

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority supplementary information for the Senate Inquiry into the administration and reporting of NAPLAN testing (October 2010)

My School website

My School Working Party

In early May 2010, the then Minister for Education, the Hon. Julia Gillard MP, announced that ACARA would establish a *My School* Working Party to address stakeholder concerns about version 1 of the website and inform development of the second version of the site.

The Working Party was made up of nominees from principal, union, parents and state schools associations as well as independent literacy and numeracy experts. The Working Party was tasked with providing further professional advice on the use of student performance data and other indicators of school effectiveness as ACARA develops *My School* Website version 2.

The Working Party was also invited to provide advice on how the information on the website could be used by schools and their communities to foster school improvement and to improve the educational performances of students. Information currently on the site will remain.

Working Party membership:

Professor Barry McGaw AO	Chair, ACARA Board
Dr Peter Hill	Chief Executive Officer, ACARA
Professor Max Coltheart	Emeritus Professor of Cognitive Science, Macquarie University
Mr Ian Dalton	Executive Director, Australian Parents Council
Mr Neville A Feeney	Executive Officer, Catholic Secondary Principals Australia
Ms Fiona Forbes	President, Australian Special Education Principals Association
Mr Angelo Gavrielatos	Federal President, Australian Education Union
Mr Rupert Macgregor	Executive Director, Australian Council of State School Organisations
Professor Geoff Masters	Chief Executive Officer, Australian Council for Educational Research
Dr Thelma Perso	Executive Director, Literacy and Numeracy Taskforce, NT Department of Education and Training
Ms Leonie Trimper	President, Australian Primary Principals Association
Ms Sheree Vertigan	President, Australian Secondary Principals Association
Mr Chris Watt	Federal Secretary, Independent Education Union of Australia

The Working Party met on six occasions between June and August 2010 with secretariat support provided by ACARA.

Enhancements endorsed by Ministers in June 2010

At its meeting in June 2010, MCEECDYA responded to community feedback and evaluation work on the *My School* website and endorsed the implementation of measures to protect the integrity of data on the site and the collection of direct student data. Ministers also approved the terms of reference and makeup of the *My School* Working Party.

Ministers also requested that ACARA investigate options for using direct student measures such as parent education and occupation levels, for enhancing the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) used as a basis to compare schools' NAPLAN results on the website. ACARA was also requested to develop student growth/progress measures for depiction on *My School*.

Progress since ACARA's first submission to the Inquiry

Over the course of its meetings the Working Party were presented with a series of draft *My School* screenshots and other information, and provided advice and comment to ACARA on the development of proposals for the second version of the site. The primary outcome of the meetings of the Working Party was the development of a number of recommendations for *My School* version 2. Working Party members provided advice to ACARA's Board that increasing the clarity and usefulness of the website will further enhance the Australian community's understanding of Australia's schools. The majority of the Working Party's recommendations were adopted by the ACARA Board in the first week of October.

On 15 October MCEECDYA discussed the website and agreed to the enhancements referred to above. Ministers also requested that ACARA develop additional options for the school profile webpage and provide these options and advice out of session. It is expected that the final makeup of the website will be agreed in coming weeks in preparation for a December release.

Most enhancements will be implemented in December 2010. Others are identified for implementation in 2011 or beyond in future versions of the website. The following section sets out progress made by ACARA and the anticipated timing of implementation of the website enhancements.

For implementation in Version 2—December 2010 release

1. School financial data

Ministers have agreed that financial data for each school will be reported on the second version of the website in late 2010. This will include 2009 recurrent income, disaggregated by source of funding (Commonwealth government; State/Territory government; school-initiated fees, charges and voluntary contributions; other sources). It will also include 2009 capital expenditure, similarly broken down by source of funding.

2. Growth data on literacy and numeracy achievement

Ministers have endorsed ACARA's recommendations on the depiction of the growth in learning of students who took NAPLAN in 2008 and 2010 in the same school in both years.

3. Reporting of school contextual information

ACARA will expand the reporting of contextual information about schools by publishing the percentages of students with a language background other than English.

Ministers also endorsed the expansion of the text field in which principals are able to describe the profile of the school. Expanded school profile statements are currently being collected from schools.

4. Using student level data to compute ICSEA

Ministers have endorsed ACARA's recommendation to use a new formula for ICSEA which includes the use of student-level socioeconomic status (SES), specifically, parents' or carers' education and occupation. This information will be used in the calculation of school ICSEA values where available.

5. Other enhancements to ICSEA

Ministers endorsed ACARA's proposals to implement the following measures:

- obtaining updated and comprehensive home address data for all students to improve the accuracy of ICSEA in cases where student address data are used (i.e. in the absence of sufficient direct student data on parental occupation and education) including within the ICSEA formula a variable to take account of the effect of language background other than English.
- improving the process for quality assuring ICSEA values for individual schools and, for those for which Census Collection District data are used, identifying instances where the initial estimate is inappropriate.

