

21 October, 2016

Wellbeing and distractions the top barriers to educational success

Beyond the classroom, New Zealand children struggle to manage stress and digital distractions, 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.

The report, commissioned by ASG and written and analysed by Associate Professor Shane Phillipson and Associate Professor Sivanes Phillipson at the Faculty of Education at Monash University, Melbourne, reveals that while parents' confidence in the school curriculum remains high, many are concerned with their child's wellbeing.

More than half of parents (54 per cent) feel that their child is not taught how to manage stress at school very well, while 47 per cent of parents believe their child becomes angry when they feel they cannot control things.

"Parents, an essential stakeholder in the education journey, are the only ones able to link the impact of home and school life with the academic success of their children. This year's findings from the ASG Parents Report Card reveal they are conscious that the balance between academia, and the personal growth required to develop well-rounded life skills, is not being met," says John Velegrinis, CEO, ASG.

According to the report, six out of 10 (62 per cent) parents believe their child is easily upset by negative experiences, while almost one third have expressed concern at their child's ability to handle personal problems and over one fifth believe their child has poor problem solving abilities.

In addition, the report also found that while 96 per cent of parents are confident their child can speak to an adult if they need help, 14 per cent of parents are not confident their child has friends they can call on should they need support.

However, in comparison to Australian parents a higher percentage of New Zealand parents agree that there is less school pressure on their children, they are more focussed with clearer learning goals and believe their children are more mentally and physically fit. For example, fewer New Zealand parents (36 per cent) indicated their children feel nervous and stressed about their schoolwork, which increases to 42 per cent for Australian parents.

"To provide support and make a conscious effort to address these social barriers, it's essential that parents, teachers and education policy makers, work together to ensure academic excellence doesn't come at the expense of basic life skills," says Mr Velegrinis.

According to Dr Shane Phillipson and Dr Sivanes Phillipson of Monash University the *ASG Parents Report Card* also highlights that while parents' aspirations and children's motivations to succeed continue to drive success, distractions remain an area of concern.

Parents believe daughters (48 per cent) tend to focus better on completing schoolwork compared to sons (40 per cent) and almost six out of 10 parents have to continually prompt their child to study.

Parents also feel time management is one of three greatest challenges facing their child's learning with three in 10 parents (29 per cent) particularly concerned with their child's ability to balance time spent learning and time participating in extra-curricular activities.

"Influences such as the use of digital technology and access to screen time have now become part of everyday life for children. They have also become part of a daily struggle for parents to balance homework and extra activities," says Dr Sivanes Phillipson.

The use of screen based devices is the number one concern of distractions for parents, with almost half (48 per cent) of parents struggling to limit their child's screen time and over one third (37 per cent) of parents do not always know what their child is watching.

The *ASG Parents Report Card* goes on to reveal parents are mostly satisfied that the educational resources and curriculum available are designed to set their child up for success.

Eighty four per cent of parents are confident that the current curriculum will help their children with their future career, while nine out of 10 parents (89 per cent) rate their child's teacher as very capable. However, there are growing concerns for some parents (22 per cent) who believe the current school curriculum is failing to motivate their child.

Further findings from the report reveal that parents continue to have high aspirations for their children, with many setting their sights on their child's ongoing education.

More than one quarter have already earmarked a university for their child to attend (27 per cent), 62 per cent frequently talk to their child about higher education and 71 per cent of parents believe that a degree will help their child to achieve their ambitions.

"Parental aspirations are a fundamental driver of success for children however, there is a sense of realism among parents as over nine in 10 parents understand that academic success comes from hard work," says Mr Velegrinis.

The findings also reveal parents worry about not having enough money to fully support their children's educational needs.

The *ASG Parents Report Card* has shown that 85 per cent of parents wish they had more money to pay for their child's education, and more than a quarter of parents (26 per cent) admit they must work two jobs to ensure a successful education for their children.

"Parents want to give their child the best possible start in life through education, so it's not surprising that the financial implications, and burdens of that, weigh heavy on the minds of New Zealand parents.

Education is a fundamental pillar for nation building and we must ensure that the future of the country has the very best access to the educational environment required to help them learn, grow and achieve," concludes Mr Velegrinis.

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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 April 2016. More than 800 New Zealand parents, grandparents and guardians participated in the research

The co-authors of the *ASG Parents Report Card* — associated professors Dr Shane N. Phillipson and Dr Sivanes Phillipson of the Faculty of Education at Monash University — developed the questionnaire and research methodology and worked with ASG 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 530,000 children have been enrolled with ASG and more than \$2.6 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, Dr Sivanes Phillipson of Monash University Faculty of Education or ASG parents please contact:

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