

I am a high school mathematics teacher. I have been teaching mathematics at my current school since 1989. I have many concerns about the way results of NAPLAN testing are being used. I concede they may be of limited statistical use to suit statisticians and policy-makers, however, the results are most likely flawed before they are in the hands of the statisticians.

I use the analogy that Sir Donald Bradman made 0 runs in his final Test innings. If his results from that one day were to be used as a record of his cricketing prowess, where would we all be?

In my many years experience in supervising tests, competitions, examinations etc, in Senior High Schools, the most frequent question asked is, "Do these marks count for my final score?" The answer, in this instance, of course is no. As a result the level of integrity immediately reduces. I have witnessed students in multiple-choice tests selecting answers at random. When reviewing student results from multiple-choice competitions I as the teacher know when some students have benefited from lucky guesses. I have also been aware of deliberate sabotaging of the tests by groups of students. There is no reason for this not to happen in NAPLAN testing. Hence my proposition that results are possibly flawed. I have further concerns about the integrity of the results when students across state borders are compared. In some states students are taught by subject specialist teachers for the two years prior to the year 9 testing, whilst other students are taught by subject specialists for only one year prior. This surely will cause a bias in the results, not due to student ability or teacher ability, but simply exposure. I teach some students who do not have a home computer, let alone internet access. This surely is also a significant disadvantage for some students.

I believe far too much importance is being given to NAPLAN. It may be a useful tool for some politicians to stand up and say, "They are voting with the keyboard, look at how many hits the website receives" or similar statements, but I am sad to say that the real knowledge-holders, those who know the students and have daily interactions with them, are constantly being ignored. I cannot believe major issues such as funding are linked to NAPLAN results. Leave NAPLAN out of the big decisions.