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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 New Zealand

New Zealand parents want their children to be taught life skills as part of their overall education, however cultural influences, education 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 New Zealand from parents' perspective.

Undertaken by Associate Professor Sivaness Phillipson and Associate Professor Shane N. Phillipson at the Faculty of Education at Monash University, Australia, 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*, 66 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 91 per cent among Indian and other Asian parents. Furthermore, 52 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 88 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.

Less than a third (32 per cent) of New Zealand parents believe that sex education is best learnt at school versus 58 per cent of Indian and other Asian parents. Furthermore, 69

per cent of New Zealand parents agree they can openly talk about sex at home, but this falls to 45 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 issues such as 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 older 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 secondary 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 reveals how parents’ education and income levels shape their perceptions of academic success.

Seventy nine per cent of parents who are university educated believe a degree will help their child achieve their ambitions, in contrast to 59 per cent of parents who are vocationally trained.

“Parents with a degree have a first-hand experience of the opportunities that exist post-university, and perhaps see greater value and a return on investment in tertiary education. So it doesn’t surprise us that income levels also contribute to parents having higher aspirations, with 81 per cent of parents who earn in excess of \$96,000 per year believing that a degree will help their child achieve their ambitions. This drops to 76 per cent of parents who earn between \$60,000-\$96,000,” continues Dr Phillipson.

Interesting comparisons are also drawn out between New Zealand and Australian parents.

While, more Australian parents have higher aspirations for their children’s academic success, more New Zealand parents believe their children have clearer learning goals than parents of Australian children.

Australians parents believe their daughters are more motivated to succeed than their sons, despite setting higher standards for their sons’ academic achievement. Whereas New Zealand parents perceive their sons and daughters as being equally as capable to

achieve and succeed, with girls having a slight edge when it comes to their ability to remain focused on their studies.

Both Australian and New Zealand parents expressed concerns that the curriculum did not meet their children's current or future needs, in areas such as social and life skills, and that teachers were being overwhelmed with classroom management issues. Furthermore, parents from both sides of the Tasman Sea did not fully understand the purpose of homework in their child's learning.

"Schools must do more to explain to parents what their child is doing and how this is linked to their child's success. But clearly, Australians can learn much from their New Zealand counterparts as to why parent-school partnerships seem to be more successful in New Zealand than in Australia. The differences could be attributed to the advantages afforded by one national school system in New Zealand compared to many (State-based) education systems in Australia," concludes Dr Phillipson.

[Link to the ASG Parents Report Card.](#)

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About the *ASG Parents Report Card*:

The *ASG Report Card* describes New Zealand 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 450 New Zealand parents, grandparents and guardians participated in the research.

The co-authors of the *ASG Parents Report Card* — Associate Professors Sivaness 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 in Australia and New Zealand. During this time, more than 540,000 children

have been enrolled with ASG and more than \$2.9 billion in education benefits and scholarship payments have been returned to members and their children.

To learn more, visit www.asg.co.nz.

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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