

NAPLAN Reporting Review – ACT

Government response to the issues Paper

Introduction

The Education Council of the Council of Australian Governments commissioned a review of the current approach to the presentation of data from the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), including information published on the My School website.

The review welcomes written submissions from those involved in schooling in Australia and other parties interested in contributing to the review. Specifically, the review is seeking feedback on four issues:

1. Perceptions of NAPLAN, including the potential for misinterpretation or misuse of data;
2. How My School and NAPLAN contribute to understanding of student progress and achievement;
3. How schools use achievement data, including NAPLAN, to inform teaching; and
4. How My School and NAPLAN data are reported to students and parents.

This paper represents the ACT position on the questions posed by the Review. The ACT response notes and takes account of the principles and protocols for reporting on schooling agreed by education ministers in 2008, including those applying to My School, as reflected in the Melbourne Declaration on Education Goals for Young Australians.

Four general principles were articulated in the agreement, along with four principles that related to the specific interests of schools, parents and families, along with the community and school systems and the governments that support them:

1. Principle one: Reporting should be in the broad public interest.
2. Principle two: Reporting on the outcomes of schooling should use data that is valid, reliable and contextualised.
3. Principle three: Reporting should be sufficiently comprehensive to enable proper interpretation and understanding of the information.
4. Principle four: Reporting should involve balancing the community's right to know with the need to avoid the misinterpretation or misuse of the information.
5. Principle five: Schools require reliable, rich data on the performance of their students because they have the primary accountability for student outcomes.
6. Principle six: Parents and families need information about schooling, including data on the performance of their child, schools and systems, to help them to develop informed judgements, make choices and engage with their children's education and the school community.
7. Principle seven: The community should have access to information that enables them to understand the performance of schools and the context in which they perform and to evaluate the decisions taken by governments.
8. Principle eight: School systems and governments need sound information on school performance to support ongoing improvement for students and schools. They also need to monitor and evaluate the impacts of the use and release

The ACT Submission below has been informed by more than ten years' experience with NAPLAN and NAPLAN reporting and reflects the ACT's perspective on an appropriate balance between the right to high quality information about the outcomes of schooling and the possibility of misinterpretation or misuse, as interpreted through answers to the questions posed in the Issues Paper by the Review.

Perceptions of NAPLAN Reporting and My School data

Does the NAPLAN data currently available on the My School website provide an appropriate balance between the right to high quality information and the possibility of misinterpretation or misuse?

- No, while the NAPLAN data currently available on the My School website does provide some high-quality information, there remains an unacceptably high potential for misinterpretation and/or misuse. There is a tension between the principles underlying My School outlined above. In particular, Principle one, broad public interest, and Principle four, the community's right to know, along with and Principle six, data on the child, the school and systems. My School currently resolves this tension in a way that prioritises a particular expression of the public interest and the right to know. This expression is based on the concept of school choice, that is, that parents need sufficient information in order to make an informed choice with regard to the best school for their children.

The concept of choice operating here assumes that education is a service for which there is a free market. However, for a very significant proportion of the population, there is little or no choice available, as the cost of non-government education is such that this group of people is precluded from taking advantage of non-government education. In this environment, My School becomes a vehicle for those non-government education providers to compete for patronage amongst those in the market for education services who are able to exercise choice.

It is the ACT's contention that the impact of this competition is against the overall public interest due to the negative impact on public schooling that results from this competition and on the broader society from the contribution that this competition makes to social and economic divisions in Australia.

Are the analyses of NAPLAN data on the My School website sufficiently comprehensive to enable proper interpretation, or too comprehensive to be useful to the general public?

- An extension of the discussion above is that, even if there were a universally accessible open market for education services across different school sectors, the information presented on the My School website, without the support of a visit to a school and an understanding of the full range of services offered, is not able to support informed choice by consumers of education services, with the possible exception of a very small group of families with significant analytical capability.

It is the ACT's contention that Principle six contributes to the issue described above due to the high potential for misunderstanding, or misuse, of data used to compare schools and school systems. The data available for school comparisons, jurisdictional comparisons and for sector comparisons is not presented in way to support informed decisions by most people.

For example, an assessment of student outcomes by socio-educational advantage across sectors shows that, by these measures, there is little difference in outcomes between sectors. In other words, the majority of the apparent difference in school outcomes, as represented on the My School website, is principally due to the overall socio-educational make up of each school's student population. While the similar school comparison seeks to overcome this problem, it is the

ACT's view that there are issues as to the reliability of these comparisons for other reasons, as will be discussed below.

Does the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) support fair comparisons between schools identified as statistically similar?

- In short, no. It is the contention of the ACT that the creation of a national ICSEA measure had the potential to create anomalies in jurisdictions with populations that varied (as measured by the components of the SEA) significantly from the national population. Both the Northern Territory and the ACT are examples of this as smaller jurisdictions with population demographics that have almost nothing in common.

In particular, it is the contention of the ACT that the parents and carers of the ACT student population were significantly over represented by families with degree qualifications, or higher. Given that intelligence and other capabilities are normally distributed throughout a community, the ACT anticipates that the national SEA model gives too much weight to these domains in the ACT, and that similar schools comparisons with schools outside the ACT are likely to be disadvantageous to ACT schools in all sectors.

Issues of fair comparison are exacerbated by comparisons based on ICSEA, where the schools being compared can have a student population that is chosen on criteria that are not necessarily representative of ICSEA. An example of this is selective schools, where the performances of schools with a similar ICSEA to a selective school can have results that vary very substantially (by more than 100 NAPLAN points for year 9 numeracy) from schools with a similar ICSEA. In these instances, ICSEA is not a useful means of determining comparison schools and selective schools should not be represented as being a fair comparison.

The ACT has applied the ACARA methodology for determining SEA using the ACT student population data for NAPLAN 2017. As a consequence of this work, the ACT is of the view that SEA score predictions for the ACT will result in higher SEA scores for ACT students, due to placing higher weight on the item categories given the same level of academic achievement.

ACARA has agreed that there is likely to be an upward bias in the ACT, and additional work is necessary to determine the extent and impact on similar schools' comparisons and on jurisdictional comparisons.

What consideration should be given to comparisons over time and between schools while schools progressively transition to NAPLAN online?

- Due to the risks of mode differences being misinterpreted, there is a logic to not making inter school or inter jurisdictional comparisons across online and paper-based schools while NAPLAN online is not fully implemented.
- The ACT notes that, despite the logic behind adjustments during the implementation of NAPLAN online, the broader point of the overall value of school comparisons through My School, as outlined above, should be the central consideration and ongoing consideration here, outside the NAPLAN online implementation period.

HOW MY SCHOOL AND NAPLAN CONTRIBUTE TO UNDERSTANDING OF STUDENT PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENT

To what extent do schools and school systems use NAPLAN student progress and achievement data, including comparisons with statistically similar schools, to inform their school improvement strategies?

- NAPLAN data, including achievement and progress data, is made available to schools in the ACT in a variety of ways that are described in more detail in the section below. This data is used to inform decisions around school improvement at the whole of system level as well as at the school and the classroom levels.
- Similar school data in My School is not particularly useful in making comparisons between schools, particularly across jurisdictions, or in supporting evidence-based decisions around school improvement. It is the ACT view that there are issues with determining real school similarities, as outlined above particularly given that the data presented in My School is of an educational outcome, as measured by NAPLAN, along with attendance, some financial and other general information.
- Using the limited data in My School for benchmarking similar schools is not considered effective. Effective benchmarking relies on an understanding of the causal factors that contribute to actual differences in school outcomes, and this can only come from an intensive exposure to the norms, culture and practices of the schools being used for benchmarking purposes, and this exercise will be beyond the capacity of most families as well as difficult to undertake for schools seeking to benchmark their performance. My School consequently contributes little of value from a school improvement strategy perspective.

To what extent is whole-population assessment data necessary to meet school systems' and governments' need for sound information to support school improvement?

- Whole population data is necessary to meet school systems' and governments' need for sound information to support school improvement. However, given the nature of the analysis undertaken by school systems and on behalf of governments, it is not necessary for this data to be sourced from My School.

HOW SCHOOLS USE ACHIEVEMENT DATA, INCLUDING NAPLAN, TO INFORM TEACHING

To what extent are NAPLAN data and the My School website used to inform teaching?

- It is important to separate the use of NAPLAN data from the My School website in considering this question. NAPLAN data is a valuable source of information to inform teaching at the system, school and the classroom level. However, it is most effective when considered in conjunction with other information that a school holds on its students and on the norms, culture and practices of the school that can impact on student performance.
- NAPLAN data, particularly at the item level and including access through SCOUT, a product accessed in the ACT through a contract with the NSW Education Department, provides a valuable tool to support to detailed curriculum planning and delivery by teachers, including in helping them to monitor the delivery of the curriculum.
- My School is not particularly effective means of delivering detailed NAPLAN data for use in schools. In the ACT SCOUT is a more useful tool for a teacher who wants to analyse the performance of their students in more detail than My School provides for. Faster access to NAPLAN data through NAPLAN online has the potential to create a significant resource multiplier

for teachers by making access to this information available in a timeframe that will allow them to use it more effectively.

- More significant is the potential inherent in a national formative assessment tool, currently in an early scoping stage – this tool has the potential to provide immediate feedback to students, teachers and parents from a broader range of sources, including areas of the curriculum not addressed through NAPLAN and associated assessments.

Which assessment tools, approaches and data analytics services do schools and school systems use to inform teaching?

- Schools in the ACT use a number of assessment tools and approaches. My School data is used at the school level to ascertain the average change in results for students with the same starting scores who have taken consecutive NAPLAN tests at the same school.
- Schools in the ACT have access to SCOUT, a service provided. SCOUT enables schools and teachers to compare their performance against the state (ACT and NSW) as well as statistically similar school groups (SSSG) in the ACT and NSW. Differences between the school and the SSSG are suggestive of areas of strength or weakness. Changes can be indicative of the effectiveness of areas of intervention and identify areas in need of improvement and to analyse their NAPLAN performance in Average Scaled Growth in each domain and compares the percentage of students who are at or have exceeded their Expected Growth
- Schools also have access to NAPLAN longitudinal mean score and growth data in various forms, including tables and quadrant charts that are able to inform both school, and when aggregated, whole of system judgements.
- ACT schools have access to formative assessment tools, for example, Progressive Achievement Tests for both reading and maths. These are a series of tests designed to provide objective, norm-referenced information to teachers about their students' skills and understandings in a range of key areas.
- The ACT recognises that the social and cultural environment and relationships within a school contributes to the outcomes achieved by students. Schools are supported in understanding this environment by information provided by students (from year 5 upwards), teachers and other staff, and by families and carers through annual satisfaction surveys.

