

THE SYSTEM

The Naplan test papers arrive at schools up to a week before the testing commences. The Principal then opens the bundles and checks them and reports that the material has arrived. In some schools the papers remain in the Principal's office – in others he hands them to the appropriate teachers.

These papers are simply packed in light-weight plastic.

There is nothing to prevent the Principal or a teacher from opening the bundles – no-one checks that this does not occur.

It is clearly possible for a teacher to open the bundles and then concentrate on teaching either the spelling or math or reading sections right up until test time.

I am aware that when the maths test is done there are two sections and students are given a 10 minute break between the two sections. These students then meet in the playground, compare answers and then can make changes to their test papers when they return to the classroom.

There is no security on the test papers before the test – and in some cases students can chat about information and change their answers during the test.

There is also nothing to prevent a teacher from “assisting” students during the test.

LIKE SCHOOLS

One of the best examples I know is Huntingdale Primary School in Western Australia.

The school has 755 students (8% are “Indigenous students”) and they have a teaching staff of 44, or more than 17 students to each teacher.

Huntingdale is in the southern suburbs of Perth. Most of the teachers drive to school each morning. Listed as a similar school is Cocos Island District High School, with its 111 students and 18 teaching staff. That's less than 7 students for each teacher.

There are no “Indigenous students” on Cocos Island – but for 85% of the students English is a second language. They speak Malay.

Some of the teachers cruise across the lagoon in a boat each morning and evening on their way to and from school.

Now it's obvious the schools are like chalk and cheese – different types of schools, different student/teacher ratios, different everything ... except on the MySchool website which says they are similar.

The only factor that is similar are the schools ICSEA rankings.

ICSEA (Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage)

Every school in Australia has an ICSEA. Schools above the mean value of 1000 are said to be more advantaged and those below less advantaged.

The problem is, ICSEA is not an accurate assessment of school similarity. School data is not used to establish ICSEA values.

ACARA used ABS Census Collection Data sets (CCD). Approximately 220 households equal a CCD. Data gathered in a CCD is averaged to develop four indexes of socio-economic data. 35 variables are used. ACARA used only 14 of these variables. They added two extra school based variables - % of Aboriginal Torres Strait islander enrolments and “remoteness”.

A “regression analysis” is applied – meaning that, in breaking income spread into 10 deciles, ACARA factors in only the lowest and highest deciles when determining the ICSEA. The high income variable does not assign a greater or lesser value to the school according to income ranging above the highest

decile entry point of \$52 000. So, with two like schools as per the ICSEA you could have school A with 60% of students with family incomes of \$60 000, and in school B you could have 60% of students with family income of \$500 000.

Like schools?

Glaring anomalies that have been reported in every State and Territory.

The Chair of ACARA Prof. McGaw admitted to a Senates Estimates Committee (11/2/10) that as many as 10% of ICSEA values have been challenged and changed.

MUMS AND DADS LOVE IT...

We are told that Mums and Dads across Australia love the MySchool website.

In Western Australia, WACSSO (the body representing the Parents and Citizens groups right across this State) are opposed to it.

COMPARING YEAR TO YEAR

The Federal Minister tells us that, with the next lot of data being placed on the website, parents will be able to see the changes in the school's performance from year-to-year.

In Western Australia the average family only remains in a house for around 8 years – that is to say 12.5% of the population move (on average) every year.

With the various booms in the mining industry (and other growth patterns in WA) it is fair to assume that figure is even higher.

So, when the NAPLAN results from a school's Grade 3 two years ago are compared to the Grade 5 this year, there could be a 25% variation in the students in the class.

Movements up or down in the results will have more to do with parents changing jobs or houses as it has to anything that the school can do.

INTERSTATE VARIATIONS

In the vast majority of Western Australia's public schools, Year 7 students are in Primary School with one "generalist" classroom teacher. In New South Wales and Victoria they are in High School with specialist Maths and English teachers.

SUMMARY

NAPLAN has no security on the papers prior to tests, is wide-open for cheating, incorrectly compares schools based on dubious data and now provides comparisons that are erroneous.

And, Federal Funding is based on these results!!!!!!