

MEDIA RELEASE

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Students improve computer skills but gaps in achievement remain

The latest findings of the National Assessment Program- ICT Literacy, conducted for the Australian government by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) reveal mixed results in Australian students' proficiency with computers.

A nationally representative sample of approximately 11 000 students from around 600 schools across Australia completed computer-based assessments in October and November 2008. This was the second administration of the national assessment, which was first carried out in 2005. Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Julia Gillard released a detailed report on the 2008 national assessment on 22 April.

ACER's deputy chief executive and lead author of the report, Dr John Ainley, said the most pleasing result of the 2008 assessment was the considerable improvement made by Year 6 students.

In 2008 57 per cent of Year 6 students reached or exceeded the proficient standard developed with ICT experts as an indication of what students could reasonably be expected to do using ICT. This compared to 49 per cent in 2005.

A slight improvement was made by Year 10 students both in terms of test scores and the percentage of students reaching or exceeding the proficiency standard (66 per cent in 2008 compared to 61 per cent in 2005).

"ICT is part of life in modern society and students who do not develop proficiency in ICT are likely to be limited in their participation in later economic and social life," Dr Ainley said. "In general the results of this assessment indicate that Australian students are doing well in this vital area of their education."

At the other end of the scale, the percentage of students achieving at the lowest proficiency levels remained relatively unchanged from 2005. The report also highlighted a disadvantage for Australia's Indigenous students as well as those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and rural areas. These findings indicate a lack of progress where improvement was most needed.

"On the downside, it would appear that there is a small group of students who are struggling to master ICT skills and this will require attention over time to ensure that these students are not left behind," Dr Ainley said.

ACER conducted the study under the auspices of the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs – MCEECDYA. The full report, National Assessment Program – ICT Literacy Years 6 & 10 is available from www.mceecdya.edu.au

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