

I am a retired Primary/Early Childhood teacher who was employed by Education Queensland for over 25 years. I was Year 2 Key Teacher at Mayfield State School and Year 2 Co-ordinator at Grand Avenue State School for many years. I have a Master of Education (Literacy) from Charles Sturt University. I was employed by QSA to mark the writing task of NAPLAN in 2010 and 2011. My youngest grandchild is currently in Year 10.

My submission is in regard to the writing task of NAPLAN.

- **b) Unintended consequences of Naplan's Introduction:**

The testing method – one test on one day – can have a detrimental effect on children's health.

I have witnessed some very capable Year 3 children become so anxious before taking the test that they have actually vomited. Because these young conscientious students have internalised the importance of the test from various sources such as media, parents and maybe even principal's and teachers' attitudes, they feel pressured to do well.

It reminded me of some students' anxiety and physical illness before the Queensland Scholarship Examination (a state standardized test for children entering High School) and this was abandoned about 50 years ago.

- **c) Naplan's impact on teaching and student learning practices:**

Unfortunately it seems that some teachers are teaching to the test.

When I was marking, it became quite obvious that there were some formulas and ideas well entrenched. The same unique idea would appear again and again. Then a marker nearby would comment on the same unusual notion.

Also, to achieve a high mark for spelling, there has to be correct use of difficult words. The markers have a list of words which form part of this category. It is surprising how many times some of these words appear in children's work, sometimes out of context. It seems to indicate an awareness of words on this list.

It is common practice for students to have school pre-tests prior to the actual test. I have been asked by Principals of several schools to mark these papers. I believe that the time taken to teach these children to take the test would be better used in the actual teaching of writing.

- **e) Potential improvements to the program to improve student learning and assessment:**

As the test is only one indication of the child's writing ability, other samples of the child's work could be submitted for possible consideration.

For example, teachers could send copies of a series of work e.g. daily diary. When I was Year 2 Key Teacher with the Qld Year 2 Tests, I have seen young children (who could not take a test) present a few words on a sheet of paper. However, after perusing the daily diary and other samples of work in the students' portfolio, a true standard was obtained.

I was personally aware of this when my grandson was not stimulated by the topic and wrote less than a line in his Qld Year 2 tests and consequently was identified as a person with needs. He was extremely upset with his sense of failure and being singled out for special attention. My daughter, who is also a teacher, and myself questioned this result and indicated the work we had seen him produce, about a subject in which he had interest, was of a satisfactory standard. His daily diary entries were also lengthy. After review, this decision was changed, he regained his confidence and many years later, is currently studying Law at QUT – a faculty that requires a high level of written skill.

- **g) other relevant matters:**

Markers of Year 3 texts should have infant school experience and be familiar with deciphering the developing cursive handwriting style of Year 3 children so as not to impede the content assessment.

A large number of markers at QSA in 2010 and 2011 did not have Early Childhood experience and often found the handwriting of younger students difficult to decode. Furthermore, markers had time pressure. There was a record of the number of scripts marked per person per day and sometimes there was even feedback and comparison with markers of other states. Therefore, when confronted with a difficult to decipher script and limited time, there was a danger "to mark down" in all facets. Whereas an Early Childhood teacher would be familiar with handwriting styles, and consequently would be free to concentrate on the content.

I hope my findings are of assistance,

Eunice Bailey