Literacy and Numeracy in Low SES Communities Pilots Projects
Victoria

Family Engagement Forum

23 August 2010

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The Context

- School age children spend 70% of their waking hours (including weekends and holidays) outside of school.

- "the home can be a nurturing place for the achievement of students, or it can be a place of low expectations and lack of encouragement in learning." Hattie 2009

NOT ALL FAMILIES ARE THE SAME

SES

- Socioeconomic status (SES) measures a family's relative position in the social hierarchy. Hattie (2009) reports an overall effect size *d*=.57 and adds that this is "a notable influence of the student's achievement."

- PISA confirms that SES affects student achievement but the degree to which it does so varies by country
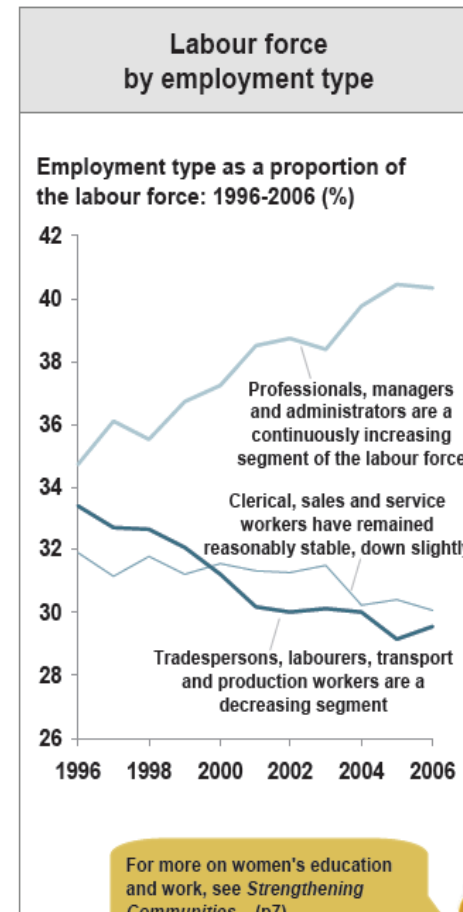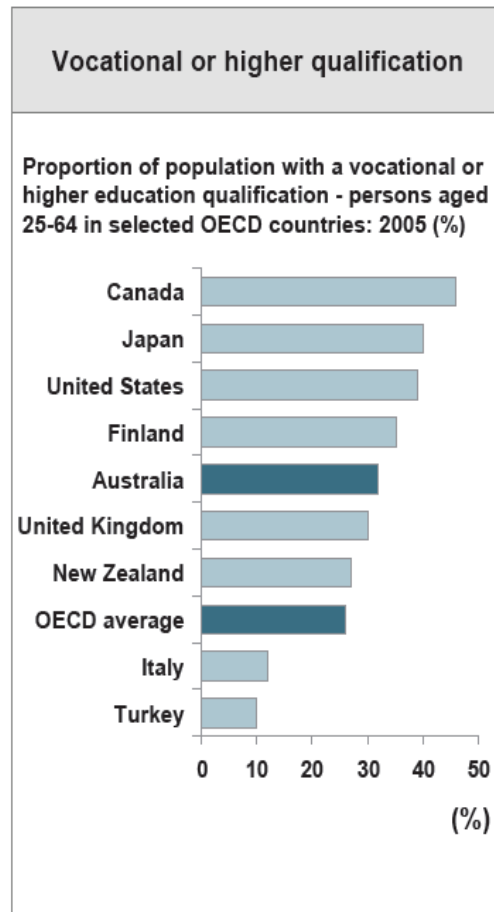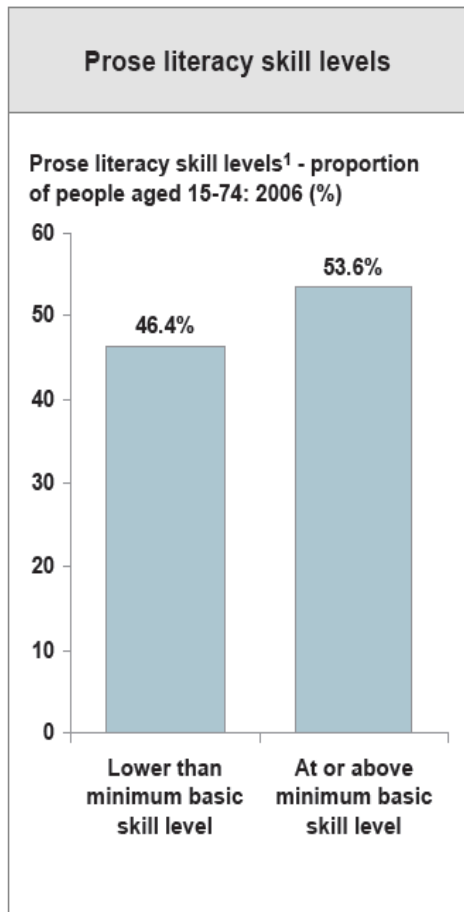
OECD PISA report 1997

