

It's official – we have an election looming and it looks to be a fizzer. Here's hoping that with the many weeks to go until polling day it won't turn into a long and drawn out damp squib. The pundits have it almost too close to stake their reputations on and education is looking to be at the forefront of discussion. Just where it should be for something so important for the future of our children and that of Australia as a whole.

Family engagement resources

NAPLAN has been and gone this year and hopefully most students have been in a position to actually enjoy the experience as a low stakes addition to their normal classroom activities. Looking to other and more significant exams still to come there are a number of resources that are available to support parents and our children in what can be challenging experiences. Check out ACSSO's family engagement [resource pages](#) for a range of material that might help.

National teaching awards

The 2015 ASG National Excellence in Teaching Awards (NEITA) were presented in March – to twelve of Australia's very best Teachers covering the three sectors of early years, primary and secondary. What makes them even more special is that they were among over 1,100 initial nominations made by parents and communities across Australia. Having met some of them it is their deep commitment and passion for giving their very best for the benefit of our children that shines through. ACSSO's recognises that they also need the very best school leadership and vital needs based resourcing, and an engaged parent community to support this. Nominations for the 2016 awards are now open so please consider nominating a Teacher that works with your children and is worthy of greater recognition. The nomination information is [here](#)

Free ARACY membership

The essential role of parents in education can never be underestimated, and we are all on a path of lifelong learning, so please consider joining ARACY (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Young People) as an individual member. It's free and will give you the opportunity to join a number of specialist networks – one of which is the Parent Engagement Network that will focus on the vital role of parents as the first and most significant educators of their children. ARACY is working collaboratively to deliver the latest thinking and tools that will give you the opportunity to deepen your own understanding of what can make a difference in your child's education, and that of your school. ARACY's membership information is [here](#)

Election fever

Back to election matters and election fever is fully upon us with education as a central focus point of the campaign. ACSSO meets regularly with the various party representatives and education stakeholders to advocate for the very best outcomes for public school students, their families and wider communities. ACSSO has a view that the value of teacher quality and parent engagement can be taken to be a point of consensus. However, we would argue that the quality of school leadership has an equal if not greater impact. Even with the very best school leadership, teachers and family engagement in learning there has to be adequate needs based resourcing to enable our principals and teachers to perform to the best of their professional abilities. A point reinforced by David Gonski's recommendations that ACSSO heartily endorses.

Join in to be heard

Looking to your child's school, its community as a whole, and parents' role in helping the school to deliver the best possible outcomes, please be aware that each State and Territory has a peak parent body that is devoted to supporting the school communities in their jurisdiction. Support that is always there and freely available when you need it. In addition, they will have looked at the essential points of concern in the coming election that relates to your local area. ACSSO will be taking a national perspective on education derived from those same State and Territory members that form ACSSO. There is a direct and fluid connection so please feel free to channel your thoughts through your organisation and in turn please take those points to any federal candidates that you may encounter in the coming weeks – as we will too.

And the winner should be...

As education transcends the various party political aspirations, and is an ongoing responsibility of all Australians, there has to be an expectation that every layer of government is fully supportive of the future of our children. Truly fair, simple and transparent needs based education funding agreements, with provision for additional needs, and no special deals are vital for the future of our children. Children that are constantly progressing through the system and will have to do the heavy lifting for the future of the economy and Australia as a whole. Maybe a point to ponder if or when a candidate comes calling at your door.

Phillip Spratt