6. Action to minimise misuse of *My School* data

At their June 2010 meeting Ministers endorsed ACARA's proposals to investigate:

- a 'click-wrap' requiring users to indicate their agreement up-front to terms and conditions of use of *My School* data;
- a tool to deter automatic scraping of data from the website.

These measures have been endorsed by Ministers and will be implemented prior to the release of version 2 of the *My School* website.

7. Reporting of participation data

Ministers endorsed ACARA's proposal to display more prominently information about student absences, withdrawals and exclusions from NAPLAN testing.

Individual school and national student participation data will be reported alongside NAPLAN results on version 2 of the website.

For implementation in Version 2 of the *My School* website—update in 2011

Reporting of results

Ministers have endorsed ACARA's proposal to provide a facility for schools to provide a commentary on their NAPLAN and senior secondary results. This will be implemented before version 3 of the website, with the comments to be collected and reported in the first half of 2011.

For implementation in Version 3 of the *My School* website (2011) or beyond

1. Search facilities and filters

Ministers have endorsed ACARA's proposals to investigate enhancing search facilities and filters by allowing users to refine their search for like and statistically similar schools.

2. Nationally comparable senior secondary information

Work is being undertaken to obtain more nationally consistent data, especially indicators of senior secondary outcomes and including information relating to Year 12 attainment.

3. Satisfaction with schooling

ACARA has been requested to investigate the feasibility of a national satisfaction survey of parents, teachers and students to enable nationally comparable satisfaction information to be published on the website in future. It is intended that results of satisfaction surveys will be published in the 2011 version of the *My School* website. ACARA has convened a working group to provide advice in relation to satisfaction surveys.

4. Student population indicators

In the absence of an agreed national definition of disability and national data based on this definition, information on student disabilities cannot be reported. The federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations is leading work to develop a nationally agreed definition of disability.

5. Teaching staff levels of expertise

New national certification/registration standards for teachers are being developed. It is intended that once they have been implemented, information on the proportion of teachers at each level of expertise will be published. These data will not be available for the 2010 version of the *My School* website.

DETAIL ON KEY AREAS

ICSEA and school comparisons

A number of stakeholders in the Australian school sector, as well as sections of the broader community, voiced concerns about the fairness of comparisons of school NAPLAN results based on ICSEA. While the ICSEA formula used in *My School* version 1 had high predictive validity, it was based on Census Collection District (CCD) data, which led in a small number of cases to anomalous ICSEA values.

Some stakeholder concerns related to the currency of the census data used in ICSEA. While the data provided ICSEA measure with high validity, the use of census data does have a number of limitations:

- households in a particular CCD may not be homogeneous and not directly representative of the students living in them;
- geo-coding student address data is difficult in some areas, especially in more remote areas; and
- data are from the 2006 census and are becoming increasingly outdated. Data from the 2011 census will not be available until 2013.

Ministers requested at their September 2009 and June 2010 meetings that ACARA investigate the use of direct student data to enhance ICSEA.

An analysis undertaken by ACARA compared the current ICSEA formula with a new formula based on student level-measures of parent education and occupation status, as well as considerations for LBOTE and the proportion of Indigenous students. The result of this modelling indicates that the new formula will improve ICSEA's ability to predict school NAPLAN performance, in addition to having greater face validity. Analyses indicate that there is a 7% increase in the explanatory power of ICSEA when direct student-level indicators of parent education and occupation are used.

Under the methodology endorsed by Ministers, data on parent occupation and education collected directly by schools from parents will be used (where available) in preference to census data. This will ensure that the ICSEA value assigned to a school closely reflects the socioeconomic backgrounds of the students (SES) actually enrolled in that school. ACARA is currently collecting updated direct parent data from jurisdictions and sectors. At the same time, ACARA is collecting updated student address data to enhance the quality and completeness of the indirect parent data (census data).

The new model utilises 'direct parent data'; however, to obtain an accurate indication of the backgrounds of students in each school, it is necessary that a certain percentage of data in each school be available. Where the available direct parent data do not meet this threshold, or where updated student address data are unavailable, the school's ICSEA calculation will revert to the current calculation based on 2007 CCD information.

Once updated student information is collected for 2010, the ICSEA will be recalculated using the recommended approaches. All data included in the revised ICSEA will be tested prior to broader distribution and will involve extensive consultation with the ICSEA Expert Panel.

Additionally, the ACARA ICSEA Expert Panel has investigated and MCEECDYA has approved the inclusion of a new variable for disadvantaged language background other than English (LBOTE) status in the revised calculation of ICSEA.

Reporting of schools' financial information

ACARA established the Finance Data Working Group (FDWG) comprising senior finance officials from Federal, State and Territory education departments, together with representatives from the Catholic and Independent sectors. Considerable work has been required to obtain not only the data but also achieve agreement across jurisdictions, sectors and systems to the methodology for collecting data, given the different accounting systems and degree of devolution of finance across states and sectors.