- '… it is clear that socio-economic concerns lie at the core of many issues of equity, access and participation in education and training, whether addressing causes or consequences' (p. 131). The report further contends that social, home and educational factors combine to explain educational disadvantage, and that these factors tend to be located in particular spatial and geographical settings (OECD PISA Report p. 67).

Education Policy Analysis OECD 2002

- "In almost all countries there appears to be a clear advantage in attending a school whose students are on average, from more advantaged family backgrounds. On average across OECD countries, this contextual effect is over three times as large as the direct effect associated with individual student background." (OECD Report 2002)

...with millions of Australians vulnerable to a changing labour market

Prose literacy skill levels

Prose literacy skill levels[1] - proportion of people aged 15-74: 2006 (%)

- Lower than minimum basic skill level: 46.4%
- At or above minimum basic skill level: 53.6%

Vocational or higher qualification

Proportion of population with a vocational or higher education qualification - persons aged 25-64 in selected OECD countries: 2005 (%)

- Canada
- Japan
- United States
- Finland
- Australia
- United Kingdom
- New Zealand
- OECD average
- Italy
- Turkey

(%)

Labour force by employment type

Employment type as a proportion of the labour force: 1996-2006 (%)

Professionals, managers and administrators are a continuously increasing segment of the labour force

Clerical, sales and service workers have remained reasonably stable, down slightly

Tradespersons, labourers, transport and production workers are a decreasing segment

For more on women's education and work, see *Strengthening Communities...* (p7)

1. ABS study measures skills relative to "the minimum (skills) required for individuals to meet the complex demands of everyday life and work in the emerging knowledge-based economy"
Source: ABS 4228.0, *Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (2006)*; OECD, *Education at a Glance 2005*; ABS 6105.0, *Australian Labour Market Statistics*

…behind the averages, however, there are wide variations across sectors, socio-economic status and culture

We have high variability in outcomes in reading and mathematical literacy by international standards...

### Range of PISA[1] testing score (Australian students, 2003)

95th Percent
75th Percent
25th Percent
5th Percent
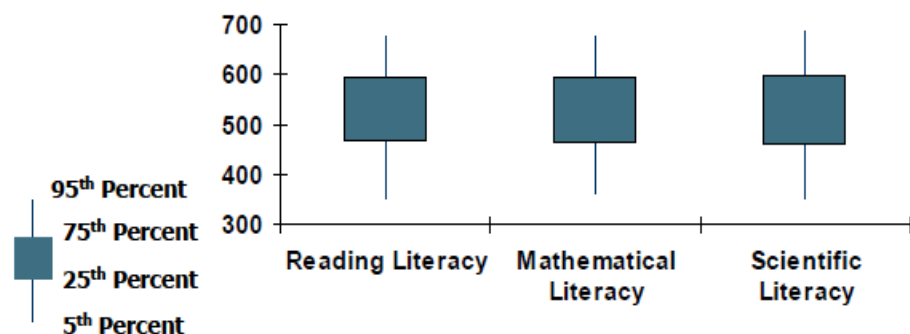
Difference in PISA score between top and bottom SES quartiles
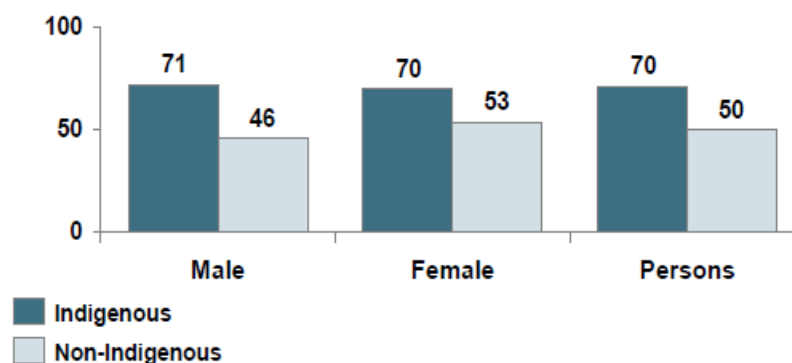

