

The effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy

QoN – Senator Penny Wright

Question 1 - ACARA’s website states NAPLAN tests are to “provide parents and schools with an understanding of how individual students are performing at the time of the tests.” Do you agree NAPLAN is a snapshot of an individual’s learning?

- a. **Is it not a contradiction to say NAPLAN is a test to track individual student performance and then to use NAPLAN figures to compare schools in a way that suggests some schools are better than others (red or green on the My School site)?**
- b. **The South Australian Primary Principals Association says “Many grants to schools are based on the school’s results in comparison with other schools. This has resulted in the problematic nature of funding where schools are 'rewarded' with extra funding when students are not successful and when they improve they have the additional support removed”.**
 - i. **If NAPLAN results are a snapshot of student learning at an individual level, is it appropriate for NAPLAN to be tied to monetary incentives, such as school funding?**
 - ii. **Can you identify any possible adverse consequences arising from this situation?**

ACARA agrees that NAPLAN provides a snapshot of an individual’s learning. The tests provide parents and schools with an understanding of how individual students are performing at the time of the tests. Importantly, the results also provide schools, states and territories data that can be used to review how education programs are working and which aspects of literacy and numeracy need to be prioritised for improvement. NAPLAN tests are one aspect of each school’s assessment and reporting process for individual students, and do not replace the extensive, ongoing assessments made by teachers about each student’s performance.

Part (a).

No. During the development of the NAPLAN program and the design of the technical specifications of the NAPLAN tests, a range of data uses was taken into consideration.

My School compares student performance in NAPLAN tests, but does not purport to measure all things that are relevant in considering school performance. There is space on each school profile page for schools to include information about their school to complement the NAPLAN data, including links to school websites. This element of the school profile page is the most prominent aspect of each school profile page and visible to users prior to being able to access NAPLAN results. Additionally, the *My School* Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) was created to enable meaningful and fair comparisons of National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) test achievement by students in schools across Australia.

Part (b).

(i) One of the intended uses of NAPLAN results that was considered during the design of NAPLAN tests was the use of aggregated results to inform funding decisions.

ACARA considers that use of NAPLAN data by governments, school systems and individual schools to identify where extra effort needs to be made to improve student outcomes is consistent with the program's intent and policy directions confirmed by ministers expressed prior to the tests commencing. In some instances this extra effort may require additional funding.

(ii) Deliberate underperformance for the purposes of attracting additional funding is a possible adverse consequence of the use of NAPLAN data for informing funding decisions. However, there is no evidence that this has occurred anywhere in Australia. Public reporting of school level NAPLAN results via *My School* would discourage this behaviour as schools are accountable to their community for sudden and unexplained declines in their results. Abnormalities in results would be apparent in a way that was not possible prior to the publication of school level NAPLAN data and this transparency works as a safeguard against this possible adverse consequence.