What opportunities are there to improve the timeliness of data provision and the scope and frequency of national assessments?

- Timeliness of data provision is a function of the technology used to collect the data and the technology used to disseminate it. A NAPLAN completed completely online, without the necessity for manual marking, is clearly the most effective means to improve timeliness of data provision. The introduction of any manual steps in the process, from the completion of the test by students, the marking, or the analysis and dissemination will reduce the timeliness of delivery.
- The frequency of national assessments is currently annual. A change to biennial or triennial assessments, for example, will provide sufficient data for analytical purposes at the national and whole of jurisdiction levels. However, assessment on other than an annual basis will reduce the value of the analysis at the school level, as not all cohorts will be tested, or if they are, not as frequently.
- There is more room to increase the scope of the assessments. While the current focus on literacy and numeracy does deliver valuable information and supports school improvement, there are other outcomes of education that could be measured as well and an assessment of what these could be is warranted.

HOW MY SCHOOL AND NAPLAN DATA ARE REPORTED TO STUDENTS AND PARENTS

What information about My School and NAPLAN do students need in order to contribute to their own education?

- NAPLAN is used in the ACT to confirm school and teacher understanding of student achievement gained from formative assessment tools. Where NAPLAN information does not reinforce existing assessment information, an opportunity exists to better understand what students know and can do – and what areas should be the next focus of learning. On this basis, the item level analysis provided through SCOUT is important and individual student reports can indicate to students and their families where a student has strengths and areas for focused learning.
- The ideal is to consider this information in tandem with other assessment information, not in isolation.

To what extent do schools communicate individual, whole school and comparative NAPLAN data to students, parents and families?

- Traditionally, all ACT schools provide a report to parents on the performance of their student against the performance of the student's peers in their school, and other students nationally, for students undertaking a particular test.
- In the ACT for 2018, this information has been modified slightly during the implementation of NAPLAN online to exclude the comparisons with other schools.

To what extent do parents and families use My School to make informed judgements, make choices and engage with their children's education?

- It is important to separate out the 'make informed judgements' and 'make choices' components of this question. Making choices is implicitly related to decisions about school selection. The ACT comments above in relation to the question of choice are that there is no place in public NAPLAN reporting for My School to be used for partially informed choices around schools and school sectors.
- My School, on its own, is not a satisfactory, or alternative vehicle for families engaging with their children's education.
- Where the question is around making informed judgements, the ACT will interpret this as informed judgements about the progress of a child through the elements of learning that are represented by the NAPLAN domains. It is the view of the ACT that information on NAPLAN presented through My School can contribute to such judgements, but must be accompanied by teacher judgement reporting, and by advice from teachers and schools as to the overall progress of a student, including in non-academic domains of school life.

NAPLAN Reporting Review 2019

Submission by

The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA)

The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA) leads, supports, represents and advocates for the Independent sector in South Australia to enhance the success, sustainability and strength of its member schools. The AISSA is the peak body for the Independent school sector in South Australia and is a member of the Independent Schools Council of Australia. The Association provides a forum for debate on significant policy issues and plays a leadership role in providing advice and information, representing individual schools and the sector.

Across South Australia, 104 Independent schools provide choice, diversity, innovation and excellence in education. Nearly 20% of South Australia's children are educated in Independent schools, with higher percentages in the secondary and senior secondary years. The majority of schools are located in metropolitan areas. Approximately one-third of schools are in regional South Australia and two schools are in remote areas. The majority of schools cater for students from Reception to Year 12, with one-third providing primary school education only.

The AISSA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the NAPLAN Reporting Review 2019. Providing support to schools in the area of National Assessment including NAPLAN is a key part of the work of the AISSA. This includes building the capacity of schools to critically analyse school NAPLAN data to drive improvement in learning outcomes. The AISSA's submission responds to the four aspects outlined in the NAPLAN Reporting Review February 2019 Issues Paper and is based on feedback from member schools and the expertise of AISSA staff.

In summary:

- The AISSA supports transparency in the provision of information about schooling outcomes in the wider community, for parents and for schools.
- NAPLAN data provides a valid and reliable research base for governments, schools and the wider community to engage in dialogue about longitudinal trends and school improvement; however, comparative reporting does not enhance this research base nor improve outcomes for students.
- *My School* has overemphasised the importance of NAPLAN as a mechanism for monitoring student and school achievement, and progress in literacy and numeracy. An unintended consequence of this is that *My School* has become a comparative tool for rating schools in the community and media.
- A general lack of understanding about aspects such as the NAPLAN test design, reporting scale and calculation of the ICSEA score has led to misinterpretation and inaccurate assumptions and conclusions by parents and the wider community.
- The reliability of the ICSEA score to facilitate valid and contextualised comparisons for the general public is problematic.
- A new NAPLAN measurement scale should be explored.
- For Independent schools, data-based decisions are made at the whole of school level by leaders and at the classroom level by teachers, using the Department for Education provided NAPLAN Analysis Tool as well as supplementary diagnostic tools. Teachers do not use the *My School* website to inform their teaching.
- The AISSA believes that it is unlikely that Independent schools investigate and make comparisons with their statistically similar schools identified in *My School* for improvement purposes.
- The AISSA recommends ACARA support state and territory authorities to continually develop and improve locally developed analysis tools, and that these are shared across jurisdictions, for it is with these tools that NAPLAN data is of greatest use in improving student learning.

1. Perceptions of NAPLAN and *My School* data, including the potential for misinterpretation or misuse.

1a. Does the NAPLAN data currently available on the My School website provide an appropriate balance between the right for high quality information and the possibility of misinterpretation or misuse?

The AISSA supports transparency in the provision of information about schooling outcomes in the wider community, for parents and for schools. However, the current presentation of publicly available data on *My School* lends itself to misinterpretation, in particular as this relates to understandings about the NAPLAN test design, reporting scale and use of the ICSEA score. Whilst it is recognised that reporting should be in the public interest, much of the language used on *My School* presumes prior knowledge of statistical terms and/or a willingness and availability of time to seek out explanatory resources for further clarification. The current public reporting around *My School* continues to overemphasise the importance of NAPLAN as a mechanism for monitoring student and school achievement and progress in literacy and numeracy. A consequence of this is that *My School* has become viewed as a comparative tool for rating schools in the community and media.

1b. Is there anything you find difficult to understand or is there any different NAPLAN information you would like to see included on My School?

The *My School* website provides information about every Australian school ostensibly targeted at a wide range of audiences – parents, community, teachers and schools. Meeting the needs of all audiences has meant that the site lacks a clear pathway for users to access information. Some of the detailed and technical information is, for example, difficult to locate, with interpretation requiring a high level of data literacy. A general lack of understanding about aspects such as the NAPLAN test design, reporting scale and calculation of the ICSEA score has led to misinterpretation and inaccurate assumptions and conclusions, particularly by the media and some commentators, with consequent implications for interpretation of the data by parents and the wider community.

1c. Is the explanatory material on My School around ‘statistically similar schools’ sufficiently explained, easy to understand, and does this support fair comparisons for schools?

The AISSA does not support the current representations of ‘statistically similar schools’ as comparable. The background data that forms the basis for this calculation is generated by parents through self-reporting significantly compromising the reliability and validity of this dataset for comparative purposes. The AISSA challenges the claim that the ICSEA score enables “meaningful comparisons of National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) test achievement by students in schools across Australia” “... even though [schools] may be in various parts of Australia and may have different facilities and resources”. It is doubtful whether the complexity of the comparative schools is captured in these data presentations and as such, the reliability of the ICSEA score to facilitate valid and contextualised comparisons for the general public is highly problematic.

1d. What consideration should be given to comparisons over time and between schools while schools progressively transition to NAPLAN Online.

As schools across Australia progressively transition to an online test, the statistical comparability of both modes must be treated with sensitivity. The AISSA believes that a new NAPLAN measurement scale should be explored. The 2011 break in the Writing scale has demonstrated that NAPLAN data is able to be re-presented to garner the support of schools, parents and other key stakeholders. The added information about test mode, for the purpose of reporting to parents, is supported. Whilst the use of school comparative data sets is not supported in principle, applications of comparative data on *My School* during the transition years should indicate the mode of test at the individual school level.

2. How *My School* and NAPLAN contribute to understanding of student progress and achievement.

2a. To what extent do schools and school systems use NAPLAN student progress and achievement data, including comparisons with statistically similar schools, to inform their school improvement strategies?

Data is one of the eight key areas identified in the AISSA High Impact School Improvement Tool which has been developed by the AISSA to provide a contemporary evidence base to inform each school's improvement initiatives. As such, South Australian Independent schools are encouraged to engage in rigorous and ongoing use of NAPLAN student progress and achievement data to inform a continuous improvement agenda.

Within each school's improvement agenda, the NAPLAN data that is analysed to inform improvement initiatives is not that as presented on *My School*. Rather, it is the locally developed NAPLAN Analysis Tool that provides greater insight. This Tool is made available to non-government schools in South Australia by the South Australian Department for Education. It is updated annually and contains a school's current and longitudinal NAPLAN data, thereby enabling school leadership and teachers to more fully interrogate their data and subsequently plan both school improvement priorities and teaching interventions.

The NAPLAN data set is not analysed in isolation. Data-based decisions are made at the whole of school level by leaders and at the classroom level by teachers using their Analysis Tool in addition to supplementary diagnostic tools such as the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT). The AISSA believes that it is unlikely that Independent schools investigate and make comparisons with their statistically similar schools as identified on *My School* for improvement purposes.

2b. To what extent is whole-school population assessment data necessary to meet school systems' and governments' needs for sound information to support school improvement?

One purpose of NAPLAN is to provide national and jurisdictional achievement data in literacy and numeracy. Full cohort NAPLAN assessment data supports governments to make decisions about education policy and future directions in education. Moreover, the NAPLAN equating process provides a high level of assurance as to the reliability of comparisons between years. The NAPLAN data provides a valid and reliable research base for governments, schools and the wider community to engage in dialogue about longitudinal trends and school improvement; however, comparative reporting does not enhance this research base nor improve outcomes for students.