- Australia
- OECD Average
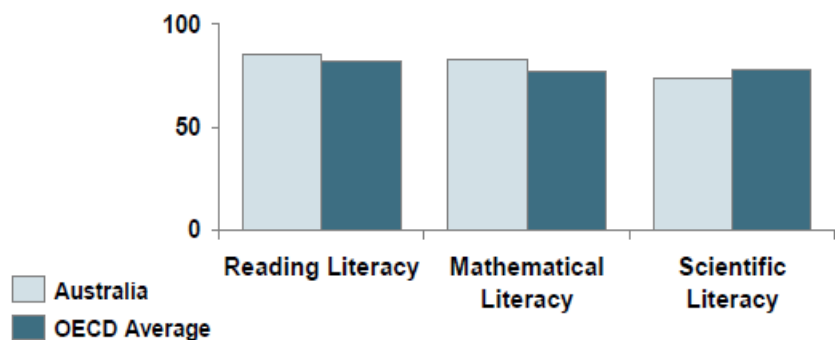
...with significant differences in outcomes across schools, socio-economic status and culture

School income per student from all government funding sources: 1992/2002 ($ per student)

- 1992
- 2002
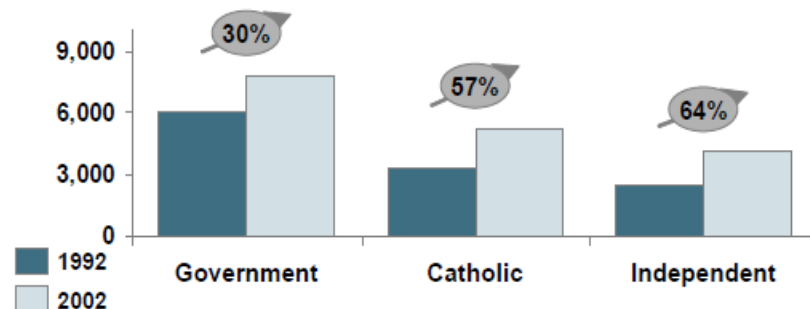
Proportion of population with no non-school qualification – aged 15 to 24 years[2]: 2004-05 (%)

- Indigenous
- Non-Indigenous

1. OECD Programme for International Student Assessment, a global survey of 15-year-old students 2. Includes 23,200 Indigenous people aged 15-24 years (25.2%) who were still at school and 689,400 non-Indigenous people aged 15-24 years (26.2%) who were still at school
Source: Department of Premier and Cabinet, Victoria, *Governments Working Together (2004)*; Productivity Commission, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage 2007*; OECD, *Literacy Skills for the World of Tomorrow – Further Results from PISA 2003*

Social Inclusion / Exclusion

- The recent social changes experienced by developed nations have been accompanied by a growing awareness of the ways in which some people within society are failing to benefit from the changes social and economic conditions and are therefore achieving poorer outcomes

- ➡ public policy initiatives in Australia, UK etc

Social Inclusion/Exclusion

- Social disadvantage arises when children suffer from multiple disadvantages that make it difficult for them to actively participate in society.

- Social inclusion is not, however, just a response to exclusion; it is about making sure that all children and adults are able to participate as valued, respected and contributing members of society.

