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## **Holistic education support needed to ensure equal access to education**

According to international education reports students from lower socio-economic backgrounds who attend under-resourced schools in Australia are continuing to fall behind their peers. ASG has continually raised concerns regarding the direction of education policy which have not been addressing these issues.

The 2015 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which investigated background and demographic data found students achieve higher when they are from a high socioeconomic background; there is a strong school emphasis on academic success; they have a strong sense of school belonging; and they are not bullied.

Findings reveal the difference between advantaged and disadvantaged students is equivalent to around three years of schooling.

Schools and teachers matter too with disadvantaged students less likely than their advantaged peers to report that their teachers are very engaging or supportive, and the reports also confirm resourcing makes a difference with Year 8 maths and science students in adequately-resourced schools performing significantly better than those in under-resourced schools.

Interestingly, the findings echo the perceptions of Australian parents on the state of education as outlined in the second edition of the [ASG Parents Report Card](#). Parents are more concerned with the lack of resources at their child's school than resources at home, and link a lack of resources to their child's interest in their subjects.

The ASG Parents Report Card also found money does play a vital role in education with 53 per cent of parents not able to afford after school tuition. Eighty five per cent of parents wished they had more money to support their child's education.

ASG CEO John Velegrinis says there's also a strong correlation between results and the social and emotional growth of children.

"While student benchmarks are important ASG research confirms the focus on academic excellence is overshadowing the social and emotional growth of children. Sixty two per cent of parents believe their child is easily upset by negative experiences and almost one in two parents believe their child becomes angry when they feel they can't control things. Parents are acutely aware of the harmonious balance between academic achievements and the social and emotional growth that their children need to succeed.

With respect to teachers, an overwhelming majority of parents think they are very capable but have concerns that they are sometimes unable to deal with children with behavioural issues, helping their child remain focussed and the capacity of the teacher to engage their child in learning subjects such as mathematics and other skills that are considered to be the basics.”

Mr Velegrinis urges the Australian government to ensure education policies are geared towards providing greater school resources, raise teacher quality and provide more family support to close the education gap.

“ASG recognises that a more equitable and appropriate funding arrangement is urgently required for Australian education and calls for a holistic review of school funding arrangements including all relevant stakeholders to be undertaken. This is not an issue that should be involved in political ideology but rather one which is geared towards giving all students the same opportunity to have the best education, regardless of the level of parental income. Providing equal opportunities in education and setting high standards of school education enables international benchmarking and competitiveness preparing young people to participate in global economic and social systems and will assist in our nation-building efforts.

We also endorse a strong teaching profession where only the very best applicants are selected and where career-long learning is encouraged, supported and recognised by employing authorities. ASG recommends that an agreed statement of national competency standards for entry into the teaching profession, the development of further competencies of employed teachers and greater rewards for quality teachers be developed and rigorously implemented.”

View [TIMSS 2015: Reporting Australia's results](#) and [PISA 2015: Reporting Australia's results](#) for more information.

ENDS.

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**Editor's notes:**

*The Australian Scholarships Group (ASG) is a member owned organisation, helping to create educational opportunities for children. ASG has been helping families and their children for more than 40 years. During this time, more than 530,000 children have been enrolled with ASG and more than \$2.5 billion in education benefits and scholarship payments returned to members.*