3. How schools use achievement data, including NAPLAN, to inform teaching

3a. To what extent are NAPLAN data and My School website used to inform teaching?

On the whole, feedback from member schools indicates that teachers in Independent schools do not use the *My School* website to inform their teaching. Rather, the NAPLAN Analysis Tool is used to interpret and analyse student achievement, student progress and to inform teaching and learning. Using this tool, teachers and leaders engage in a systematic data action model to analyse, interpret and interrogate NAPLAN data at individual, cohort and whole school levels.

3b. Which assessment tools, approaches and data analytics services do schools and school systems use to inform teaching?

As described above, each Independent school has access to an annual NAPLAN Analysis Tool, constructed using Excel Power Pivot. Pivot tables allow the filtering of data in multiple ways to enable school leadership and teachers to interrogate their NAPLAN data and subsequently plan both school improvement priorities and teaching interventions. However, the lack of detailed information with regard to students' writing performance is an area requiring action by ACARA, especially given student achievement nationally in this domain. SA Independent schools that have transitioned to NAPLAN Online access the national School and

Student Summary Report (SSSR) generated through the online platform, in addition to the Analysis Tool. To date, the SSSR provides limited opportunity for deep analysis and action by schools, nor any analysis for Writing.

The AISSA supports schools in data analytics focusing on targeted actions that support teachers' instructional decision making processes for learning programs. Annual support is offered centrally and in-school. Shaddock's model, *Using Data to Improve Learning* (ACER, 2014), as well as that of Sharratt and Fullan (2012), underpin this approach with schools. The AISSA has also developed resources to facilitate data analytics using the Analysis Tool to facilitate sustainable and effective data-driven decision making in teaching and learning.

Schools in the SA Independent sector use a wide range of other assessment tools and approaches to assess student learning and inform teaching. These include ACER's (PAT) Reading and Numeracy, Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) and the Mathematics Assessment Interview (MAI). Bespoke programs such as 'literatu' are accessed by some SA Independent schools, providing them with data analytics that support teachers with their learning and teaching programs. School Management Systems are widely used in the sector, with some inclusive of data analytic capabilities.

3c. What opportunities are there to improve the timeliness of NAPLAN reporting?

It is hoped that the transition of NAPLAN to the online mode will reduce the time between the test period and the reporting period.

4. How *My School* and NAPLAN data are reported to students and parents.

4a. To what extent do schools communicate individual, whole school and comparative NAPLAN Data to students, parents and families?

Each Independent school meets their national obligations pertaining to the distribution of the NAPLAN Individual Student Report (ISR) to parents. Moreover, schools implement a range of approaches to communicate NAPLAN data with students, parents and families. These include student - parent interviews, school community newsletters, reports to school boards and the school community and student pathway discussions as they transition from middle school to senior secondary school.

*4b. To what extent do parents and families use NAPLAN data on *My School* to make informed judgements, make choices and engage with their children's education?*

The AISSA is unable to comment on the extent to which families use *My School* data to make judgements, choices and engage with their children's education.

5. What NAPLAN reporting information do students need in order to contribute to their own education?

The power of data is in its ability to tell a story. Engaging students in their learning narrative using NAPLAN data empowers student agency and efficacy. In particular the use of student growth data to track patterns in achievement over NAPLAN testing years supports students and teachers to make informed and collaborative decisions about learning approaches, strengths, challenges and future pathways. NAPLAN data used individually with students **is not** accessed from *My School*. Additionally, NAPLAN data is not used in isolation, but rather as part of a bigger data story. The AISSA recommends ACARA support State and Territory authorities to continually develop and improve locally developed analysis tools, and that these are shared across jurisdictions, for it is with these tools that NAPLAN data is of greatest use in improving student learning.



Australian Education Union

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8 March 2019

Professor Bill Loudon
Review of NAPLAN Data Presentation
Education Council of the
Council of Australian Governments (COAG)

Email: NAPLANreview2019@act.gov.au

Dear Professor Loudon

**Re: AEU Submission to the Education Council of the Council of Australian Governments
(COAG) Review of NAPLAN Data Presentation**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit to the Review of the Current Approach to the Presentation of NAPLAN Data including information published on the My School Website.

Please find our submission attached.

Please contact me if you have any questions in relation to this submission.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, which appears to read "S Hopgood".

Susan Hopgood
Federal Secretary



Australian Education Union

Submission to the

Education Council of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Review of NAPLAN Data Presentation

March 2019

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Executive summary

The Australian Education Union (AEU) represents more than 187,000 members employed in public primary, secondary and special schools and the early childhood, TAFE and adult provision sectors as teachers, educational leaders, education assistants or support staff.

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) was never intended as a vehicle for the public comparison of results of individual schools, and the ability of parents to use My School to compare and potentially select a school solely on the basis of the very broad, simplified and misrepresented results reported on the website allows for significant misinterpretation and potential misuse of its data.

The availability of de-contextualised NAPLAN data for individual schools creates a particularly high stakes scenario for schools, where reputation and enrolment numbers can hinge on a single year's NAPLAN results, and teaching and learning processes are distorted due to an overemphasis on NAPLAN results at the expense of the rounded and varied education teachers would prefer to provide.

This high stakes assessment narrows teaching strategies and curriculum, increases stress for students and impacts on their health and wellbeing, lowers staff morale, and can negatively impact on school reputations and capacity to attract and retain students and staff.

This submission includes evidence from world experts in assessment, who reach the striking conclusion that “the design and execution of the 2018 NAPLAN make it so flawed that its results are of very limited use to students, parents, and schools”¹ and that “there are no studies I know of that report successful use of the two testing modes on a regular single national assessment... In sum, the 2018 NAPLAN results should be discarded.”² The disastrous attempt at bi-modal delivery of NAPLAN in 2018 has broken the longitudinal time series (despite ACARA's attempts to preserve it at all costs to data integrity) and the data should not and cannot be used in this way.

Furthermore, and aside from the 2018 debacle, the presentation of NAPLAN data on the My School website is, at best, vague and at worst, misleading. Average scores for individual schools are presented in a rigid colour coded display, while the unusually wide confidence intervals that the data is subject to are downplayed in reporting to the extent that the average visitor is unlikely to be aware that the score is not an authoritative single number as presented, but actually a possible range of scores of up to two entire NAPLAN scoring bands.

This misrepresentation of the NAPLAN data is then subject to further de-contextualisation through the use of the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) for the “similar schools” comparison without any regard to sector, or the varying level of recurrent funding available to schools labelled as “similar”, or the impact that the high stakes of NAPLAN testing may have on test preparation regimes and the varying instance of “teaching the test” at schools ostensibly branded as “similar”.

¹ Perelman, L. & Haney, W., (2018) *Problems in the Design and Administration of the 2018 NAPLAN*, retrieved from https://www.qtu.asn.au/application/files/5615/3543/9603/Naplan_2018_Report_Perelman_Final.pdf

² *Ibid.*

For these reasons the Australian Education Union (AEU) has reached the policy conclusions and recommendations outlined below.

AEU POLICY CONCLUSIONS

- 1. The 2018 NAPLAN test cannot be validly used for comparison data processes such as My School deploys.**
- 2. My School data can only be refreshed with a new longitudinal starting point when all students are using the same assessment mode.**
- 3. The original stated purposes of NAPLAN and My School have been terminally corrupted.**
- 4. The My School website causes great social harm especially to our most vulnerable students and schools.**
- 5. The website is incompatible with contemporary policy approaches to privacy rights.**
- 6. Alignment with the 2018 Gonski “Growth to Achievement” approach provides a framework for resolving the profound problems that NAPLAN and My School have caused.**

AEU RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1: That a comprehensive review of NAPLAN is undertaken, focusing on whether the current approach to standardised testing is fit for purpose.**
- 2: That the use of standardised testing, such as NAPLAN, as a scorecard for individual schools or groups of students in those schools, as currently promoted through the My School website, is ceased.**
- 3: That ACARA provide plain language explanations to parents of the very wide error margins used to calculate student and individual school scores and the misleading manner in which they are presented to parents on the My School site.**
- 4: That an exploratory study is undertaken to determine the requisite sample size at the state/territory, sector and national levels for a new assessment program to replace NAPLAN.**

Introduction

The Australian Education Union (AEU) represents more than 187,000 members employed in public primary, secondary and special schools and the early childhood, TAFE and adult provision sectors as teachers, educational leaders, education assistants or support staff.

Numerous stakeholders, including teachers, principals, the AEU, state education ministers, education academics, international assessment experts and many others have repeatedly called for a full and comprehensive review of the suitability of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) in its entirety. We are gravely concerned that rather than the full and comprehensive review we have consistently advocated for, this current review has a narrow focus on the manner in which NAPLAN data is presented and reported and does not seek to answer the most urgent and pertinent question about NAPLAN –whether it is a viable and useful method of assessment.

We have addressed each of the questions from the issues paper individually below.

1. Perceptions of NAPLAN and My School data, including the potential for misinterpretation or misuse

There is widespread condemnation within the teaching profession of My School as the vehicle for the public comparison of the NAPLAN results of individual schools and the ability of parents to potentially select a school on the basis of results reported through the website alone. This is not an accurate way to determine the character of a school and is not the way that NAPLAN results were originally intended to be used.

In order to gauge the character of a school it is vitally important that parents visit that school and talk to the principal, teachers and the wider school community. Encouraging parents to visit the My School website to compare NAPLAN results removes all nuance from the process of choosing a school and encourages parents to pass judgement about a school based purely on a narrow set of measures and without any of the context that comes with direct engagement.

The NAPLAN data, and its manner of presentation on the My School website creates a particularly high stakes scenario for schools, where reputation and enrolment numbers potentially hinge on a single year's NAPLAN results. The high-stakes nature of the test has wide-reaching, and often negative, implications for schools and can lead to the distortion of teaching and learning process as schools are encouraged to overemphasise NAPLAN test results at the expense of more important elements of the rich and varied education which teachers would prefer to prioritise for their students.

When asked, AEU members are consistently certain in their assessment that there is no good outcome from the publication of school-level NAPLAN data. A recent AEU South Australia Branch survey of South Australian teachers and school leaders showed that 82% of educators believe that test data about their school should not be publicly available. According to the respondents it would be more appropriate for NAPLAN data to be available only to staff at the school, the student and their family. As stated above, the publication of school-level NAPLAN data raises the tests' stakes, and therefore also significantly raises its level of priority in the classroom.