- Social inclusion extends beyond bringing the 'outsiders' in; instead it is about closing physical, social and economic distances separating people, rather than only about eliminating boundaries or barriers between *us* and *them*.

Disadvantaged & Vulnerable Populations

- Some families make limited use of available services and are regarded as 'hard to reach' families, implying that the problem exists in the families themselves, rather than in the services provided for them.

- There is a growing consensus that, rather than thinking about certain sections of the community as being hard to reach, it is more useful to think of them as being people whom services find difficult to engage.

Disadvantaged & Vulnerable Populations

- This new perspective shifts the burden of responsibility from being totally that of those who do not make use of the services available to those who provide the services

- Instead of marginalised families being seen as a fault for failing to make full use of the services that are available, the services themselves might be held to account for failing to reach out to engage such families effectively.

McWilliam et al, Views of Families

- **Families as consumers** – families are seen as quasi-employers, and the role of the service provider is to keep them satisfied with the service

- **Families as partners** – the service providers and parents make decisions together, and share their complementary expertise openly

McWilliam, McMillen, Sloper and McMillen (1997)

McWilliam et al, Views of Families

- **Families as victims** – families are seen as victims of poverty, ignorance, and circumstance (although they are also blamed for rearing their children poorly)

- **Families as necessary evil** – the goal of the service is the education or care of the child during the day, and families are merely the evening caretakers

McWilliam, McMillen, Sloper and McMillen (1997)

Osher and Osher (2002)

Provider – Driven Systems

- Assumption: Service providers and agencies are expected to fix problems

- Family/professionals roles: Professionals are viewed as experts with the knowledge and skills to deliver interventions competently, and families defer to the expertise of professionals

