

## Keep NAPLAN Results More Transparent

Our website [www.bettereducation.com.au](http://www.bettereducation.com.au) provides informative and comparative NAPLAN results and information including private school scholarships and selective schools to parents wanting to make choices about schooling for their children. We also provide free service to the community in Australia and abroad by answering questions via emails. The website is just a hobby, and not for commercial purposes. Advertising on the site only covers the running cost, but not the labour cost. But we have been ordered to withdraw the NAPLAN results from our website, see the [ABC News](#).

Why cannot we keep school results more transparent? Why some people are so scared of the NAPLAN ranking tables? "The transparency and accountability, especially through the wide availability of school performance data, can only benefit policymaking in the education sector, as well as assisting decision-making by parents". As we all know, parents would not make their choice of children's schools based simply on academic performance, but it is one of the major factors they would consider. Underachieving schools won't be disadvantaged as it could be a powerful argument for more resources for them. Then there comes performance improvement. They will become most improved schools!

We started this website following our daughter's great achievement in VCE about 2 years ago. We thought it was time for us to make some contribution to the Australian society by sharing our experience on educating our children with other parents. Shortly after a successful launch, we received lots of online enquiries about school results and how to choose a school. Then we implemented high school results and ranking before My School was established. We extended to NAPLAN results this year. Considering Australia is a country with a large education export, our website could do good for Australia as it has attracted a lot of parents from overseas to look for better schools for their children.

We have received lots of support from our community:

"I am a teacher and curriculum coordinator of a large secondary school, but am currently on family leave, expecting my second child. NAPLAN and its transparency is essential for everyone. There is nothing to fear. For schools and teachers that are underperforming, then we can clearly identify where help and support is needed. Schools that excel have then got the opportunity to share their knowledge and best practice. This is good for teachers, good for parents and ultimately vital for our students. If we don't identify where we can gain maximum benefit for our children, then we are failing them. The education of our children should always be the focus. It is our responsibility and obligation to them. Hiding problems does nothing but deny them their basic rights to access what should be available to all, quality education and access to quality practices."

"Thank you for your e mail and please be assured that your work is appreciated. I find your site very useful for providing in one place much of the performance data available for Australian schools. I agree that transparency and accountability, especially through the wide availability of school performance data, can only benefit policymaking in the education sector, as well as assisting decision-making by parents.

...the OECD's Indicators of Education Systems (INES) Project, whose best known output is the annual "Education at a Glance" publication providing comparative educational indicators

across OECD and selected non-OECD countries. This is essentially an education benchmarking exercise and would probably be the biggest and most prestigious international exercise of its type (in any field), and the publication is the OECD's "best seller". I am naturally a strong supporter of the widespread dissemination of educational information and of its informed use.

I used to attend OECD technical meetings for this project every six months or so. When I mentioned to my counterparts in other countries that some states in Australia prevent access to data that enable comparison of SSCE or ATAR results across schools the general reaction was one of "how do they get away with it?" I think the teachers' union opposition to NAPLAN in general and to NAPLAN benchmarking of schools in particular was predictable. I think that the unions are not so much afraid that "the public will be misled by NAPLAN league tables" but rather that the public will not be misled. I think the teachers' unions do themselves a disservice by their opposition to aspects of NAPLAN and are partly driven by ideological biases, which are offended by the apparent better performance of non-government and selective schools in many inter-school comparisons.

I would urge you not to give in to the unions and to keep publishing the NAPLAN rankings, as well as your other school data. NAPLAN comparative data (especially identification of comparable schools) need further refinement but this will happen over time. Already there is strong evidence that NAPLAN has been widely welcomed and extensively accessed by the community."

"This attempt to silence you is unacceptable – there is no secret to the fact that there is a powerful relationship between poverty and poor school achievement. The opposition to publishing NAPLAN rankings is only in the interests of maintaining the status quo, that is, to avoid governments having to face the uncomfortable reality that the schools at the bottom of the social heap are also underachieving academically. It's a puzzle why unions are so hot on this issue. It could be a powerful argument for more resources for underachieving schools."

A career English teacher living and working in China wrote to us: "To answer the perennial question of which are the academically superior schools in England is easy, there is a web site that lists all that countries private (independent) schools in decreasing order of academic success. My problem is Australia, my home-land to which I encourage Asian parents to think of first...I am trying to support the education system in my country but am hindered by a lack of easily obtainable and credible information".

"Just the demands of the Teachers' Union. What have they done for the promotion of education? All they have done is protecting some under-performing teachers."

"While I hope and pray the website doesn't come down, I'd like to take the cautionary measure of copying and saving the Reading & Numeracy tables for both 2008 and 2009."

