

As a principal of a primary school I have felt pressure from a variety of sources to have "good" NAPLAN test scores. Unfortunately the comparison with other schools creates the urge to keep up with the Jones's. This has been evident by credible accounts of cheating (children reporting that their teachers helped them and explained), being zealous converts to the NAPLAN God and the fear of the local newspapers league table.

This has seen some teachers, parents and principals acting as though NAPLAN was the only thing that mattered. Frantic preparation is being undertaken, special practice and practice tests are hammered with 5 and more tests. February to May is focused on how to do better on the tests. Children are on special diets and organised sleep patterns in the week leading up to May 11.

Like these enthusiast I also want the children in my school to do well and do their best, but I am not prepared to enter this competition against the Jones's and have students suffer these unintended consequences. Children need to enjoy the curriculum with a rich and challenging variety of modes. Repeated tests and the feeling that NAPLAN is the Be All is a false economy.

As principal I want to know how the curriculum provided in my school prepares the children and caters for them. The NAPLAN and other measures can help me determine this, provided I use the data to compete against ourselves. It is this reflection on the progress, strengths and weaknesses that will be of real value in improving teaching and curriculum provision. The comparison through League Tables and ultimately the competition against other schools creates a need to find ways to do better, no matter how and serves no real purpose. By keeping the testing in perspective and limiting the use of League Tables we can have improvement in learning brought about by good teaching and not through artificial and temporary means.