- Focus on assessment: 'Treatment' needs are assessed and goals set according to the problems presented.
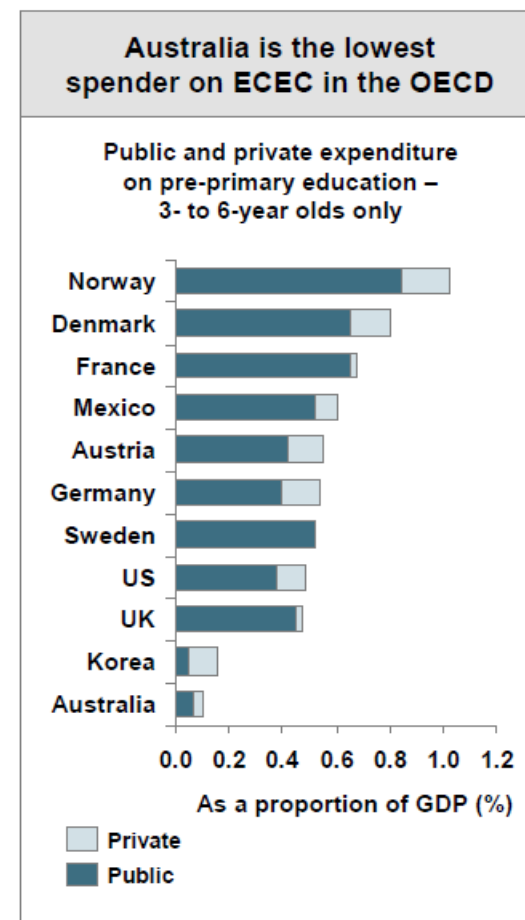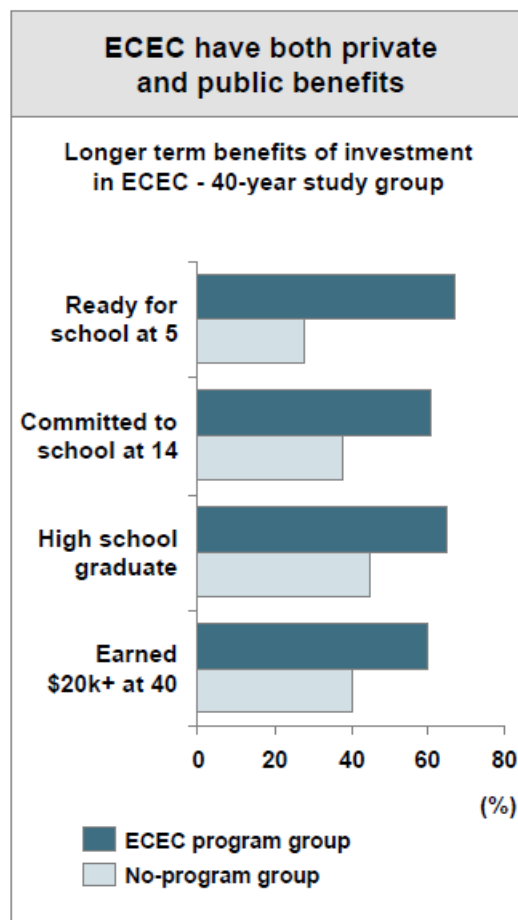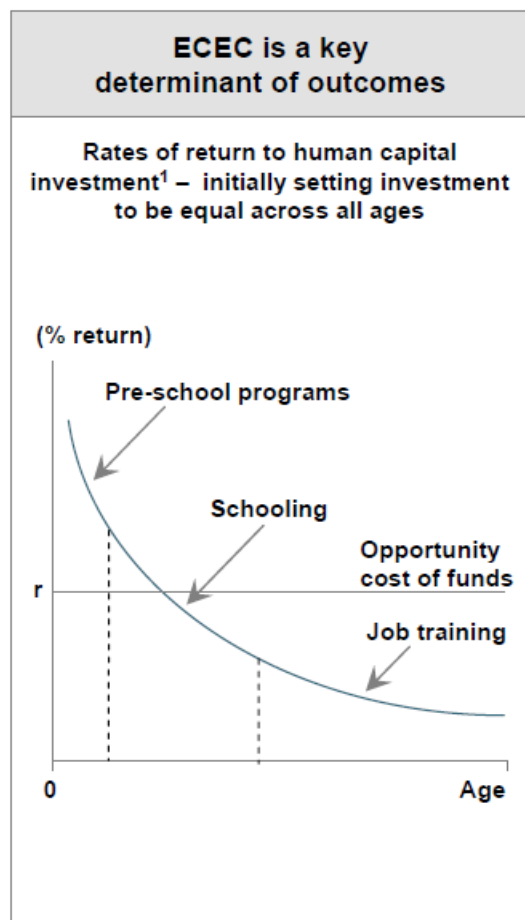
Osher and Osher (2002)

Family –Driven Systems

- Assumption: A strength-focused ecological approach guides development of strategies to support the family in the community.

- Family/professional roles: Families are viewed as having expert knowledge to contribute and participate fully in treatment decisions.

- Focus of assessment: Assessment and goal setting is based on the strengths, hopes and preferences of the child and family.

Fundamental Assumptions

- Parents begin with positive aspirations for their children want to do the best for their children, and only fail to do so because their circumstances or resources or personal history conspire against them.

- "Parents are their children's first educators and therefore parents play a vital and ongoing role in teaching young people."

Bastiani (1989)

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) are critical to outcomes later in life…

ECEC is a key determinant of outcomes

Rates of return to human capital investment[1] – initially setting investment to be equal across all ages

(% return)

Pre-school programs

Schooling

Opportunity cost of funds

r

Job training

0   Age

ECEC have both private and public benefits

Longer term benefits of investment in ECEC - 40-year study group

Ready for school at 5

Committed to school at 14

High school graduate

Earned $20k+ at 40

0   20   40   60   80
(%)

- ECEC program group
- No-program group

Australia is the lowest spender on ECEC in the OECD

Public and private expenditure on pre-primary education – 3- to 6-year olds only

Norway
Denmark
France
Mexico
Austria
Germany
Sweden
US
UK
Korea
Australia

0.0 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 1.0 1.2
As a proportion of GDP (%)

- Private
- Public

1. Cunha et al, *Interpreting the evidence on life cycle skill formation (2005)*
Source: OECD, *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education And Care (2006)*

