses highlighted by the results, and to see their achievements in context,” Professor Wildy said.

Teachers and leaders use the student assessment results to compare the performance of year groups over time; to identify the impact of interventions on subgroups, such as low-performing students and on individuals; to question the effects of organisational and cultural changes; and to link what they learn to school goals and strategies, Professor Wildy said.

“Schools that have performed relatively well are digging into the results to find areas for further development. Schools that are not performing well are less defensive. Instead they are using the results to improve,” Professor Wildy said.

Professor Wildy’s paper draws on the experience of projects including the Data Club and the NuLit and NAPNuLit projects, which provided workshops to enable teachers and school leaders to interpret results from the WA Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (WALNA), the Monitoring Standards in Education at Year 9 program (MSE9), and the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN).

The ACER Research Conference 2009, on the theme *Assessment and Student Learning: Collecting, interpreting and using data to inform learning*, takes place in Perth from 16 to 18 August.

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