There is a wealth of evidence from the US, UK and now Australia demonstrating the negative impacts of high-stakes standard assessment. In 2017, The Whitlam Institute concluded that such testing protocols inevitably lead to:

- The narrowing of teaching strategies and of the curriculum
- Negative impacts on student health and wellbeing
- Negative impacts on staff morale, and
- Negative impacts on school reputation and capacity to attract and retain students and staff³

The experience of AEU members' confirms the findings above - In South Australia, two thirds of teacher respondents said they have felt pressure to change the way they teach as a result of NAPLAN and two thirds of respondents also reported that practice tests had been conducted during lesson time at their school.

Does the NAPLAN data currently available on the My School website provide an appropriate balance between the right to high quality information and the possibility of misinterpretation or misuse?

General comments on misinterpretation and misuse of the My School website

There is no doubt that valid, reliable and contextual information about schools and school performance should be publicly available to track progress at a systemic level. However, the construction of the NAPLAN tests, and the mode of delivery of those tests has repeatedly been shown to be unreliable and is presented through My School in such a way that is easily and frequently misinterpreted by parents who make use of the website. Additionally, there are numerous examples of media outlets and third parties abusing the privilege of accessing this information to brand schools as either failures or successes without consideration of any of the contextual factors that contribute to a school's NAPLAN results. The very fact that NAPLAN results are made available at individual school level in such detail is, perversely, what leads to them being almost uniformly viewed as the most important outcomes a school produces, and whilst the current public reporting regime continues, that will never change.

Educators have the professional skills to implement appropriate programs and support that meet the needs of the students in their classes on a continual basis. They use a variety of assessment tools to gauge student's performance and identify the support those students need. The best feedback for improved student learning is targeted and immediate. In contrast to this approach, My School presents a delayed snapshot of NAPLAN results, entirely without context. It can take to 4 months before teachers receive a student's NAPLAN results. NAPLAN is just one test, a snapshot, and on its own it provides a narrow and incomplete picture of a student's education. It can't measure creativity, critical thinking, engagement or the culture and community of a school.

³ Dulfer, N., Polesel, J. & Rice, S., *The Experience of Education: The impact of high stakes testing on schools students and their families*, The Whitlam Institute, 2017, retrieved from <https://www.whitlam.org/publications/2017/10/17/an-educators-perspective-the-impacts-of-high-stakes-testing-on-school-students-and-their-families>

Reporting of each individual school's delayed results publicly via My School has negative impacts on students, teachers and schools and is clearly not in the broad public interest. Over the last decade, Australia's results in mathematics and literacy have not improved, and NAPLAN and My School have not driven the improvement it was claimed they would when launched. As NAPLAN has failed in its core task of improving literacy and numeracy standards for Australian students, there is little point in continuing to report its results, and particularly no point in reporting them at the individual school level.

Comments specific to the 2018 NAPLAN test

In relation to the questions of whether the 2018 NAPLAN test and consequent data provide high quality information, and whether the data could be open to misinterpretation or misuse, we cite the findings of research on this issue conducted by Perelman and Haney, both world experts in assessment and reporting, on the bi-model delivery of the 2018 NAPLAN test.

In reviewing the delivery modes of NAPLAN 2018 they found that:

1. "Simultaneously administering Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT) to one part of a national population and pen and paper tests (P&P) to the other appears to be an unprecedented strategy for evaluating the transition of a large scale national test to CAT;
2. The fatal error of calibrating CAT item choices for Grammar and Punctuation on performance on the Reading portion invalidates individual student marks on the CAT for at least the Grammar and Punctuation sections, and, possibly the entire test;
3. There has been no publication of studies that are reported to equate the two test modes and to demonstrate that the marks on the two test modes are comparable;
4. The strategy employed by ACARA for cross-mode design invalidates comparisons of the 2018 NAPLAN, both the CAT and P&P versions, with prior years' NAPLAN tests;
5. Online writing tasks are inherently incomparable with P&P tests;
6. The design and execution of the 2018 NAPLAN make it so flawed that its results are of very limited use to students, parents, and schools."⁴

Based on their findings the AEU concludes that the 2018 NAPLAN test was deeply flawed and its results cannot be validly used for any consequent public reporting. At the school level the only partially useful data would be for an individual student on the actual papers they sat, and the only portion of that suitable for longitudinal comparison is the P&P writing task, which in itself has many methodological defects.⁵

⁴ Perelman, *Op. cit.*

⁵ Perelman, L, (2018) *Towards a New NAPLAN: Testing to the Teaching*, retrieved from https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/18116_towards_a_new_digital.pdf

Longitudinal My School data is rendered invalid as the bi-modal 2018 NAPLAN operation breaks the longitudinal sequence. From the point that the sequence is broken students are not being compared, over time, with comparable testing modes. As Perelman states “there are no studies I know of that report successful use of the two testing modes on a regular single national assessment.... In sum, the 2018 NAPLAN results should be discarded.”⁶

Additionally, following the 2018 NAPLAN online debacle public trust in NAPLAN is now severely compromised. Dr Steven Lewis, of Deakin University, has stated that “any lack of statistical comparability, be it perceived or actual, between the online and pen-and-paper tests jeopardises its utility as a trusted means of comparison. Such a lack of comparability could mean that comparisons cannot be made between schools using different modes of testing in 2018, or between a single school’s year-to-year performances if the school has piloted the online delivery format”.⁷

In its public communication on the issue, the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) claims that it has consulted ‘independent experts’ who have “confirmed the results are comparable” between testing modes, but strangely doesn’t readily offer any details as to who these experts are, or the methods they used to arrive at these conclusions. After assuring us that all is well with the 2018 results, ACARA then immediately state that “this years’ results for Year 9 students who completed the test online were, on average, higher than for students who completed the test on paper”, and that the difference “appears to be a result of the test mode”.⁸ The lack of transparency around the statistical procedures and experts used by ACARA to attempt to present the 2018 data as ‘valid and comparable’, can only result in a complete lack of trust in the results.

Additionally, the Victorian branch of the AEU has heard from numerous Principals who were shocked when advised by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority that they could make ‘manual’ calculation adjustments to enable comparability between NAPLAN writing assessments completed online and by pen and paper.

The 2018 NAPLAN online debacle clearly demonstrated that for ACARA preserving the perceived sanctity of the testing regime was of greater importance than ensuring the valid, consistent and reliable assessment of student achievement.

NAPLAN and My School are irredeemably compromised and cannot be validly used to compare the performance of individual schools using the 2018 NAPLAN test results.

⁶ Perelman, L. & Haney, W., (2018) *Problems in the Design and Administration of the 2018 NAPLAN*, retrieved from https://www.qtu.asn.au/application/files/5615/3543/9603/Naplan_2018_Report_Perelman_Final.pdf

⁷ The Educator (2018) ‘Impossible’ to know validity of NAPLAN testing – experts, retrieved from <https://www.theeducatoronline.com/au/news/impossible-to-know-validity-of-naplan-testing--experts/253502>

⁸ ACARA media release, 28 August 2018, retrieved from <http://www.acara.edu.au/docs/default-source/Media-Releases/20180828-naplan-summary-media-release.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

Is there anything you find difficult to understand or is there any different NAPLAN information you would like to see included on My School?

There is a general and complete lack of transparency in the way that the NAPLAN test is developed and its grading criteria. Again, to quote, Perelman:

There is no publicly available document that presents the rationale for the 10 specific criteria used in marking the NAPLAN essay and the assignment of their relative weights. This lack of transparency is also evident in the failure of the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) to include other stakeholders, such as teachers, local administrators, parents, professional writers, and others in the formulation, design, and evaluation of the essay and its marking criteria.”⁹

The “Technical and Statistical Information” section of the My School website contains very little actual information of the sort, and instead offers a series of platitudinous statements. For example, the “Reliability and validity of NAPLAN” fact sheet found in the “Technical and Statistical Information” section refers numerous times to various “specialists” and “experts” who develop, quality assure, trial and provide advice on the NAPLAN tests, but provides no actual detail on how any of this is done. A prime example of this obfuscation is where the fact sheet states that:

Equating tests are delivered by specially trained independent test administrators. This ensures that the security of the equating tests is preserved. The equating process for NAPLAN was developed following expert advice and enables ACARA to say with confidence that any test difference has been taken into account before making statements about one year’s results compared to the next.¹⁰

Nowhere on this ‘fact sheet’ are we presented with any actual facts about how the tests were devised, the statistical procedures the “specially trained independent test administrators” used in the equating process or any details of what the impact of the equating process is on the raw data.