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…with strong evidence that starting early is essential

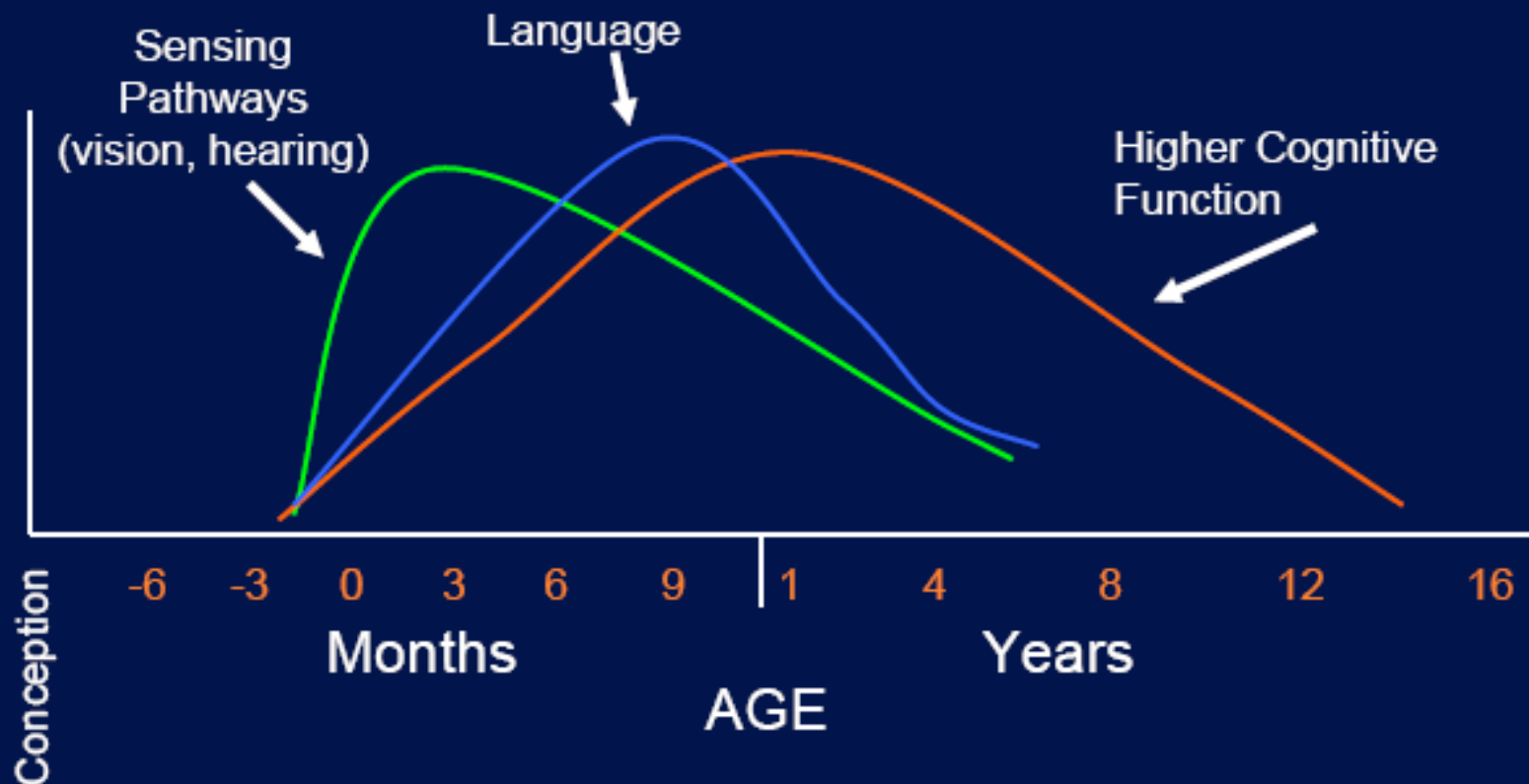Average