

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## *More strategic thinking needed on the use of data in schools*

Although there has been an increase in the amount of information collected from and about Australian schools, this information is not always being used effectively to enhance learning according to a new report released today by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

According to the latest edition of the Australian Education Review, *Using Data to Support Learning in Schools: Students, Teachers, Systems*, better use of research evidence and data are required at all levels of the education system.

The review examines the issues raised by the ACER Research Conference 2005–*Using data to support learning*. It analyses the conference papers in the light of a survey of broader Australian and international literature on using data to support learning.

The review, written by ACER Principal Research Fellow, Dr Gabrielle Matters, with a foreword by assessment expert Dr Randy Bennett of Educational Testing Service of Princeton, New Jersey, highlights how the demand to improve decision making through data has occurred because we are living in an age of accountability in education and a boom in new technology. Bennett argues that governments must ensure that today's students are educated to the highest achievement standards possible.

“This review shows us that practices in collecting and interpreting data often do not reflect what is known from research to be effective, and the increased level of information now available in schools is not always used to maximise student learning,” ACER's chief executive Professor Geoff Masters said.

He said new research is needed to collate and reflect on the existing body of research on how to use student work as a source of data about student achievement.

In addition, an investigation into the attitudes of Australian teachers and policy makers to the concept of assessment *for* learning is required, as is professional development for teachers in “interrogating” student data, especially data supplied to schools by external agencies and assessment data generated at the school level.

Australian Education Review number 49, *Using data to support learning in schools: Students, teachers, systems*, by Gabrielle Matters, is available for download from the ACER website at [www.acer.edu.au](http://www.acer.edu.au). Print copies can be purchased from ACER Press. Contact customer service on (03) 9835 7447 or via email on [sales@acer.edu.au](mailto:sales@acer.edu.au)

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