10 Great Tips
for Accessing Educational Research

1 Use Google Scholar

Google Scholar allows you to do a broad search for relevant journal articles. There is a Help link on the bottom right corner of the Google Scholar search page, providing lots of great tips for improving your search (see also 'Learn the art of a good search' below). You can also access an 'Advanced Search' option from the menu on the top left. Using Google Scholar might be a good starting point to get an idea of what research is out there. You might then try finding specific articles through Catholic Education Melbourne's database subscription service (see below), available to all Catholic Education Melbourne and school staff.

2 Take advantage of the database subscriptions accessible to all Catholic Education Melbourne and school staff

The database subscriptions listed below are all accessible via the CEVN website, so all staff will be automatically logged into these sites when logged into CEVN.

OECD Education iLibrary

This iLibrary includes journal articles, papers, ebooks and databases. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) produces some excellent materials on a whole range of education topics, enabling staff to keep up-to-date with international research and evidence in education. Many items can be downloaded as PDFs and everything you find can be read online. Clicking the Help option on the top menu bar will take you to a number of helpful user guides and tutorials.

EBSCO (international academic databases)

Three EBSCO databases provide access to Australian and international research: Academic Search Complete, Education Source and ERIC. In combination, they provide access to more than 8,000 full-text journals. They are multidisciplinary in nature, but have an emphasis on educational academic literature. For information on how to use these databases, use the Help function in the top right corner of the EBSCO webpage. You can also search for an extensive number of specific journals by clicking on the 'Title List' link under either Academic Search Complete (e.g. *Youth Studies Australia*) or Education Source (e.g. *Issues in Educational Research*). This will then allow you to search within those publications.

Informit A+ Education (Australian academic database)

This database consists of a collection of over 200,000 Australian-specific records, including full-text journal articles on a wide range of education topics. For information on how to search the database, go to Help and FAQ at the bottom of the Informit webpage, click the 'How To Guides' tab, then click 'Search'. You can also search for specific journals through the 'Advanced Search' option and browse through volumes of those journals (e.g. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*).

3 Learn the art of a good search

As well as using the help guides from the various databases listed above, you can get some great tips about the search art form here:

- Google Scholar help page
- ACEReSearch help page

Brainstorm different terms/phrases that researchers around the world might use for each of your key topics. For example, don't limit your search to 'literacy development in primary school students'. Each of these key words or phrases could have numerous alternatives. A few examples are listed below:

- Literacy
- Reading
- Language
- Comprehension
- Development

- Learning
- Progress
- Improvement
- Growth
- Primary school

- Elementary school
- Preparatory school
- Grade school
- Early years
- Students

- Pupils
- Children
- Schoolchild

Look for an 'Advanced Search' function on any search engine or journal search. This will enable you to experiment with AND/OR searches. For example, you could search for 'literacy' AND 'development', or search for 'literacy' OR 'reading' AND 'development' OR 'learning'.

4 Don't reinvent the wheel

It's easy to feel like Alice falling down the rabbit hole when you start searching literature. The descent seems endless and you can feel like you will never find the exact evidence to support your needs. Therefore, don't underestimate the value of investing in an up-to-date textbook or a published collection of papers that provides a summary of a topic or theme if it covers the kinds of questions you are asking. Some papers provide a 'systematic review' of research in a given area, so these are worth hunting down. Just include terms like 'systematic review' as an AND in your search.

5   Browse research repositories

The following websites provide great links to research repositories, as well as summaries of education research:

- Australian Teaching & Learning Toolkit
- Department of Education and Training (DET) Research and evaluation publications
- University of Melbourne Minerva Access – Go to the Melbourne Graduate School of Education collection via the 'Browse' menu on the right and 'Communities & Collections'
- Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE)
- ACEReSearch

- Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) hosts the Australian Education Research Theses database
- Australasian Open Access Strategy Group (AOASG) maintains a list of open access repositories in Australia and New Zealand. Many universities and government departments provide access to their research via these repositories
- Teaching Sprints has collated many research resources

6   Read reports from research institutes and other organisations

You will find a wealth of recent research reports on the following sites:

- Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)
- Grattan Institute
- Learning First
- Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation
- OECD Education GPS
- Education Endowment Foundation (UK)
- Education Development Trust (UK)

7   Subscribe to alerts

Try subscribing to the newsfeeds of one or two journals or organisations that focus on topics of interest or relevance to you. Then, when a new addition is published or a new paper is released, you will hear about it. Subscribing as a follower to blogs is also a great way to find out about new research from many organisations like AARE and ACER. Subscribe to the weekly newsletter from the National Catholic Education Commission which often highlights new and relevant research findings. You can also subscribe to the Catholic Education Melbourne *Research Burst* via research@cem.edu.au. This termly newsletter includes links to current research-related information, recent reports, professional learning and resources to stimulate thinking, discussion and practice.

8   Make friends in high places

Searching for relevant, useful and accessible research papers can take a lot of time. As a teacher or leader, you have a limited amount of time to commit to finding and then reading the papers, let alone thinking through how you can apply the research to your classroom or school. So if you ever go to a conference or a professional learning activity, or you read something that you connect with and enjoy, try and find out if there is a way to keep in touch with the researcher (e.g. on Twitter or Facebook, or even by email). They might be happy to send you their papers or other materials of interest. This may open up connections to other relevant research or programs that meet your needs.

9   Share, share, share!

Other teachers at your school may already have hunted down the research papers that you are after. Ask around. Create a culture of generosity of knowledge with your colleagues and let people know when you have found something you think may interest them. Try and build research-sharing into team meetings or staff newsletters. Catholic Education Melbourne's Research team has been exploring the role of 'Research Leads' as one way of supporting school engagement with research. Visit the Research Leads webpage for some information and videos that you might find useful when looking for ways to share your research.

10   Enrol in postgraduate study

Perhaps the most extreme way to access educational research would be to enrol in a graduate certificate/diploma, master's degree or PhD. Then you will have unlimited access to a vast amount of research through your university library.