position in student distribution
(percentile)
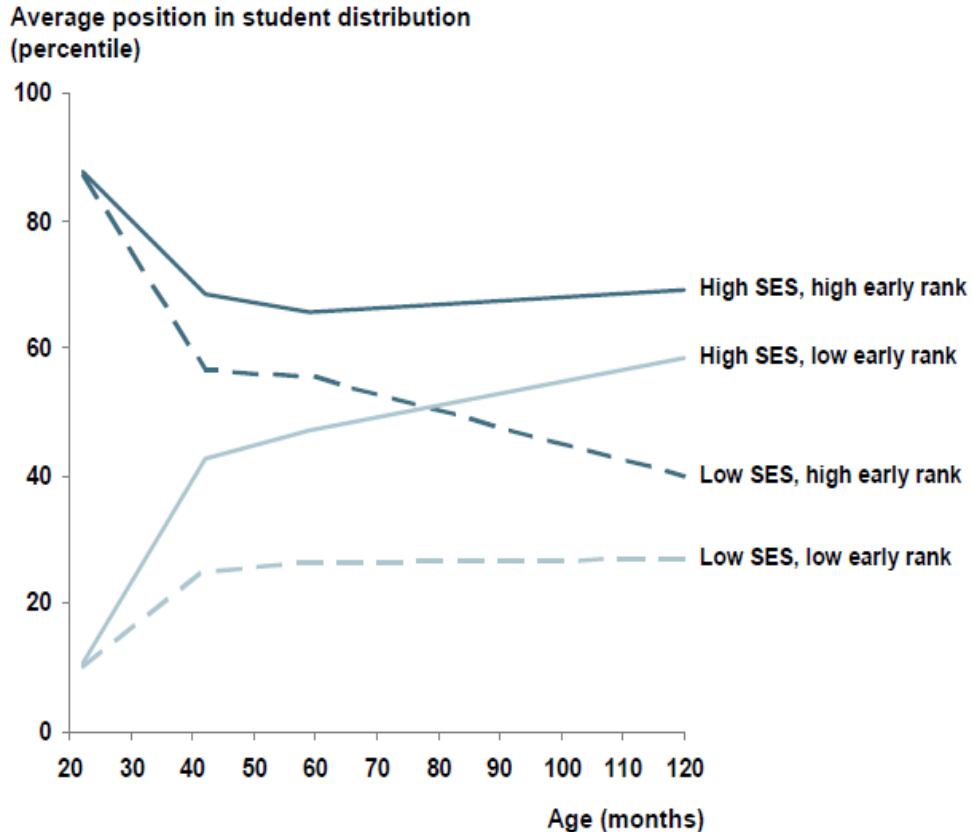
The importance of "starting early"

