

Friday, 25th June, 2010

Committee Secretary
Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee
Parliament House,
Canberra, A.C.T, 2600

To the Committee Members,

On behalf of the teachers at Kandos Public School, I am writing to contribute our concerns regarding the Inquiry into the Administration and Reporting of NAPLAN testing.

We understand the value of testing to inform teachers and parents of student progress and agree that tests, such as the NAPLAN, have their place in our Education system. However, we also wish to emphasise that schools teach much more than that which is assessed by NAPLAN. We are strongly opposed to any structures that place the importance of such tests above all other teaching and learning experiences. We urge the Senate to remember that NAPLAN is one test on one day and should not be considered as the only valid tool to measure student progress. We would also like to express our dissatisfaction with a test that assesses the achievement of a National Curriculum which has not yet been implemented!

In considering the educational experiences of students in our school, we would also like to note that formal testing procedures create an unusual environment for students and most do not demonstrate their abilities due to anxiety and unfamiliar question structures. Therefore, we suggest that perhaps the data collected in NAPLAN testing is not the most accurate means of assessment.

We are immensely concerned by the misuse of data in league tables and websites that directly rank schools and students against one another. We consider it appalling that our students are not adequately protected against such publications and are subjected to potential naming and shaming! Working in a small country town, it is particularly important to us to maintain positive relationships with community members and to uphold the good reputation of our students and teachers.

We constantly evaluate our teaching to ensure we are making progress in providing the best possible education for all students who attend our school. League tables discredit our professionalism by suggesting that individual teacher judgement and school based assessment

are not valid measures of achievement. Teachers in all New South Wales Public Schools want only what is best for their students and do everything possible to ensure they provide the highest quality opportunities for their students!

What good could possibly come from judging schools against each other? We have seen the deplorable effect of league tables on teachers and students in the US and UK. There are no benefits in following these models. Several of our staff members have taught in these systems and have noted the detrimental effects league tables have had on whole communities. They also noted the lack of funding and support which exacerbated the poor standard of student achievement despite the commitment of teachers.

We are also concerned about the impact of league tables on the quality of educational programs provided in schools. If simplistic league tables continue to be published schools will inadvertently become competitive and teachers will begin to “teach to the test” rather than balancing the curriculum with the other important Key Learning Areas such as Creative Arts and Physical Education. Will this adequately prepare our students to participate in all aspects of society?

Teachers are among the most generous, committed and caring group of individuals you will find in any community. Our opinions are not expressed selfishly but rather, with the interests of our future leaders at heart. Therefore we urge you to consider better ways to protect our students and support their education. Prevent simplistic league tables from being published.

Sincerely,

Miss Rosey Nelson

(Classroom Teacher and Federation Representative Kandos Public School)