TIMSS highlights inequities in Australia's school results



The 2016 TIMSS results show the need for greater investment in disadvantaged schools and more specialist maths and science teachers, the AEU said today.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said Australia's flat results were a concern, as was the fact that we were falling behind countries which were investing more in their school systems.

"This data shows yet again the gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged students, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous students," Ms Haythorpe said.

"Less than half of Indigenous students are at or below the proficient level, with little or no change in the gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students over the 20 years of TIMSS.

"There are also strong links between social disadvantage and low scores in both Year 4 and Year 8 testing.

"This is another demonstration of the need to target funding more directly to the schools which teach disadvantaged students, as Gonski funding is beginning to do.

"The TIMSS testing was done in 2015, when less than 10 per cent of Gonski funding had been delivered to schools.

"We need to ensure that the full six years of Gonski are delivered to give disadvantaged schools the resources they need to close these gaps.

"Public schools in every state are still below the Schooling Resource Standard the Gonski Review recommended.

TIMSS focuses solely on maths and science, and Ms Haythorpe said Australia's performance was linked to chronic shortages of maths and science teachers.

"We have long-term shortages of trained maths and science teachers in Australia, yet the Federal Government has no plans to fix this, or take action to stop the decline in entry standards for teaching courses.

"Around 40 per cent of our Year 7 to 10 mathematics classes are taught without a qualified mathematics teacher. The most recent PISA report highlighted unequal access to a rigorous maths curriculum as a reason for Australia's poor performance in that area.

“Shortages of qualified teachers have a direct impact on student performance – yet we have a flawed teacher training system which is producing too many graduates, but too few with maths and science skills.

“The Federal Government has talked about innovation and agility, but won’t give our schools the resources or trained teachers to ensure they can excel at maths and science.

“Malcolm Turnbull’s plan to end Gonski funding after 2017 will deny schools $3.8 billion in resources, and hit the most disadvantaged schools the hardest.”

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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