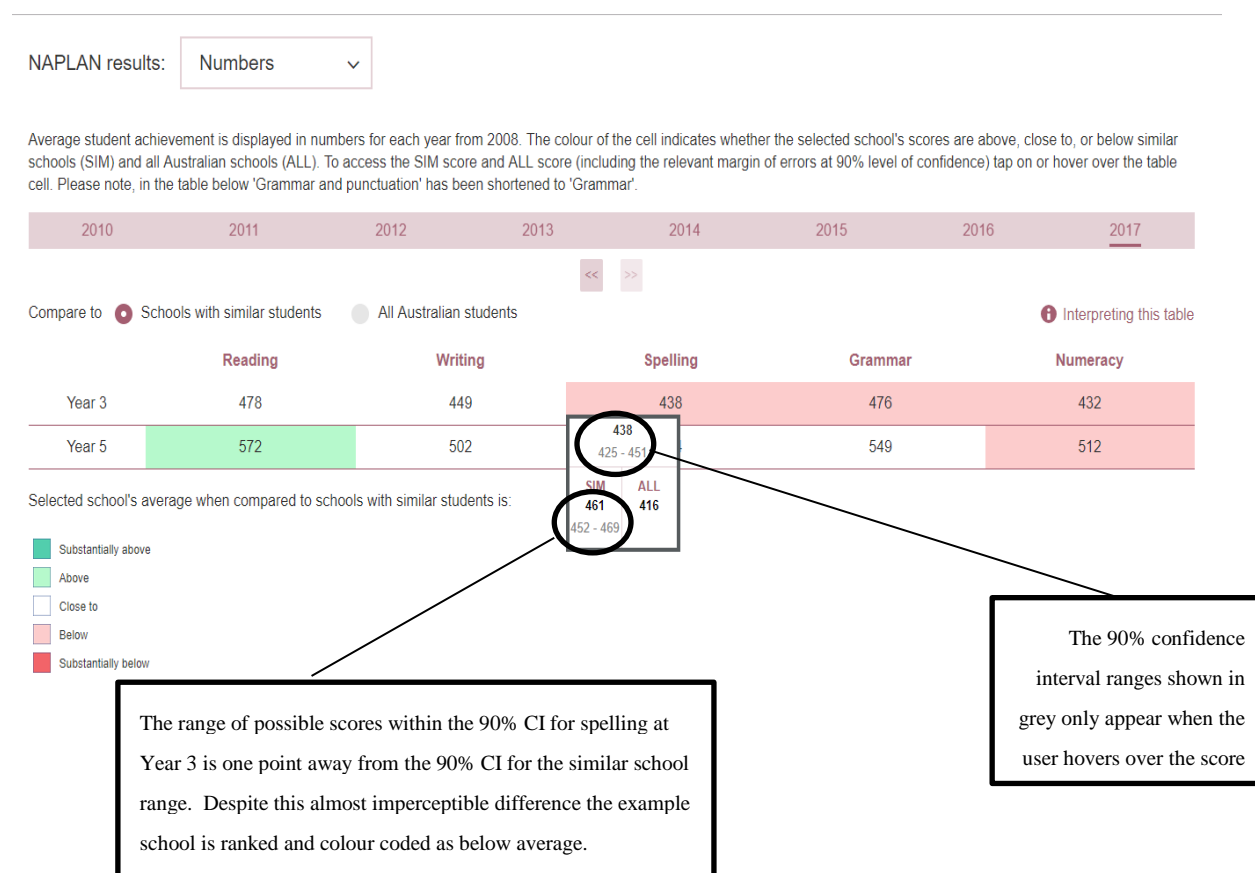
Similarly, while, several clicks into the technical and statistics information section of the My School website, there are PDFs available that partially explain the standard error ranges for NAPLAN data by sample size, the actual data as presented on My School significantly downplays the very wide error ranges in the data presented, and presents what are actually incredibly imprecise results as precise and absolute.

As seen in the example below, the NAPLAN results “numbers” display on My School only shows the error range for school average scores when the user hovers over a number and even then, it is shown greyed out and without any accompanying explanation of what it represents.

⁹ Perelman New NAPLAN

¹⁰ https://www.myschool.edu.au/media/1068/reliability_and_validity_of_naplan_file.pdf

Figure 1: Example of how scores and error ranges are presented in My School



Users must click a link to reveal a picture showing that this range is actually a 90% confidence interval, which is used across all NAPLAN data on My School, and is a much lower level of confidence than the standard 95% confidence interval used in most social and educational research. As shown by Mockler (2018) the 90% confidence interval covers approximately two bands of NAPLAN scores - enough to turn red to white, or white to green and entirely change the way a school is perceived by the public.

The use of the 90% confidence interval hides the complete imprecision of the scores and their banding. As Mockler shows using an example from the 2016 NAPLAN technical report, a score of 615 in grammar and punctuation is in fact a score within the range of 558 and 672 at the 90% confidence interval. The application of the standard 95% confidence interval to this result would present an even wider range of 547 – 683 – “in other words, the student’s ‘true ability’ might be very close to the national average, toward the bottom of Band 7, or quite close to the top of Band 9...That’s a very wide ‘window’ indeed.”¹¹

¹¹ Mockler, N. (2018) *It's time to be honest with parents about NAPLAN: your child's report is misleading, here's how*, Australian Association for Research in Education, retrieved from <https://www.aare.edu.au/blog/?p=2870>

In many cases, the range of scores within a standard 95% confidence interval would be sufficient to move a school from a pink “below” score to a white “close to” or even a green “above” score. The presentation of what is actually a very wide range of possible scores as an objective and absolute judgement at an individual school level has the potential to severely impact a school’s overall scoring within the colour coded system, its ranking in various league table aggregators and in the media, its reputation with parents and ultimately its enrolments and resourcing.

All the nuance and detail required to properly interpret this data at school level has been either stripped out or deliberately deprioritised in the data’s presentation in favour of a simple colour code that purports to tell parents whether their child’s school, and their child’s score, is either good or bad.

The crux of the problem is that this representation of student performance at a school level is what the My School website is built on, and My School is the primary online resource Australian parents are encouraged to use when considering schools for their child. The vast majority of parents are not inclined to trawl through the NAPLAN technical reports and academic critiques to glean the information above. Most simply trust that what they are presented with is the true state of their child’s education and make important decisions based on it.

The looseness with which ACARA treats its reporting responsibilities when it comes to disclosing the imprecision of student and school level NAPLAN data has undoubtedly resulted in many parents being unnecessarily alarmed and many schools’ and teachers’ reputations being needlessly damaged.

The AEU has heard numerous concerns from school principals about the use of individual school NAPLAN data by parents when choosing a school, including:

- The dominance of the “colour-based” comparisons between schools serving students from statistically similar backgrounds provides a narrow, one dimensional view of school performance that ignores an array of critical contextual elements about the school and the performance of students, including the knowledge and skill base from which students start
- The effect of the misused visual representation of comparative performance on school enrolment patterns within and across communities and geographic locations
- The impact of NAPLAN based marketing of schools and their apparent performance for the purposes of attracting enrolments.

Is the explanatory material on My School around “statistically similar schools” sufficiently explained, easy to understand and does this support fair comparisons for schools?

Because NAPLAN is a point in time snapshot, and schools (even statistically similar schools) make different decisions about how the test is to be regarded, the data cannot possibly be reliable. There is no contextual information about a school available before the system jumps straight to the headline numbers, and the finance data showing the level of total recurrent funding and recurrent funding per student is presented entirely separately from the NAPLAN comparisons and from the schools Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value, which has the effect of obscuring the huge impact that funding and finance have on performance.

For example, a randomly selected public primary school in inner Melbourne has a high ICSEA of 1149 and is listed on My School as receiving \$8,837 recurrent funding per student in 2017. Its most appropriate comparative Catholic school (as offered by My School) has a similar ICSEA of 1125 and received recurrent funding of \$10,210 per student in 2017, 15.5% more per student than the public school. There is no way to directly compare funding levels at the same time as perusing NAPLAN scores without clicking back and forth between schools and their various tabs of data, and therefore no way to analyse a schools' scores within My School in the context of the amount of funding available to that school and the impact that may have on results. The labelling of schools as similar based only on an ICSEA score is also in itself problematic, as it encourages people to believe that all differences have been somehow accounted for and discourages further investigation of the type described above.

There is also a wealth of evidence, both Australian and international, that shows that the fundamental approach to assessment often differs between high and low socio-economic status schools, and that this inevitably shapes the way that learning is approached. In the USA "Poor districts offer stripped-down drill and practice approaches to reading and math learning, rather than teaching for higher order applications ... Critical thinking and problem-solving, collaboration, effective oral and written communication, accessing and analysing information, curiosity and imagination ... have typically been rationed to the most advantaged students in the United States." Additionally, in Queensland: "Far from students in poorer communities lacking 'basic skills', they in fact receive more work on decoding at the expense of other critical aspects of reading and literacy." Teese and Lamb draw this conclusion from their national research: "Since public perception of schools based on league tables particularly disadvantages low SES schools, the consequence is a focus on "performance", rather than "achievement".¹²

What consideration should be given to comparisons over time and between schools while schools progressively transition to NAPLAN online?

As shown above, every attempt has been made by ACARA to present the 2018 online and pen and paper results as compatible, but these attempts have been universally condemned by independent assessment experts, and it is clear that the online and paper NAPLAN tests are not and cannot be made to be comparable.

The bi-modal nature of data collection in 2018 also breaks the longitudinal time series of My School data. As such, the 2018 results should not be shown on the My School website and no data for 2018 should be published publicly. Additionally, ACARA should recognise that its longitudinal time series has been broken and that any compiled data, or comparison of 2018 with previous years, is unreliable and invalid.

If, as ACARA asserts, NAPLAN is to become an entirely online administered test, the time series could only be started afresh from the point that it becomes an entirely online exercise, and any further attempt to use the 2018 data to stitch together the paper based online versions and any future data collected online will only further undermine ACARA's already severely damaged credibility.

¹² Fitzgerald, D., (2017) *Crossroads: A green Paper on Assessment Policy*, NSW Teachers Federation, p.12

2. How My School and NAPLAN contribute to understanding of student progress and achievement

The AEU has long held that the solution to improving educational outcomes is to engage students in life-long learning, not by encouraging competition between schools. If we want to see improved student outcomes, we need to invest additional resources in our schools, so every student is supported to reach their full potential.

In terms of how NAPLAN data is disseminated and reported, the least damaging and safest thing to do would be to keep the school-level data available only to the school. Schools can then evaluate their teaching practices without the de-contextualised glare of public scrutiny.

To what extent do schools and school systems use NAPLAN student progress and achievement data, including comparisons with statistically similar schools, to inform their school improvement strategies?

The widespread publication of NAPLAN results gives high scoring schools a privileged status with the public and the media, who perceive the scores as a direct measure and indicator of teacher and school effectiveness. This is further reinforced, for example in Victoria, where the Department of Education and Training uses NAPLAN results to initiate school improvement processes, reviews and interventions, despite their limited utility because of the profoundly narrow rendering of a school's context, as detailed elsewhere in this submission.

This use is inappropriate when consideration is given to the NAPLAN's many problems with validity and reliability, and often results in resources, teacher attention and class time being soaked up with attempts to improve the results of under-performing students on the tests. It means that the scope and depth of the curriculum is often ignored in favour of drills and activities aimed at improving student test performance. In these circumstances an improvement in test performance may mean a decline in the quality of education experienced by students and affect their achievement in the long term.¹³ For many years, principals have expressed significant concern to the AEU about the impact that this annual process has on staff and student morale, which exacerbates the challenges faced by schools to improve student learning and achievement.

To what extent is whole-population assessment data necessary to meet school systems' and governments' need for sound information to support school improvement?

The whole population NAPLAN results currently collected are unsuitable for anything other than state and national demographic data about performance trends in broad student groupings, and it is therefore entirely unnecessary to test the entire school population. Data with an equally high level of confidence and representativeness could be gathered in a far less costly manner, and without all of the negative impacts on schooling, through properly stratified sample testing.

In terms of the broad public interest and policy coherence, there is now a historic opportunity to seize the opportunity offered by the underlying philosophy of the Gonski #2 Report, "Through Growth to Achievement" to align our approaches to assessment, reporting and student improvement.