At their April 2010 meeting Ministers requested that the Finance Data Working Group investigate the collection and reporting of information about schools' assets. The Working Group advised that this was not logistically possible within the timeframe and presented a number of complexities that would take time to resolve. ACARA advised Ministers at their June 2010 meeting that it will investigate this issue for future years and provide further advice following implementation of version 2 of the *My School* website.

ACARA has engaged an independent accounting firm to:

- undertake an assurance/audit process to ensure that jurisdictions/sectors have complied with the agreed methodology;
- provide a written report on the comparability of the data.

The firm is assisting with the collection of the data to ensure that jurisdictions and sectors have complied with the agreed methodology. The firm will provide ACARA with a final report on the comparability of data and a letter of assurance.

School performance data and depiction of margins of error

With three years' data now available, 2010 provides an opportunity to enhance the display of school performance in NAPLAN.

At their October 2010 meeting Ministers endorsed ACARA's proposal that the pages depicting NAPLAN results will provide an enhanced presentation of school participation information and NAPLAN results by:

- including a table with percentages of participating students as well as exempt, absent and withdrawn students;
- providing a depiction of the school's NAPLAN performance in a test domain across the years, 2008-2010; and
- providing an indication of the range in which the school's average performance could possibly be located (with 90% confidence).

Depiction of growth (student progress)

At their June 2010 meeting Ministers endorsed ACARA's investigation of the depiction of student progress on *My School*, with this depiction based on matched student data and displaying only the results for students who undertook the NAPLAN tests in 2008 and 2010 in the same school. Data are not included for students who changed schools in this period.¹

ACARA advised the *My School* Working Party that in version 2 of the website a depiction of student progress (growth) between testing years aggregated to school level would be included. Members noted that this information would build and improve upon the existing mean scores.

Members supported this enhancement as it added to the narrative of school performance over time. The Working Party suggested that the depiction of growth should closely follow the model of reporting NAPLAN in the current Report to Parents and that it also indicate the degree of imprecision in the estimate of growth.

To mediate the complex and technical nature of the analysis around student progress data, comments will be provided on the school's results. These comments will be generated automatically from the underlying data.

¹ As a result, student progress data are available only between Years 3 and 5 (and in some States,

NAPLAN Test Administration

Information on ACARA's plans to enhance the security of test administration

ACARA's plans to enhance the security of test administration include:

1. strengthening the protocols and monitoring of security for 2011 – ACARA is currently working with the states and territories to progress these matters,
2. mounting a multi-level communication strategy in 2011 to further develop understanding of the required protocols for the management of test materials on the part of schools, principals and staff (as some breaches may have been the result of a lack of knowledge of the protocols).

Background

Protocols

- ACARA prescribes security requirements for states and territories, schools and principals in a nationally agreed document – *National Protocols for Test Administration*. The protocols include detailed expectations and requirements for the management of tests before, during and after test administration at the school level.
- ACARA works with states and territories to regularly review and update the protocols and is currently doing so for 2011.

Shared responsibility

- ACARA is responsible for the security of all test material during the process of development until final camera-ready copy format. States and territories are responsible for administration of testing, including test security. All state and territory jurisdictions have comprehensive high security requirements for access to and handling and storage of test materials.
- During the development process, the majority of work is undertaken by contractors. All contractors are required to confirm that their employees, premises, IT networks, processes and storage facilities meet the highest levels of security as prescribed by ACARA. Audits are undertaken to ensure compliance with these strict requirements.
- When test documents are complete, image files are provided to each state and territory for the purpose of having the tests printed, packed and dispatched to schools.

Breaches

- It is the responsibility of Test Administration Authorities to investigate all allegations of security breaches, cheating and other test incidents that occur within their jurisdictions.
- Depending on the circumstances within a jurisdiction, the investigation of incidents is undertaken by the government sector authority or, for non-government schools, referred to the respective non-government sector body.
- The process for the investigation of incidents is complex as a result of the varied arrangements by which schools are managed. The process for disciplining schools,

principals and teachers is also complex and subject to a similar variety of arrangements.

- In 2010, 1M+ students sat over five million tests in nearly 10,000 schools across Australia. In 2010, all breaches were localised and very contained. There were:
 - seven confirmed minor breaches of security,
 - two remain under investigation and
 - three reports that proved to be unfounded.

While ACARA has a zero security breach target, seven minor cases given the size of test cohort is not unusual for programs of this magnitude.

Annual statement

- Reported breaches of test security will be included in an annual statement on the ACARA website that records all reports, provides detail of any alleged incident, what the outcome of any investigation was and what action, if any, was taken as a result of the investigation.
- Individual or schools are not identified in the register.
- The register has been refined through liaison with all states and territories to determine the status of all reported cases, to reach agreement on common definitions for incidents and for a proposed format for the presentation of this information.
- The statement includes cases that were confirmed, that remain under investigation or were found not to be substantiated.
- A draft version of ACARA's first statement of test incidents is currently with education ministers for their final approval.