"I migrated to Melbourne a few yrs ago with two pre-schoolers. I had a lot of trouble looking for suitable schools as there was no published info about their performance. I sent my kids to a school which did not cater to their learning needs and caused them a lot of anxiety. I don't think publishing the NAPLAN results and ranking the schools will disadvantage the "weaker" schools. In fact, it will be good evidence that more resources are required at these schools."

"When we found out I was pregnant 3 years ago, we moved to a bigger house in a cheaper suburb. It was a step outside my comfort zone, being the inner Eastern suburbs of Melbourne, and my biggest concern was the standard of the government schools in the area. It's an extremely important issue for me. To give you a sense of my enthusiasm, I have visited 7 primary schools so far with 3 more left on my list, and have enrolled my son in 4 non-government high schools. And he's not yet 2!! Given that we are currently renting, our decision on where we ultimately buy will be substantially influenced by the standard of local school. The ranking tables on the bettereducation website have been phenomenally helpful in reassuring me of the quality of education in our area. The visits are to give me a 'feeling' for the schools and their principals but for me it's the combination of 'feeling' plus results that will ultimately make me feel comfortable.

Please don't get rid of this website. It will force me to try to create my own tables at home which would be ridiculously time-consuming."

"I think it is outrageous that the teacher's union can demand 'Better Education' to withdraw all NAPLAN school rankings from your website. What rights and on what ground do they have on such demand. This is a free country. What are they trying to hide? Website like yours has kept me informed on what are the high and under performing schools out there so I can determine what schools best suit my children."

"In 2008, my family and I migrated from Malaysia to settle in Melbourne. Back then I did not have your wonderfully informative website with primary schools and Naplan results ranking to guide me in my choice of a public primary school for my child. I made my choice by inquiring from my neighbours and mothers in the nearby shopping centres.

In these 2 years, my child's school consistently provided many interesting excursions, incursions, sports and drama activities but it did not have the same focus for literacy and numeracy subjects. This was evident in the published 2009 Naplan results of the school.

The school principal is not thrilled with the MySchool and Bettereducation websites because both are reminders of what is lacking in the school - serious learning for both underachieving and achieving students. This is a wake-up call because the parents now know how badly the school has let down the students.

I strongly support your website because it retains several years of various academic results and hopefully Naplan results will be one of them. These records of Naplan results will guide parents to make informed decisions about their children's education and push for improvements where needed. Thank you and keep up the good work!"

"I would support the ongoing availability of this data. As an overseas parent moving to Australia I have found it very difficult to find any data that can provide an extra dimension to the glossy brochures that the private schools provide- data is often non comparable and the schools seem to pick quotes on all sorts of different parameters that in the end they are pretty meaningless. I have used the Naplan results as an additional piece of information but not the only one in deciding which schools to apply to."

"As parents of a child who is about to commence primary school, we have found this site to be an invaluable source of useful information. It has helped us cut through a lot of the ambiguity associated with selecting an appropriate school for our child. We would be very distressed to see such data be withdrawn. As tax payers, we believe that if this information is available to education authorities, then it should be made accessible to all parents who chose to use it."

"I have been living abroad and your website helps me a lot to my customers when they move to Australia and choose the place they live. They are very happy with my information which I get from your website and I full support your hard work and deeply appreciate it a lot."

"We really do appreciate what's provided in the website. It is very informative and we believe it provide reliable comparative data. As parents, we would not make our choice of children's schools based simply on academic performance, but it is one of the major factors we would consider. We believe in publicity of results from assessments as such making schools or teachers more accountable for the resources that have been entrusted to them. Thank you for your dedication to advancing Australia's education."

"I can relate to, and understand your concerns. I have myself sent few e-mails to Hon. Julia Gillard and pleaded with her to keep school results more transparent. My daughter is in year 6 and I am relieved she is going to go out of public to private school. I find the education system in Australia self destructive and with no regards for the future of country. Teachers Union only cares about their own "hip pocket" and to safe their face for bad teaching practices. Maybe they should stop disclosing sports results as well, so that we don't offend the ones who didn't win or came last. It is shocking and devastating for the future of this country. The only ones who will get better education are the rich, who will be able to pay for extra tuition, coaching schools and private schools. The truth is that the Union wants to keep the poor illiterate and uneducated."

"My son will be starting primary school next year. Thanks to your website I can make an informed decision about which school I can send him to. There was absolutely no information about all the overall performance of schools until now. It all seemed so secretive in the past."

“You have done a fantastic job. Schooling is playing an important part of every child. Parents need to know the performance of the school their children are / to be enrolled in. Ranking the school based on NAPLAN may not reflect the whole picture of the quality of a school. But I think most of the parents are intelligent enough to assess a school not purely based on one piece of information. The information actually provides a very good reference. I don't know why some people think others lack of the ability to make their own judgement.”

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We are determined to keep school results more transparent. Please support our work.

Yours sincerely,

Mr and Mrs Wang