

Effective teaching of reading makes all the difference

The recent results of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2016 showed a pleasing jump in Australia's progress in Year 4 Reading. In welcoming the report, Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) President, Dennis Yarrington, cautioned that while Australia sits in a band of countries that includes the Netherlands, Germany, Austria and the USA, there is no room for complacency.

Mr Yarrington said that recent years have brought a welcome focus on the effective teaching of reading but there is still much work to be done.

"I would say the 'how to' will prove to be a much better driver of reading achievement than the 'how much'. Testing, collecting data and writing reports are not the means for success if primary teachers do not have the necessary knowledge and skills to teach reading effectively.

"Well before NAPLAN and Year One Check proposals, APPA identified reading as critical to a child's success at school and in life. APPA's *Principals as Literacy Leaders* project used research and studies to identify what's important in teaching reading – oral language, phonics (letter / sound knowledge), fluency, vocabulary, phonological awareness and comprehension.

"It starts with teacher education in universities where all courses in primary teaching must have nationally consistent and comprehensive units focusing on the effective teaching of reading. At a system and school level, there is a responsibility to see that all our teachers have the skills, knowledge and training to teach reading."

Mr Yarrington pointed out that schools are constantly monitoring student reading development and progress.

"Good practice requires that schools monitor student progress and undertake evidence-based interventions and assessments within a comprehensive literacy program.

"There is a practical role for education authorities to help schools implement effective assessment tools and put in place well-resourced intervention programs for students at risk."

APPA is the professional association representing over 7,200 Government, Catholic and Independent primary school principals across Australia.

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