

From:
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In Feb 2009 our small rural school community was devastated by the bushfires. Many children lost homes and all lost either pets, outbuildings, vineyards, live stock, gardens, part houses, outside play equipment and livelihoods. All children went through trauma on the night of Feb 7 with many fleeing burning homes and sheltering in others that eventually burnt down. Many fled down blocked roads in virtual darkness with flames all around them. Many of our children required trauma counselling in the following months. NAPLAN 2009 was in May. Many of our Year 3 and year 5 children went from counselling into NAPLAN tests. To then see our Year 3 results - from 5 children, treated with such total lack of respect or understanding was heartbreaking. Our trauma was not in any way recognised nor even considered. We are a tiny rural school with very small cohorts of under 10 students. We were compared to schools of 800 in some instances. This is ludicrous. The government does not know what is happening in every school community. There are many traumatic events that affect children and schools. NAPLAN is a snapshot in time yet it has such enormous weighting. For us in small schools it is heartbreaking to be compared with very large schools. It is like a slap in the face and makes you wonder why you entered such a profession if this is the end product. I give my heart and soul to this school as a teaching principal. We have kids with auditory, visual and working memory difficulties. We have kids with low IQ and kids suffering trauma for various reasons. I begin to wonder - who cares about them? We do and we recognise their journey and small successes. We cannot all be above average. the milestones these kids achieve should be valued not denigrated in league tables. Why can't we learn from what has happened in the UK and USA. We take all kids, regardless of their academic success or potential. My own daughter was turned away from her school in Year 11 because her results were poor. It was suggested she go to TAFE and do VCE of three years. They didnt want her any longer because she was not bright enough to raise their results. She went to another government school who cared about kids and finished her VCE in two years and passed. She was born at 26 weeks gestation and is lucky to be alive and sighted due to enormous medical setbacks. How dare a school turn her away and others like her because it will bring down their results. This is now a way of the future for Aussie kids it seems.