



Senate NAPLAN Inquiry

With regard to the Senate inquiry into NAPLAN testing, Seymour College makes the following comments.

Section B

- a. the implementation of possible safeguards and protocols around the public presentation of the testing and reporting data:
 - As a general principle, we recommend a return to a pure diagnostic purpose for the test: to identify individual needs and offer insights into a school's curriculum and so adapt scope and sequence where merited.
 - There is no common basis for comparison in terms of student cohort, a common curriculum or equity of resourcing, so comparison of results data is unhelpful at best and misleading and destructive when converted into league tables.
 - Any supposed deficiencies exposed in poor results need to be examined closely in context: not all students achieve at high levels and schools can offer excellent teaching and support for individuals without necessarily being able to raise significantly the achievement levels of some individuals or entire cohorts.
 - For new students, assessment of school's performance (if, in fact, a valid measure) is actually more a measure of individuals' performances in the context of their previous school, and so does not offer any useful information about either the former or current school.
 - No allowance is made in the data for gender or special learning needs within the cohort.

Section C

- b. the impact of the NAPLAN assessment and reporting regime on:
 - i. the educational experience and outcomes for Australian students,
 - ii. the scope, innovation and quality of teaching practice,
 - iii. the quality and value of information about student progress provided to parents and principals, and
 - iv. the quality and value of information about individual schools to parents, principals and the general community:
 - The fundamental purpose of the test needs to be revisited. The current testing very rarely gives us new information on individual students not already diagnosed by our teachers. We therefore question the value of such testing, especially the cost to a child if no new information comes to light. Losing teaching/ learning time to "train" for the test, and to administer the test is also questionable if a meaningful diagnosis of student learning is not provided.
 - We do review results to see if there are areas of learning at a particular year level which need to be looked at in terms of comparative results, but this is not always valuable as the current testing - while a national test - does not relate to a national curriculum. Therefore, apparent deficiencies may be attributed to a difference in age level or sequence of learning, rather than an underlying deficiency of teaching or curriculum construction. Earlier testing with a late release of results makes any response to such a diagnosis in a timely fashion very difficult.
 - In our case, any exemption provision that might be made would be done so for the child's sake, not to "improve" the school's results.
 - We provide extensive reporting on student learning and, for the reasons outlined in Section B, we do not believe that the comparative data offers much useful information to the school or to parents.

Additional Comment

We would also wish to raise concerns about the poor construction of tasks (inexact wording in instructions) and draw attention to what we consider to be a misleading example in the reading task.