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Parents want more life skills to be taught in school

ASG Parents Report Card reveals parents' perceptions of the state of education in Australia

Australian parents want their children to have access to a 'holistic education', however cultural influences, location and income all play a role in parental expectations of their child's academic success, reveals a new study from ASG and Monash University.

Released today, the *ASG Parents Report Card* is the only report of its kind to investigate the state of education in Australia from parents' perspective.

Undertaken by Associate Professor Sivanes Phillipson and Associate Professor Shane N. Phillipson at the Faculty of Education at Monash University, the report reveals that parents want teachers to do more when it comes to teaching their child about social and life skills inside the classroom.

"Historically, social and life skills are taught within the home and the development of skills and knowledge needed for a successful career have been taught in school. However, perceptions about what equals academic success is changing and so, for today's parents social and life skills are becoming an increasingly important element in education," says John Velegrinis, CEO, ASG.

"The report confirms that parents want teachers to play a greater role developing their children's life skills. However, there was a strong but divided stance on discussing topical issues, such as sexuality and cyber safety; with the level of input depending on the cultural background and age of the child," adds Mr Velegrinis.

According to the *ASG Parents Report Card*, 69 per cent of parents believe schools should do more to teach their child about social skills. When ethnicity is factored in, the proportion increases substantially to 94 per cent among Indian and other Asian parents. Furthermore, 49 per cent of parents agree they would like their child's school to do more about teaching them how to behave in public, which increases to 74 per cent among Indian and other Asian parents.

"The findings suggest there are increasingly blurred lines as to where responsibility begins and ends as parents' perceptions of their traditional roles and responsibilities change," continues Mr Velegrinis.

The analysis revealed that parents have strong views on how the school environment keeps pace with topical issues, such as sexuality and cyber safety.

Just 34 per cent of all parents agree schools are the best place for their child to learn about sexuality. When cultural influences are factored in, only 25 per cent of Australian parents believe that sexual education is best learnt at school versus 62 per cent of

Indian and other Asian parents. Furthermore, 74 per cent of Australian parents agree they can openly talk about sex at home, but this falls to 60 per cent for Indian and other Asian parents.

“While the topic of sex education may be culturally dependant, parents, teachers and schools must have ongoing discussions about the role of sexuality and sex education to best determine how much of it is part of the curriculum, and what needs to be done at home.

This is important to make sure no child misses out on this essential developmental opportunity,” says Associate Professor Shane Phillipson, Faculty of Education, Monash University.

The *ASG Parents Report Card* found that parents of younger children would like schools to be more involved in teaching their child about cyber safety. Fifty four per cent of all parents would like teachers to do more to protect their child from cyber predators, and this percentage increases for parents with children in early learning and primary school.

“The growing use of technology, including phones and tablets, at home and at school, can leave children vulnerable to the dark side of the online world. It’s important for parents to openly discuss and advise their children how to use these platforms wisely,” adds Dr Phillipson.

The report also reveal that location and income both shape the views of parents and their perceived role of academic success.

Seventy five per cent of parents who live in metropolitan cities set high standards for their child’s academic achievement, compared to 63 per cent of parents who live in regional areas. Furthermore, 80 per cent of parents who live in metropolitan areas believe a degree will help their child achieve their ambitions and 75 per cent of rural parents agree.

“For those living in regional areas, aspirations could be linked to their rural environment, with a degree perhaps not considered essential to success. The greater emphasis on academic success for metropolitan based parents could be attributed to the perceived access to educational resources,” continues Dr Phillipson.

With 2017 marking 10 years since the introduction of NAPLAN, the *ASG Parents Report Card* examined parents’ perceptions of the value of the NAPLAN testing system.

When asked about their children’s academic achievement, many parents are concerned about the level of financial resources that is available to support their children’s success. Furthermore, nearly 60 per cent believe that their children could do more in terms of being attentive to their learning. Ultimately, however, Australian parents believe that skills and knowledge are the most important resources that contribute to academic success such as NAPLAN scores.

“NAPLAN represents a very narrow view of what is being taught in the curriculum, with no measure for social development, including the social and mental health of children. This is an important component to receiving a holistic education which is highly valued by Australian parents,” concludes Mr Velegrinis.

Link to the ASG Parents Report Card.

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About the *ASG Parents Report Card*:

The *ASG Report Card* describes Australian parents’ beliefs about the capacity of the current educational environment to meet the educational needs of their children.

ASG developed the concept of the index and partnered with the Faculty of Education at Monash University, Melbourne, to develop and undertake a study in May 2017. Over 1800 Australian parents, grandparents and guardians participated in the research, across all states and territories of Australia.

The co-authors of the *ASG Parents Report Card* — Associate Professors Sivanes Phillipson and Shane N. Phillipson of the Faculty of Education at Monash University — developed the questionnaire and research methodology and worked with ASG who developed the report concept to publish the survey findings.

About ASG:

ASG’s mission is to support the education needs of all individuals from children to adults at any stage of their lives. ASG believes all individuals deserve equal access to education regardless of wealth, status and capability.

We achieve our mission by providing a range of financial products to help offset the cost of education and learning and providing valuable educational resources. As a member owned organisation we also advocate for members’ interests by advocating for the importance of education and learning in nation building.

ASG has supported parents plan for the cost of their children’s education for more than 40 years. During this time, more than 540,000 children have been enrolled with ASG and more than \$2.8 billion in education benefits and scholarship payments have been returned to members and their children.

To learn more, visit: www.asg.com.au.

For further information, images or to coordinate an interview with ASG CEO, John Velegrinis, Associate Professor Shane Phillipson or Associate Professor Sivanes Phillipson of Monash University Faculty of Education or ASG parents please contact:



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