

From:  
Mr Paul Rose

I am the principal of Ballarat Secondary College, Ballarat Victoria. There are more private/Catholic/Low fee Christian secondary schools in Ballarat than there are public schools. Over 50% of year 7 students (our first year of secondary education) attend private schools. There is not an equitable distribution of student abilities across the sectors. The private schools take the majority of high skills students. Year 7 students entering my school in 2009 had an average reading ability equivalent to the year 4 standard and an average numeracy ability equivalent to less than the year 4 standard.

For my school's teachers the main game is not to progress students by one year level each year. It is to progress students to a point where they have caught up to the year 10 standards by the end of year 10. That means making progress of much more than one year's development in literacy and numeracy per year for four years. This we are doing for many students and the number grows each year as we get better at this project.

In 2009 the school's internal testing program, using internationally verified testing procedures, showed that 615 of our year 7 students progressed at a faster than expected rate between February and September. They were catching up.

However, on NAPLAN results the overwhelming majority of students were below the year 7 benchmark. So when results are published it is this fact that is published - not the progress that the students have made. By the time they are in year 9, the students will have made more progress but will still give results in NAPLAN that suggest that they have not met the year 9 benchmarks. More progress but more reported failure.

But by the end of year 10, eighteen months later, there is very strong evidence to suggest that they will be at the required standard. Four years of dedicated work by teachers and students. Expectations of success at the end of the journey. But public naming and shaming at both key stages along the journey from year 7 to year 10. The students' school publicly listed as being one that is unsuccessful in delivering literacy outcomes.

It is not true - but the mud sticks.

The publication of NAPLAN results does not support student learning at my school. It does not give parents a true picture of the learning in literacy and numeracy that is taking place. It does not provide any valuable information for my teachers that they don't already get from elsewhere. NAPLAN results are misleading, summative data.

I oppose the use of NAPLAN on the My Schools website.

Paul Rose  
Principal