¹³ Carter, D. (2017) *The dark side of NAPLAN: it's not just a benign 'snapshot'*, Australian Association for Research in Education, retrieved from <https://www.aare.edu.au/blog/?p=2325>

We can now begin to provide data that is, “valid, reliable and contextualised” and “sufficiently comprehensive” if we embrace this Report’s endorsement of “individualised growth-focused teaching and learning”. In particular, its call for “adopting assessment and reporting models that can describe both achievement and learning growth” provides the way forward that would best enhance the interests of school students and deliver to parents what they most want for their children.

The work begun in this area provides the foundation for optimised student progress. It will involve the professionally collaborative development of appropriate teaching and assessment tools and the replacement of A-E reporting with measures that both tracks and enhances growth.

Alongside this evolution, there will be a continuing need for regular, mass sample testing of students in fundamental areas of knowledge in order that the public, administrators and responsible politicians are aware of how funds are being spent and where the greatest areas of need are. There will not, however, be a need for the continued and needless testing of every single student in the country.

As Associate Professor Nicole Mockler from the University of Sydney makes clear:

We could collect the data we need by using a rigorous sampling method, where a smaller number of children are tested (a sample) rather than having every student in every school sit tests every two years. This is a move that would be a lot more cost effective, both financially and in terms of other costs to our education system.¹⁴

Or as Tim Dodd in the Australian Financial Review put it:

There is no need to test all of Australia’s 3.8 million students on a regular cycle to get this information. We could test a far smaller sample.¹⁵

3. How schools use achievement data, including NAPLAN, to inform teaching

To what extent are NAPLAN data and the My School website used to inform teaching?

A high stakes focus on standardised testing distorts what is being measured and it encourages practices such as teaching to the test. When a school’s results rise, it is unclear whether there has been an improvement in student literacy and numeracy skills or an improvement in the level of test preparation. Bonner and Shepherd have pointed out that the ‘flat-lining’ of results has been found in many overseas jurisdictions after implementing a new barrage of tests similar to NAPLAN: “Results get better for the first few years as teachers get better at teaching to the test and then of course level out.” A recent major study of over 8,300 teachers by the University Of Melbourne Graduate School Of Education found that more than half of these teachers admitted that NAPLAN impacts the style and content of their teaching, with just over two thirds reporting it has led to a timetable reduction for other subjects in their schools. Roughly two thirds of teachers’ surveyed also reported a reduction in ‘face-to-face’ teaching time due to test preparation.¹⁶

¹⁴ Mockler, *Op.cit.*

¹⁵ Dodd, T (2017) *After 10 years it’s time to ask: What is the purpose of NAPLAN?*, Financial Review, retrieved from <https://www.afr.com/news/policy/education/after-10-years-its-time-to-ask-what-is-the-purpose-of-naplan-20170730-gxlogw>

¹⁶ Dulfer, N., Polesel, J. & Rice, S. *Op.cit.*

Standardised assessment, in its current form, is clearly having a severe impact on teachers and on the way they teach. It is no longer fit for its original purpose. The continued use of NAPLAN and the ever increasing emphasis on it as a ranking tool impacts hugely on teachers' autonomy in the classroom, forces them to "teach to the test" and undermines the professionalism of educators. The AEU's 2018 *State of Our Schools*¹⁷ survey found that:

- 76% of teachers say publication of NAPLAN data has led to an increase in the pressure on teachers to improve NAPLAN results
- 75% of teachers say publication of NAPLAN data has led to an increase in the use of NAPLAN data to measure school performance
- 65% of teachers say publication of NAPLAN data has led to a noticeable increase in the stress levels of students in the lead up to the test
- 61% of teachers say publication of NAPLAN data has led to a greater focus on preparing for the test, including pre-testing

It is clear that the erosion of teachers' professional autonomy through an increase in published standardised assessment impacts teacher's sense of professionalism and stifles professional development and progress. The current prescriptive approach to curriculum and assessment can only serve to de-motivate and ultimately de-skill teachers, to stifle the morale of the workforce and degrade the status of the profession.

The predicament that many principals and teachers find themselves in under the current My School reporting system is aptly described thus:

*Teachers, principals and school communities have also seen, over this time, the grave damage that thoughtless system and media reporting of these test results has caused to vulnerable communities and students. Consequently, and with the best of protective sentiment, schools without any particular affection or trust in the testing regimes have thrown their lot into seeking to ensure that their students are not the ones to be this season's victims. And so they teach to the test. They have special sessions and classes and tutorials and experts and targets and strategies and staff meetings and practice tests to get their kids over the line. Sometimes they come up green and sometimes they come up red.*¹⁸

Which assessment tools, approaches and data analytics services do schools and school systems use to inform teaching?

The tools and approaches that teachers use to assess students and inform teaching are discussed across the entirety of this submission. In addition to this, internal whole school, class and year level sample data are used to track progress in conjunction with the sharing of professional knowledge and judgement between school colleagues and the sharing of approaches and work samples at the interschool level.

¹⁷ Australian Education Union (2018) *State of our Schools* survey data, available on request

¹⁸ Fitzgerald, *Op.cit.*

What opportunities are there to improve the timeliness of NAPLAN reporting?

The timeliness of reporting of standardised assessment in Australia could be improved by removing the need to test every single school student in the country, and by removing the need to provide school and student levels results every year. National, State/Territory and sector level reporting of a larger stratified sample should be able to be completed in a much timelier manner than the current NAPLAN regime.

4. How My School and NAPLAN data are reported to students and parents

In the decade since NAPLAN and My School have been coupled we have seen the mass reporting across the nation of these notionally diagnostic tests. Schools are now colour coded into winners and losers. Children are placed on reporting continuums on a linear sequence of achievement or failure. By the time many students had completed Year 9 they had been told repeatedly that they were very poor at learning. Many heed the lesson.

It is instructive to note what Professor Geoff Masters, head of ACER, concludes of the NAPLAN/My School decade. Writing in *The Conversation* in 2018, Masters found that,

“Since the introduction of NAPLAN, there has been a marked increase in the stakes attached to these tests. School results have been made available for public comparison on the My School website. Some schools even use NAPLAN in their marketing and student selection processes ...

Parents, teachers and schools now place greater importance on NAPLAN results ... This has led to reports of inappropriate levels of practice testing and increased student test anxiety. It has also narrowed teaching to the test, and led to occasional cheating.

The decision to make all schools’ NAPLAN results public was based on a belief this would provide parents with better information when choosing schools.

This was a market-driven belief that, for schools, the risk of losing students would be a powerful incentive to improve. But test based incentives have proven largely ineffective in driving school improvement.

An obvious strategy is to stop reporting school results publicly and to restrict access to school-level data to individual schools and school systems. The primary focus of literacy and numeracy testing might then return to its original purpose of informing teaching and learning.”¹⁹

To what extent do schools communicate individual, whole school and comparative NAPLAN data to students, parents and families?

In addition to the damage caused by children being told that they are either at, above or below standard, there are additional, broader consequences for children and communities from the publication of NAPLAN results on the My School website, and the communication of school and student level results to parents and students, and to the population in general.

¹⁹ Masters, G., (2018) *We need to reform NAPLAN to make it more useful*, *The Conversation*, retrieved from <https://theconversation.com/we-need-to-reform-naplan-to-make-it-more-useful-93555>

Every year the media uses NAPLAN results as reported on My School to identify a list of school winners and losers. This may be either through highlighting the current years' results or by comparing current results to previous results to identify progress or decline. In both cases the information is misleading because the NAPLAN tests are unable to provide valid and reliable comparisons at the school level. As shown earlier in this submission, the report presented to parents lacks any contextual information on the error margin or very wide confidence interval applied to their child's results and therefore does not allow for any proper interpretation or understanding of what the results mean. Instead, the results are communicated to parents as if they represent a very high level of precision, despite the fact that the [technical report issued by ACARA each year](#) (although not available on My School or easily accessible to parents) suggests that the margins are so wide as to be almost meaningless.

To what extent do parents and families use NAPLAN data on My School to make informed judgements, make choices and engage with their children's education?

&

What NAPLAN reporting information do students need in order to contribute to their own education?

Principals and teachers report that where there is an overt reliance on NAPLAN data to characterise individual student achievement this can lead to contradictory insights into that child's performance when compared to teacher professional judgement and other diagnostic assessment methods used in the classroom. In some cases, where the reporting of an individual student's performance is dominated by NAPLAN results, this can lead to a significant mischaracterisation of the performance, which in turn may pervert the approaches which a teacher may take to support the student's learning in the future.

This narrow and often singular focus on NAPLAN results has an extremely detrimental impact not only on student's learning, but on their mental health and general wellbeing. The University of Melbourne study found that almost 90% of over 8,300 teachers surveyed reported students talking about feeling stressed prior to NAPLAN testing, and significant numbers also reported students being sick, crying or having sleepless nights.²⁰

This shocking description of the impact of NAPLAN and My School on students demonstrates that the combination of NAPLAN and My School does substantially more harm than good. Not only does it provide imprecise and often valueless data in a format devoid of accompanying context, and invite absolute and final judgements of the quality of schools, communities and individual students based on entirely imperfect information, it also encourages or even forces teachers to abandon their creativity and professional autonomy and to teach to the test, and it stresses students to the point that they feel physically ill. All this is the end result of a system of assessment that has produced no determinable improvement in results for over a decade, and has "corresponded to an inexorable decline in results across the board for Australian students in international measures. It correlates with a cross-curriculum decline in top end outcomes, without any commensurate lift in bottom-end achievement. It has narrowed the taught curriculum. It has sapped the joy from too many classrooms and programs. In fact, it has conspicuously and remorselessly failed by every criterion and goal that it has set out for itself."²¹

²⁰ Dulfer, N., Polesel, J. & Rice, S. *Op.cit.*

²¹ Fitzgerald, *Op. cit.* p.12-13

AEU POLICY CONCLUSIONS

- 1. The 2018 NAPLAN test cannot be validly used for comparison data processes such as My School deploys.**
- 2. My School data can only be refreshed with a new longitudinal starting point when all students are using the same assessment mode.**
- 3. The original stated purposes of NAPLAN and My School have been terminally corrupted.**
- 4. The My School website causes great social harm especially to our most vulnerable students and schools.**
- 5. The website is incompatible with contemporary policy approaches to privacy rights.**
- 6. Alignment with the 2018 Gonski “Growth to Achievement” approach provides a framework for resolving the profound problems that NAPLAN and My School have caused.**

AEU RECOMMENDATIONS

1: That a comprehensive review of NAPLAN is undertaken, focusing on whether the current approach to standardised testing is fit for purpose.

