

I am a primary school teacher, currently teaching a 2/3 composite and have many concerns about NAPLAN and league tables that are misleading and have a detrimental impact on students, schools and education in general. My concerns are outlined below.

Teaching programs are dictated by what is in the test and how it will be tested. Next year's writing task is a persuasive text. Consequently, year levels leading into Years 3, 5, 7 or 9 will need to ensure this is done regardless of whether or not that was part of the English program that had already been mapped out for the year. In my case, persuasive text wasn't part of the Year 2 program for 2010, however what was planned has had to be replaced by a unit focusing on teaching this writing task.

The timing of the tests means teachers need to deliver a full year's content in 3 months. Children are continually introduced to new concepts that they need to master by the middle of May, placing unrealistic expectations on both teachers and students. How can any worthwhile program be done properly under these circumstances?

Excessive amounts of time spent practising the test is a waste of valuable teaching time. Teachers are placed under enormous pressure to achieve results because the future of the school is dependent upon their results. The teaching program focuses on what is to be tested and on practising for the tests, rather than providing a well balanced quality education program. Consequently, curriculum areas not tested often receive much less attention.

Particularly in the younger years, large amounts of time need to be spent on teaching the children how to follow the testing procedure correctly. Under normal assessment procedures in a classroom, children would be familiar with the task requirements. NAPLAN testing procedures follow completely different formats and children need to learn how to follow the requirements correctly. There are a lot more valuable learning experiences than teaching children how to follow the procedures to complete a NAPLAN test.

In the past three years, students have been expected to plan, write, proofread and edit a narrative, from a stimulus they haven't seen before, in 40 minutes. This is an unreasonably short amount of time to produce work of the quality expected. Writing a narrative requires a great deal of creativity and high quality writing skills. Even many adults would struggle to produce a piece of quality literature in a 40 minute time frame. As educators, we are supposed to be providing children with real-life learning experiences that will help them succeed throughout their life. Realistically, how often will the majority of children even write a narrative in their adult life, let alone do so in such a short period of time.

Everyone has different learning styles and in our teaching practice we are encouraged to deliver quality programs allowing every child to learn according to their individual style. The preparation and delivery of NAPLAN contradicts best teaching practice. NAPLAN only allows for an archaic method of delivery that expects all children to be able to perform. If this method of delivery is not their preferred learning style they will more than likely underachieve in this one off testing process.

NAPLAN testing places enormous amounts of unnecessary stress on children, some not 8 years of age. These children are required to complete a test in a method of delivery they have never experienced before and are expected to perform. Should an 8 year old be placed in such a stressful situation? My experience with NAPLAN tests has been with Year 3 and I have seen many children extremely anxious. I remember one bright little girl in tears because she was so concerned about doing well that she was agonising over every question. Surely this is an unreasonable expectation for children of such a young age.

Research suggests that the introduction of league tables hasn't improved educational outcomes anywhere in the world. Evidence shows it has a detrimental effect on schooling. These results provide the public with information that can be misrepresented, reduce the quality of education received by students and create inequities among schools. Why would we follow suit?