



Maths numbers balance out

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The Wellington High School appears to be bucking the trend which says the proportion of girls not studying any maths for their HSC has almost tripled in the 10 years, a trend experts say is partly due to the perception that maths is still a 'boys' subject'.

Principal Don Harvey says numbers are evenly placed when it comes to those studying advanced maths and advanced extension maths.

"Yes the numbers are equally shared. We try and encourage our students to be the best they can be in the interest of their future," Mr Harvey said.

The school principal is particularly pleased with the result considering national figures say while boys are abandoning maths at an equally dramatic rate, they still make up the overwhelming majority of students in advanced maths subjects, a disparity greater than the 1980's, the Sydney Morning Herald reports.

St Mary's School principal Simon Price says girls turn to literacy because of the job prospects and it is their natural strength.

He also noted girls believe they didn't use maths as much in daily life.

He believes the prospects of getting a job in science related fields for example is not strong in this country a disappointment to him and many others and probably to governments who believe Australia's future depends on its knowledge base.

"People don't reward scientists really" he said.

"Maths and the sciences are hard disciplines, there for the to use an analogy the long distance runner, they need effort and application" The St Marys principal said.

A reserve bank director also appeared to be concerned warning the lack of girls dropping out in some areas would effect the economy.

"I think we have a problem with mathematics study, full stop. This is an economic threat to Australia," said Ms Ridout, former head of the Australian Industry Group. "We're going into this economy where the sciences are going to be more and more important, and it's vital that women have those skills."

A straw poll of children at Wellington public school by the Times showed many young girls liked maths somewhat proving the change in their mind set happened at a later age.

Mr Price also discussed the national literacy programme Multi- Lit "Making Up For Lost Time In Literacy" where education really begins for boys and girls.

"Our kids in years in 1 and 2 are doing this and it's a great programme and they are doing very well. We think it's the bees knees"

MultiLit's approach to improving the literacy skills of struggling students is to combine research and theory with program development and service delivery. The approach e is non-categorical, which means the program does not focus on the causes underlying or reasons why a child may have failed to make progress in reading. According to Multilit these labels have not been found to be useful in determining how a child can best be helped to learn.

A spokesperson for the program says "Our approach is to find out what skills students do have and which areas are cause for concern and to fill in their knowledge with direct, systematic and intensive teaching and/or tutoring of these skills. "

"The methods used by MultiLit are based on over 30 years of research undertaken by members of the MultiLit Research Unit.

The MultiLit Research Unit has been established to provide a focus for systematic scientific inquiry into how best to meet the instructional needs of students who are struggling to acquire basic reading and related skills, for whatever reason.

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