

Blakehurst High School Submission to Senate Inquiry on NAPLAN

The conflicting claims made by the Government, educational experts and peak bodies in relation to the publication of the National assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing:

BHS has no issue with the testing here the results are used as a diagnostic tool to improve learning outcomes for students.

The claim that “Parents want this information” is misguided. Parents want valid information and those parents whose children complete the tests get valid information on the results of their child for that test.

However, most people do not understand the narrow scope of the testing used to get the score provided on the My School Website and how inappropriate this score is in terms of assessing school performance.

The score is then used by the media to produce simplistic league tables which are unrealistic and damaging. The Government and peak bodies acknowledge this but DO NOTHING to address this improper use of information.

The implementation of possible safeguards and protocols around the public presentation of the testing and reporting data;

The test data needs to be copyright to prevent it’s use in the formation of simplistic league tables

The use of a simplistic number created using results of a narrow testing regime of 2 academic years in a school needs to be reviewed – it is a meaningless number.

The use of ‘above average’ and ‘below average’ when there is no indication of what ‘average’ actually means is not a valid way of reporting results. It is not helpful as it does not indicate whether students are performing above, at or below national benchmarks but this is how the colour coding is being interpreted by parents.

Growth data and value added data would be more meaningful

The impact of the NAPLAN assessment and reporting regime on:

The educational experience and outcomes for Australian students,

There is a negative impact on schools that are rated at below average when the results are reported in their current form as a score on the My School Website. In all likelihood the majority of students would be performing at or above national benchmarks

The reports to parents and schools that can use the data as a means of targeting teaching and learning to areas of need is very useful. The publication of a score on a website is not needed for this to occur

The misuse of the data to create the scores for the My School Website and then by the media to create simplistic, misleading league table **NEEDS TO BE STOPPED!**

The scope, innovation and quality of teaching practice

This is not assessed by the NAPLAN tests

However, the focus on NAPLAN testing and the current use and misuse of results could lead to the narrowing of the curriculum. This has been the experience in the USA and UK and would be a tragedy for our children

The quality and value of information about student progress provided to parents and

principal, and

Test results sent to parents and schools are useful tools to direct teaching practice and areas of need can be identified. This is the purpose of the test.

The quality and value of information about individual schools to parents, principals and the general community; and

When the data is used by the school for diagnostic purposes it is useful for directing teaching practice and identifying areas of need

It gives the parents an indication of how their child performed on a test on a day – it is a snapshot of progress in the areas of literacy and numeracy and should not be used as the only indicator of their child's performance at school. This information must then of course be used in conjunction with their child's class report and discussions with the teachers to get the all round picture of their progress in many aspects of learning and school life.

The test data does not have the scope to give detailed information or analysis on student as the scope of the testing is far too limited.

International approaches to the publication of comparative reporting of the results, i.e. 'league tables'; and

Experience from the USA and UK shows the damage that league tables do to school communities

With such evidence before us, why are we allowing it to happen here? Our education system is far superior to the systems in these countries yet we copy some of their WORST practices.

Other related matters

Information about schools in NSW is available through annual school reports, websites and various publications produced by the schools and other media.

Schools cannot be reduced to a single score as an indication of their worth

Schools are complex communities and whilst ever simplistic data is produced that is then allowed to be exploited by the media, we are doing our school, teachers, students and communities a huge disservice