2: That the use of standardised testing, such as NAPLAN, as a scorecard for individual schools or groups of students in those schools, as currently promoted through the My School website, is ceased.

3: That ACARA provide plain language explanations to parents of the very wide error margins used to calculate student and individual school scores and the misleading manner in which they are presented to parents on the My School site.

4: That an exploratory study is undertaken to determine the requisite sample size at the state/territory, sector and national levels for a new assessment program to replace NAPLAN.

14 March 2019

Emeritus Professor Bill Louden AM
NAPLAN Reporting Review
COAG Education Council

Emailed to NAPLANreview2019@act.gov.au

Dear Professor Louden,

NAPLAN Reporting Review

The Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Education Council's NAPLAN Reporting Review.

AHISA has undertaken a brief survey of members to inform our submission, structured around the questions posed in the Review issues paper and addressing its four key themes:

1. Perceptions of NAPLAN and My School data, including the potential for misinterpretation or misuse of data
2. How My School and NAPLAN reporting contribute to understanding of student progress and achievement
3. How schools use achievement data, including NAPLAN, to inform teaching
4. How My School and NAPLAN data are reported to students and parents.

The survey results show a wide spread of opinion among Heads of independent schools in regard to NAPLAN, the validity and usefulness of its data and the manner of its reporting on My School. This reflects the different philosophies of education held by Heads, including differences in their understanding of the role and nature of assessment in student learning, as well as the diversity of schools in the independent sector. Location, school size and the community served by the school are all major factors that can be seen to have influenced responses to the survey.

From this diversity – and, to a significant degree, because of it – several issues with both NAPLAN testing and reporting have emerged from the survey responses. These are highlighted in the 'Key Findings' section that follows. We also suggest a recommendation for further research based on these findings.

AHISA welcomes any inquiries you may have about this submission. These may be addressed to me at email ceo@ahisa.edu.au or telephone (02) 6247 7300.

Yours faithfully,

Beth Blackwood

AHISA Chief Executive Officer

ABOUT AHISA

AHISA Ltd is a professional association for Heads of independent schools.

The primary object of AHISA is to optimise the opportunity for the education and welfare of Australia's young people through the maintenance of collegiality and high standards of professional practice and conduct amongst its members.

AHISA's 440 members lead schools that collectively account for over 443,000 students, representing 11.5 per cent of total Australian school enrolments and 20 per cent of Australia's total Year 12 enrolments. One in every five Australian Year 12 students gains part of their education at an AHISA member's school.

AHISA's members lead a collective workforce of over 40,000 teaching staff and some 27,000 support staff.

The socio-economic profile of AHISA members' schools is diverse. Over 20 per cent of members lead schools serving low- to very low-SES communities. The geographic spread of members' schools is also diverse, with schools located in major city, inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote areas. School size varies from less than 200 students to over 3,000 students, with the majority of members' schools falling within the range 600 to 1400 students.

AHISA believes that a high quality schooling system in Australia depends on:

- Parents having the freedom to exercise their rights and responsibilities in regard to the education of their children
- Students and their families having the freedom to choose among diverse schooling options
- Schools having the autonomy to exercise educational leadership as they respond to the emerging needs of their communities in a rapidly changing society.

KEY FINDINGS

AHISA invited its members to complete a short online survey structured around the questions posed in the NAPLAN Reporting Review issues paper. A third of members responded to the survey.

- A majority of Heads (55 per cent) responding to AHISA's survey do not agree that the NAPLAN data currently available on the My School website provide an appropriate balance between the right to high quality information and the possibility of misinterpretation or misuse.
- Most Heads (68 per cent) are of the view that schools' NAPLAN data should not be published on the My School website.
- The two aspects of My School reporting which Heads consider most misrepresent schools' quality of provision are: promotion of a narrow understanding of what makes for the successful education of a student; and the narrowness of NAPLAN data in representing the breadth and depth of students' achievement.
- Most Heads (90 per cent) reported that the determination of 'statistically similar schools' does not support fair comparisons for schools. Some Heads query the validity of the ICSEA score itself or are concerned that by ignoring schools' geographic location or cultural and academic contexts, comparisons based on the score are misleading.
- Ninety per cent of Heads agreed that comparison of NAPLAN online data with data from paper-based tests was an issue needing consideration. Some Heads are concerned that differences in the IT capacities of schools creates an uneven testing field.
- Although only 38 per cent of Heads reported that NAPLAN data as presented on My School were used to compare their school's overall NAPLAN results with results for other schools, student gain data was reported as most useful for informing strategic school development.
- Eighty-six per cent of Heads agree that 'the lag time between NAPLAN testing and receipt of test data undermines the usefulness of the data for teaching and learning'. Most schools therefore tend to report NAPLAN results to parents either in response to parent queries or separately to other reporting.
- Even though most Heads view NAPLAN data as limited in terms of supporting student learning, many schools make use of the data to triangulate other sources of information on student achievement.
- Sixty-five per cent of Heads agree that 'NAPLAN testing diverts valuable teaching time from the curriculum'.
- Almost 50 per cent of Heads agree 'NAPLAN testing is highly stressful for students' in their school, and a similar proportion agree that 'NAPLAN testing is highly stressful for teachers'.

RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The results of AHISA's survey reveal a wide spread of opinion among school leaders as to:

- The validity, value and use of NAPLAN data to support students' learning
- The validity of NAPLAN data to support school improvement
- The validity of the ICSEA score and its use for determining 'statistically similar schools' to support school comparisons.

It is clear that the diversity of views reflects the diversity among Australia's independent schools as well as differences in educational philosophies of school leaders. The geographic location of schools and the characteristics of a school's community appear to be strong influences in shaping Heads' views and concerns.

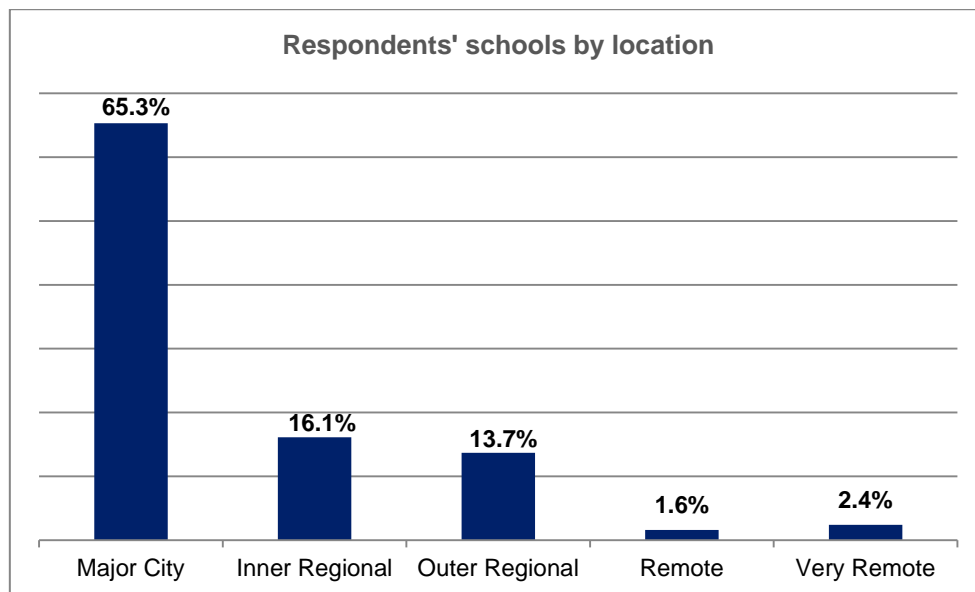
The survey results also suggest that, to inform policy development, it is not enough to be aware of educators' opinions; it is important to gain an understanding of the philosophies and experiences on which those opinions are based.

AHISA believes there is value in further investigating the experiences and beliefs that inform principals' views on NAPLAN testing and its benefits and disadvantages, including how NAPLAN data is reported. There is the potential that the findings of such research could indicate ways in which NAPLAN could better serve the needs of governments and schools. Given that research has found that school leaders are a key determinant of the potential uptake and use of NAPLAN data in schools, such research should be understood as a means of reaping benefits from the substantial investment governments and schools make in NAPLAN.

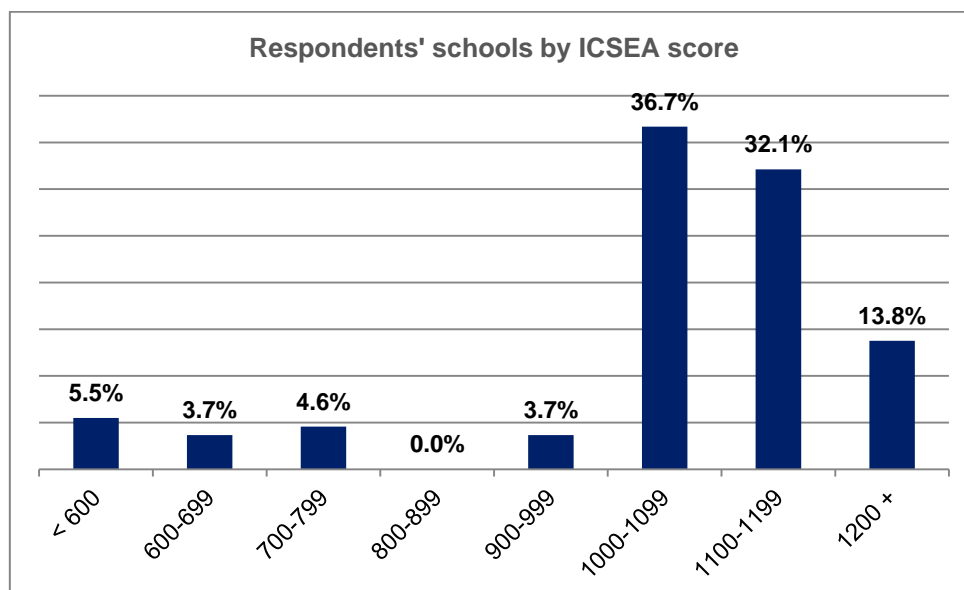
PROFILE OF AHISA SURVEY RESPONDENTS' SCHOOLS

Some 30 per cent of members responded to AHISA's NAPLAN Reporting Review survey.

