

NAPLAN,

As an educator of several years experience, I have found the reporting of the NAPLAN test results to be both misleading and insulting to students, parents and schools. The system instigated under the My School site will create a culture of blame, misinformation and falsifying of tests.

What appears to have been missed in the whole debate/media circus is that the NAPLAN tests were designed (and sold to schools) as diagnostic tests. In other words the tests were to provide schools, students and parents with relevant, individualised information to target improved learning for all. To use this data in an aggregated manner and to then use this aggregation to rank school/student performance is incredibly wrong. Instead of identifying areas of concern for groups and individuals, schools will now be focussing on teaching to the tests so that they do not gain a red. Reporting the NAPLAN tests as a definitive measure of student or school achievement is like awarding driver's licences (or not) to learner drivers after they have undertaken their first driving lesson or attempted the practice test for the first time.

My own children are an example of the misleading nature of such data – both achieved relatively low bands in the Basic Skills Tests in primary school, both have gone on to be school captains for their High School, one has just commenced his PHD in medicinal chemistry and will have several publications to his name by the end of the year; and the other will have completed his senior studies and embarked on a university course by the start of 2011. The tests are only a snapshot of achievement and provide poor evidence of learning, value adding (as much as I hate to use the term) and future success. The tests do provide information about areas that could become the focus of further study for individuals or groups within a school.

The money and time spent(wasted) preparing and administering the tests would be better spent in providing training for teachers, more teachers, smaller classes (to allow for individualisation of programs and learning) and more effective/efficient methods of reporting. Provide support for teachers and parents not punishment.