

SENATE INQUIRY INTO THE USE OF NAPLAN RESULTS IN LEAGUE TABLES

The staff at Balarang Public School would like to submit their arguments against the use of Naplan results in the public domain, especially as used by media organisations and government departments, to publish inaccurate league tables.

Our arguments are as follows:

League tables are misleading: They give no indication of parental involvement in their child's development or education. Many students lag behind because of a lack of involvement by their parents. Whole school communities are judged by results obtained by students in Grades 3 & 5 only. Other subject areas that are equally as valuable as English and Maths are ignored in league tables. Other subject areas can often display the strengths of school communities and general communities. League tables are not reflective of cultural skills across wider communities.

League tables are inaccurate: Naplan testing was designed only to inform teaching and learning practices. Methods to compare schools are inaccurate and severely debilitating to many schools across the country. Testing procedures are not statistically viable so therefore should not be publicised as accurate, or as portraying an accurate image of a school community.

League tables are damaging: League tables are damaging to the reputations of students, teachers, parents and whole suburban communities, as evidenced by the headlines surrounding Mt Druitt High School in western Sydney in the 1990s. League tables do not respect the privacy of individuals or school communities. Teachers are increasingly being pressured to 'teach to the test', therefore narrowing the curriculum content of what they teach and usually not teaching the other subjects. Evidence from UK and New York teachers clearly demonstrate that league tables have severely damaged whole school communities and have led to falling standards, funding cuts and school closures.

League tables are demoralising: League tables are demoralising to students, teachers, parents and whole communities. Parents with children with learning difficulties or disabilities are anxious about their children's performances giving schools a bad reputation with their test results. There is an increase in stress and anxiety levels in school staffrooms, with debates about league tables causing division amongst staff, and staff harmony vanishes. League tables will eventually, as proven in the UK and USA, lead to 'teacher bashing' and threats to withdraw funding from schools, therefore increasing stress and anxiety levels. Teacher camaraderie will vanish.

League tables are unnecessary: OECD reports consistently rank Australian students' performances highly. Government departments, therefore, should not tamper with educational systems that are obviously working. Evidence from the UK and USA have detailed problems in their education systems, such as: a cut in the number of subjects taught; student and teacher motivation are disabled; educational standards have fallen over last 2 decades since mass testing began; 'teacher bashing' is commonplace as are threats to withdraw funding; school closures have occurred due to falling standards incurred from mass testing, and most school closures are in disadvantaged areas.

We insist that the publication of any type of league table to describe school performance

be banned.

On behalf of the Staff
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