- A recent British study showed that social background is a more powerful predictor of educational outcomes by age 10 than attainment at 22 months

- It also suggested that less able richer children overtake more able poorer children by the age of six

Note: SES denotes socioeconomic status
Source: Feinstein L, *Inequality in the early cognitive development of British children in the 1970 cohort*, Economica, (February 2003)

Human brain development - synapse formation
— C. Nelson, 2000

Importance of Early Years
Professor Frank Oberklaid

- Children do not begin learning to read (as if by magic) when they turn 5 and are old enough to begin school

- The building blocks for success in literacy are laid long before pre-school begins, long before instruction

- Need to focus on the early years – before child begins formal schooling

We know that the quality of Australia's teachers is strongly related to good outcomes…

Impact of teaching quality on student performance in the United States: 1996 (performance percentile)
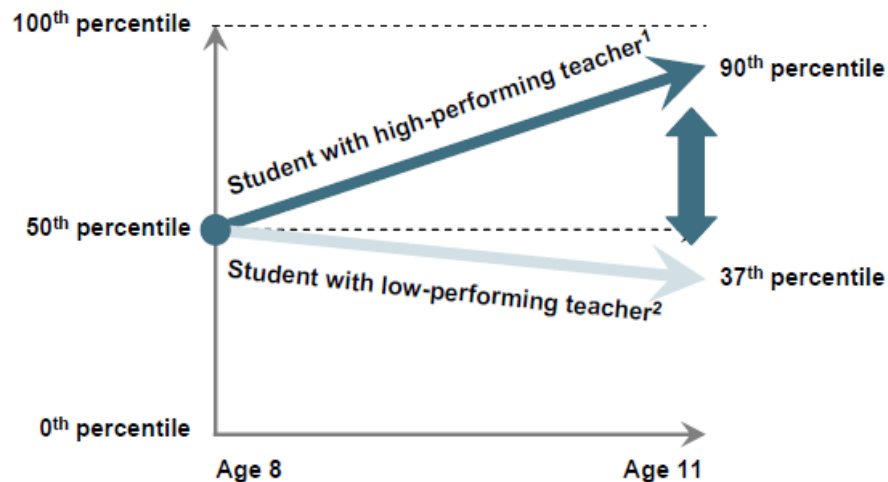
Importance of teacher quality

- Research suggests that teacher quality affects student performance more than any other variable

- On average, two students with average (50th percentile) performance could diverge by more than 50 percentile points over a three year period depending on the teacher each is assigned

- Teacher quality will arguably become better understood when analysed in the emerging context of "value adding" practices in education. This is the use of increasingly sophisticated measures and technologies to monitor the progress of students within a school, compared to students of "similar ability," or with the rest of a state

- Research suggests that the quality of school leadership is also an important factor

1. Among the top 20% of teachers 2. Among the bottom 20% of teachers
Source: Sanders & Rivers, *Cumulative and Residual Effects on Future Student Academic Achievement (1996)*

Parental Hopes and expectations

- "the higher the hopes and expectations of parents with respect to the educational attainment of their child, the higher the student's own educational expectations and ultimately, the greater the student's academic achievement." Hong and Ho 2005 p 40

- Parental involvement has greatest impact between K-3 (*d=0.41*). *Most successful involvement related to tutoring, home visits and interactions and least with parent training.*"
  Hattie, 2009 p 69

Flaxmere study

- when children started school, 98% of parents considered that education was very or extremely important to their children's future.

- 2/3 of these parents expected their children to attain diplomas or degrees.

- By the time they left primary school, these aspirations had been dowsed and the parents mainly wanted their children to "get a job".
(Clinton et al., 2007 in Hattie 2009 p70)

Language of schooling

- "Some parents know how to speak the language of schooling and thus provide an advantage for their children during the school years, while other do not know this language, which can be a major barrier to the home contributing to achievement."

Hattie 2009, pg 71

Create positive partnerships

Joyce Epstein et al 2002

- Create a positive home environment

- Improve communication

- Volunteers

- Promote learning at home

- Include parents in decision-making

- Collaborate with the community

Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

FAMILY - SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS
FRAMEWORK

A guide for schools and families

Effective Family-School Partnerships

- Sharing of power, responsibility and ownership, with each party having a different role
- A degree of mutuality that begins with the process of listening to each other and that incorporates responsive dialogue and give-and-take on both sides
- Shared aims and goals based on a common understanding of the educational needs of children
- A commitment to joint action

School Community Partnerships

- "…the cooperation and collaboration between all entities that affect a student's life. It includes the learning environment that extends beyond the school door and the extent to which schools, families, agencies, businesses, social and recreational services become fully invested in each student's education."

"schools that improve and sustain improvement almost always have engaged the community and have built strong links with parents."

Harris, Power, Goodall (2010) p3

School Communities include:
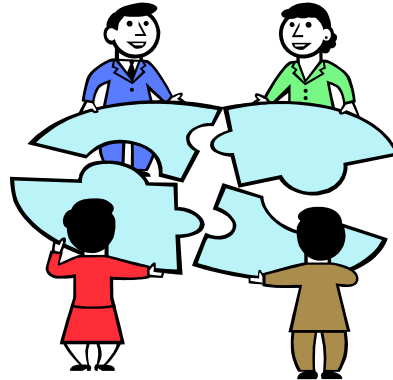
Students teachers, parents, community members, service providers and organisations who work collaboratively to create supportive and inclusive environments that promote health, wellbeing and enhanced learning outcomes.

"The purpose of a school is to help a family educate a child."

Don Edgar 2001