

From:
Mr Nicolaas Williams

I have worked in an executive position in NSW high schools for a decade, and my teaching experience is even longer. I have a masters degree in research with first class honours, and have taught in an education faculty.

As a school leader, teacher and educational researcher, I am alarmed at the potential misuse of narrow 'snapshot' diagnostic tests in literacy and numeracy for nefarious political purposes. The possibility that these type of tests could inform league tables which would create a distorted impression in the minds of parents of potential students is ethically abominable.

The reputation of students, teachers and wider school communities would very likely be tarnished by inappropriate use of NAPLAN data, which should be used solely to inform teachers and parents of an individual's strengths and weaknesses in the areas of literacy and numeracy, with a view to constructing remediating strategies.

It is unacceptable that teaching to such tests potentially compromises the broad curriculum which all students should have the benefit of. Schools worried about their position on any potential league table or on the My School website will be greatly tempted to diminish the time spent on performing arts and other key learning areas that are not relevant to tests that would inform comparative data of the kind recently promoted by Ms Gillard.

In short, it is essential that NAPLAN test results be used exclusively as diagnostic tools to assist individual learners and their teachers. They should not harm the reputation of schools, many of whom assist the vulnerable in our society - in this context, they are highly successful establishments. To constrict the curriculum is fundamentally antithetical to education - committee members will no doubt be aware that the Latin 'educare' means to 'come to know'. The misuse of NAPLAN tests to construct league tables or similar would achieve the opposite.

I urge the committee to recommend the imposition of tight regulations on the use of NAPLAN data which expressly prohibits its inclusion on My School and to create league tables or similar.

Sincerely

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