

Simplistic scrutiny brings overbearing pressure on students and staff;
American model alive and well

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The simplistic and ill-informed nature of the Myschool website means the volume of questioning that resulted when the website was announced and released was enormous. The amount of parents that wanted to move their children based on ill information and through their own mistakes in reading the website meant conversations were rife leading well into this years NAPLAN Tests - resulting in enormous pressure placed on those administering this years Tests - students and staff.

For the students, their parents had talked to them about the Website and further placed pressure on students regarding 'the Tests'. For staff, the pressure not to have any 'pink' or 'red' in their designated year level was likewise seen as either perceived or real pressure. In schools where there is only one year 3, 5, 7, & 9 teacher - and in communities which are small and can easily identify these teachers within the community - the pressure to perform rose to new and ridiculous levels.

I supported Literacy T&D for staff at our school some 6 years ago by a woman called Margaret Menner. At that time when having philosophical discussions about how we can across the board increase literacy levels of young Australians, she stated 'God help this country if you go down the American model of Nationalised Testing, where staff throw out the curriculum and simply teach to the tests due to the pressures exerted on them by school Principals. Margaret had just returned from America in 2004 having seen first hand the narrowing of curriculum and focus of teaching 'to the Tests'. Six years later we see the same results occurring here in this Country, a country which once lead the world in public education, but now follow foolhardily others who are marginally better than us in International Education standings.