

Dear Committee Secretary

Inquiry into the administration and reporting of Naplan testing.

I respond to the invitation to provide a submission to the Inquiry and offer the following comments on the Terms of Reference.

I am a primary school teacher at a small coastal school. I have been teaching for 25 years and have an eight year old daughter who sat the Naplan test in 2009. I have taught grade three when QLD testing was implemented and have taught grade three since the introduction of Naplan.

Below are my concerns about Naplan-

- At my school the entire focus for grade 3 5 & 7 of term one and term two up to the Naplan test is the format of Naplan tests, how to do tests, doing previous tests as a whole class and ensuring that the students are exposed to the style of questions and texts and concepts used in the tests. This is regardless of when such concepts are usually introduced in grade three eg: a maths concept that may have been taught in Term 3 or 4 will be covered in term one.
- At my school in term four there is a strong focus in grades 2 4 & 6 on the Naplan test formats and prepare the students for the style of testing & how to do tests of this nature.
- At my school the turnover of students is very high. For example this year up until June we had 33 students in and 36 students out. In previous years we have enrolled more students than our total enrolment at the end of the school year. In fact by grade seven we usually have less than 10 students who have been enrolled since grade 1. Naplan results for our school do not show this information. This year, on the first day of Naplan tests a child was enrolled into my grade 3 class. His results will be part of our data

and used to indicate performance yet he had not attended our school in 2010. Further to this, in the following year when students who have been identified as needing further support are being grouped many of them have already left our school.

- Naplan data when released does not reveal the following information. A student in our grade 3 data from 2009 did not attend our school until Term 4 yet his results were in our Naplan results- he attended other schools in QLD during 2009.
- I am concerned about the fact that students in QLD are not the same age as other students in Australia doing the tests. Last year many of my students were seven years old and this year I also still had students who had not turned eight by the Naplan test dates. I would be happier to do Naplan tests in QLD in September/October as this would make up in some way the age difference between our state and the other states. A teaching friend of mine who works in the primary sector in Melbourne has raised this issue of age difference at a meeting however it was brushed aside and a comment was made to the effect that “such issues have been identified and have yet to be addressed”.
- In our local community Naplan results were used improperly in local media. This was done by comparing schools of the area against each other . There was no regard for “like” schools just negative comparisons between schools which is unfair to the students and their families. Data about Naplan does not indicate days absent, number of schools attended or number of students with learning difficulties or enrolment details.

- I can see some use of Naplan style tests but some issues are still not being addressed. I could use the data to inform my teaching however the data is returned late in the year and some of the students in my class have already left our school and new enrolments have taken their place. As a parent myself my daughters Naplan results were not of great importance to me as I was more interested in her school report. Three tests in one week of a school year are not a “real” indication of performance. If this was true then schools would not need to report at all to parents, the Naplan tests would be enough. In fact Naplan could be done in every grade, every year in May and parents could get this data on their child’s performance as well as the performance of the teachers and the school.
- The media reports on schools performance by comparing results each year but this is not accurate as each year there is a different cohort. For example my class from 2009 is vastly different from 2010 eg: learning difficulties, ESL students, students with disabilities. Naplan results could be used to compare the results of a cohort to indicate progress over grade 3 5 & 7. This data of course at our school is not going to be as useful due to high turnover of the transient population.
- Naplan tests to date have used a narrative yet in 2011 the genre will be a persuasive text. If writing data is going to be compared over grade 3 5 & 7 it should be on the same type of genre – if progress of each students writing is going to be compared. Further more now the focus of teaching writing in our school is going to be changed . In term 4 grade 2 4 & 6 will be working on persuasive texts instead of the previous narrative. More changes because of Naplan .

In conclusion Naplan could be useful to schools and parents but

not until students are the same age, learning from the same curriculum and individual students results are compared over grade 3 5 & 7. Comparing schools seems pointless when it is from one test done in one week of a year by children who are not even the same age.