

To the parliamentary commission,

At the risk of wasting my time should you not heed any of my concerns, I am writing to express my disgust at the LEAGUE TABLES not the NAPLAN. The data for informing where the need lies is already in the individual school results. Unfortunately the parent community have been misled as the government has had those results since 2008 when it first introduced the NAPLAN. If the government so passionately believes in improving student results rather than winning an election, I could forgive them for their stupidity. Please get out to these schools that are struggling and spend the day there, not 5 minutes for a photo opportunity and see what the schools are doing. A child's education involves far more than the teachers and the school where they work. I work in a school with a very dedicated group of people, well trained who are always following up current practice to provide the best of teaching. At no stage have you mentioned the parents and the community and their role.

This year I decided to teach to the test, at least till May (not a well rounded approach to teaching the curriculum). With practice tests already completed there will be seven students in our group of 17 (not all in my class) who will fall below the expected standard. I can hear you saying now, it must be the teaching. Yesterday I had a relative suggest those students must be from broken families. Not true. Only two of those seven are from single parent families. If only it were that simplistic!

Parenting skills and student attitude have a huge bearing on the success or otherwise of student learning. How many of these parents sit down at night and listen to their children read or in turn read to them? Do they have real discussions over the dinner table? No! Many of these students do not have set bed times, evenings are spent in front of the TV or at the computer chatting on msn or Facebook. (I recently completed a survey and was amazed at the number of students accessing this and the length of time spent on Facebook). The students come to school tired and find it difficult to concentrate.

Why do the students at private school do so well? The answer is obvious, but those at the top choose to ignore it. Not because they have the best teachers, but the parents are interested too. They support the learning at home..... and who wouldn't when you are paying \$10 000 and more for fees? The behaviour of students at private school is less disruptive because they can be kicked out if they are ruining the reputation of the school.... not so for the poor old primary schools! They have to be life-threatening before they are removed. In the meantime, slap on the wrist tactics have only minimal effect and disrupt the learning of so many others.

Finally, last year I had a similar cohort. Of the six students below the benchmark, 3 had poor attendance... one girl missed 32 days out of 90 in the first semester (the second slightly less, 28) She has since moved on ... her fourth school in 5 years. The next student arrived at 10:30am most mornings, (and still does) missing the English block. The third also missed a lot of days around 20 with illness and always brought notes, but the child has been seen at the shopping centre with a parent. I believe she is helping Mum at home with two younger autistic brothers and Mum's own issues, but difficult to prove. How many times in a year can

you get gastro? Another student spends six weeks overseas every year and the parents pick her up early from school when it suits (even lunch time). The fifth student has behaviour issues and the 6th is from a non English speaking background. How can we fix all this? With programs, which our school already has, "It's not okay to be away." I haven't seen any change in these students as yet.

This is my suggestion for improving student learning along with dedicated, professional teachers

1. Instead of putting in new tin sheds aka the BER, the government could fund one psychologist for many years in each school, who could work with students and parents on behavioural issues and parenting skills. They could run evening parenting workshops. Currently we have a psychologist, SGO, who comes for afternoon each two or three weeks... a drop in the ocean..... to work with 2 or 3 students.
2. Remove the benefits from families who are not sending their children to school.... the School Guidance Officer making home visits along with other support people from DHS has not worked!!!! Meantime the children are the ones who suffer and fall further behind.
3. Extra English classes for students where no English is spoken at home. Even for students who have been here 3 years, they still struggle with the grammar and the colloquial language.

For the past three years I have spent time before school working with students whose parents can get their child there early (only those from a NESB families seem to manage it), to give them some more 'one on one' to improve their learning, mostly in English.

I have been teaching for 30 years, am passionate about my work and work tirelessly to improve student learning. As a Labor voter most of my life, I can tell you, they have lost my vote . And to sell League tables to the public as the best way to improve student learning is an out and out lie, totally pointing the finger at the teachers AGAIN!!!

I'm incensed that I am made to look like a poor teacher in the public arena, when current colleagues and many others I have worked with will tell you otherwise. People who have nothing to do with schooling or looking up their own children's results, have scanned through these results and asked me, "How can this be?"

While I have stuck strictly to the test conditions I am sure there are some that have not. I have overheard a couple of teachers at a Professional Development Day from another school in Victoria who took the test home the night before, supposedly to make a table to collect data before the test was collected by the courier. Our principal gave me the test to administer 15 minutes before the start of school on the day of each test. Perhaps every school should have a supervisor to oversee the

testing as they do for Year 11 and 12.

The two biggest issues that see the large drift to private schools and the Catholic system is not about the teachers as much as it is about discipline (as staff are supported by their community) and resources such as a welfare officer, extra staff that can provide small group focus and 'one on one' to support the learning of students falling below the benchmarks.