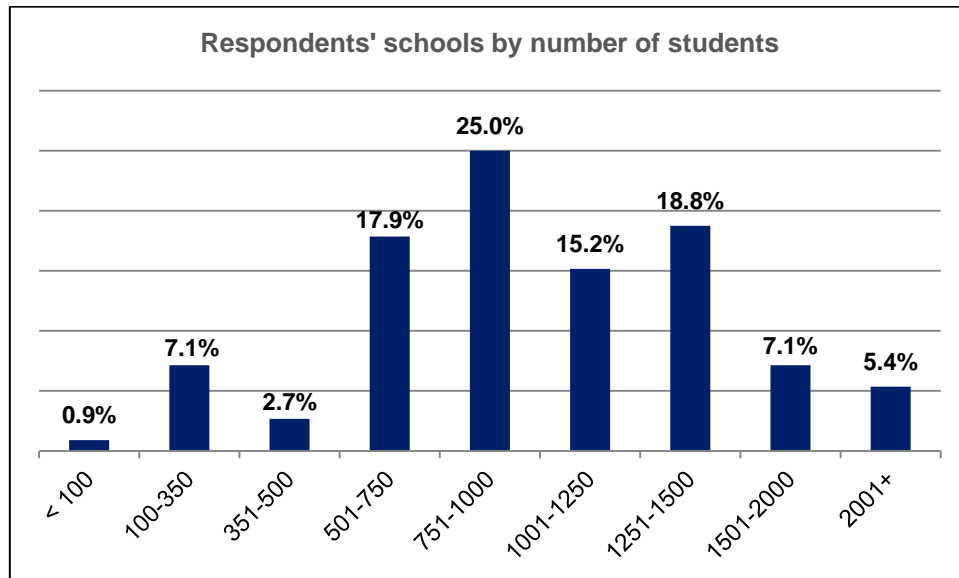
- While respondents' schools are located in all states and territories, 78 per cent of schools are located in Queensland, NSW or Victoria.
- Using the Australian Standard Geographic Classification (ASGC) system, which is used to identify school location on the My School website, 65 per cent of respondents lead schools in Major City locations and some 30 per cent lead regional schools.



- While the majority of respondents' schools have an ICSEA score of between 1000 and 1199, 17.5 per cent of schools have an ICSEA score below 1000.



- Respondents' schools range in size from less than 100 to more than 2,000 students, with most falling within the range 501 to 1500 students.



- The majority of respondents' schools are co-educational (63 per cent). The next largest grouping is single-sex female (22 per cent). Other schools are: predominantly single-sex, with mixed provision at some Year levels; co-educational with parallel classes; or co-educational with parallel single sex campuses.
- Over 40 per cent of respondents' schools make provision for early learning and/or pre-school. Just over 80 per cent of schools offer full primary provision and over 90 per cent offer all secondary Year levels. That is, the majority of respondents' schools may be described as K-12 schools, which is typical of AHISA's full spread of members' schools.
- 42 per cent of respondents reported their school has already participated in NAPLAN online testing.

1. PERCEPTIONS OF NAPLAN AND MY SCHOOL DATA

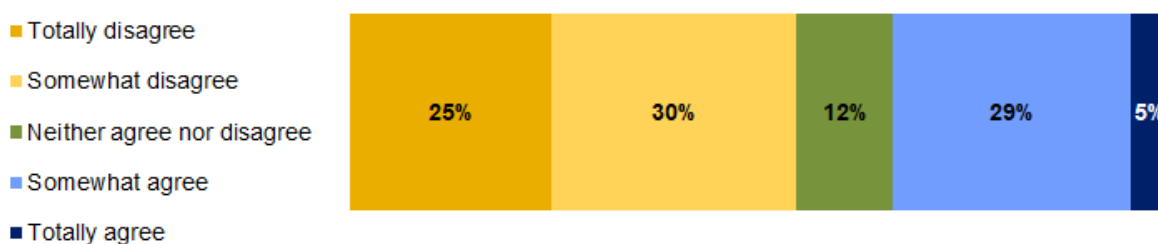
AHISA posed a number of questions to members corresponding to the questions outlined in the Review issues paper, or to reflect perspectives apparent in media coverage of NAPLAN and My School.

1a Does the NAPLAN data currently available on the My School website provide an appropriate balance between the right to high quality information and the possibility of misinterpretation or misuse?

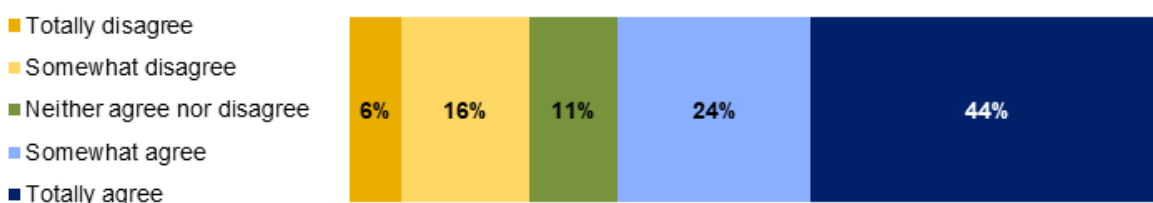
As can be seen in the chart below, when asked to comment directly on the above question, Heads are far more likely to totally disagree than totally agree that presentation of NAPLAN data on My School strikes a balance between the right to high quality information and the possibility of misinterpretation or misuse. Responses to further questions reveal that, while Heads agree that schools must be accountable for the quality of the education they provide and that governments, parents and the wider community have a right to high quality information about education provision in schools, many have serious concerns as to whether NAPLAN data can be described as 'high quality information' about schools or student achievement, either because of the nature of the tests themselves, or because of the way in which they are reported on My School, or both.

Even when Heads find value in NAPLAN testing or their schools use test information for student or overall school improvement, many commented that the information was misleading when published in the public domain. Most agree that schools' NAPLAN data should not be published on the My School website.

NAPLAN data as presented on the My School website provide an appropriate balance between the right to high quality information and the possibility of misinterpretation or misuse.



Schools' NAPLAN data *should not* be published on the My School website.



Several Heads commented strongly on the misrepresentation flowing from publication of NAPLAN and other data on My School, for example:

- ‘This [NAPLAN] testing regime is useful for cohort analysis and for school improvement purposes. The use of this public data for league table creation by media outlets is ethically and morally corrupt and should be strongly opposed. . . ‘
- ‘We have a huge intake at Year 7 from all over northern Australia. From remote, very remote to outer regional all students do NAPLAN as it was intended. Not for some comparison league table but to provide base line data along with a suite of other data. These include Indigenous students from community in Year 7 with a reading age of Grade 2, and yet they do it. How pointless is it to make comparisons with other "like" schools? Fortunately the Board and school community understand this and the staff are not judged on the basis of results. The lack of insight in the reporting of comparisons is tragic.’
- ‘My School does considerable damage to NAPLAN as it makes it a high-stakes test that narrows the curriculum. If NAPLAN only provided information to individuals, schools and systems rather than a public publishing of the data then it would be more beneficial.’

AHISA’s survey queried Heads as to whether they believed particular aspects of the reporting of NAPLAN data on My School contributed to the misrepresentation of the quality of provision at their school. The following chart represents responses by the number of mentions.

My School reporting and misrepresentation of schools’ quality of provision	
Narrowness of understanding of what makes for the successful education of a student	89
Narrowness of NAPLAN data in representing the breadth and depth of achievement of students	81
Short-term views of student progress, as NAPLAN does not account for students’ development through to Year 12	70
Lack of identification of Year levels where there are significant intakes of students from other schools	66
Lack of context of the school’s educational philosophy	64
Other	9

Comments by respondents who selected ‘other’ include:

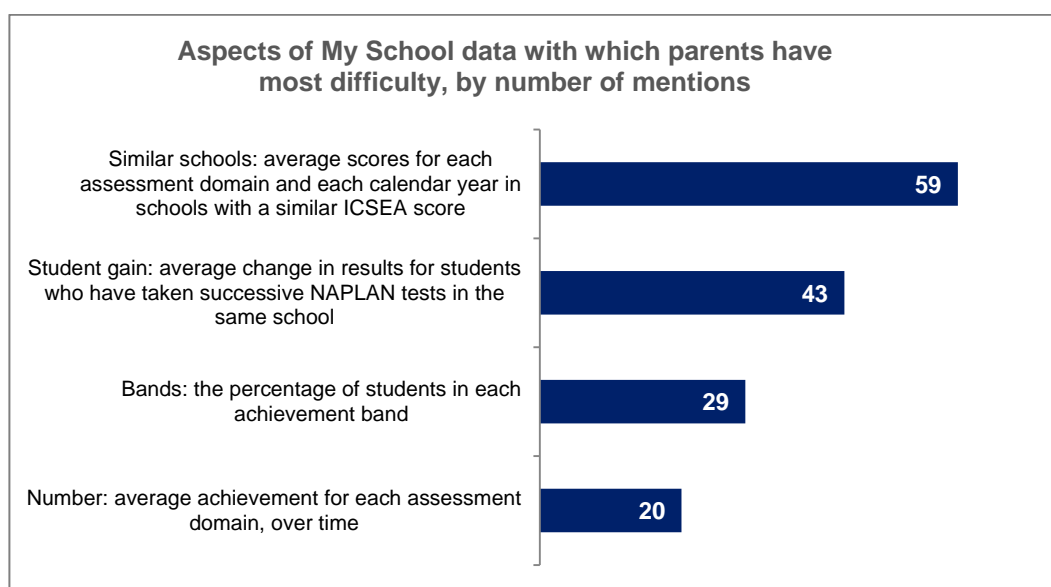
- My School does not allow for presentation of the school’s strong holistic approach to growth
- A lack of awareness and celebration of achievement for students for whom English is an additional language or dialect (EAL/D), or the depth of the academy of learning in EAL/D students’ home culture and their home language and literacy
- Lack of correspondence between NAPLAN and the Australian Curriculum (ie Year 3 NAPLAN can test material due to be taught in Year 4 etc)
- Misrepresentation of regional schools caused by the ICSEA methodology

- The limitations of NAPLAN tests themselves: multiple choice questions penalise students with a nuanced view
- Students who speak multiple languages or who come from different cultural backgrounds but who identify as 'Australian' are not reflected in data on schools' cultural diversity; nor is there a record of the impact of catering for foster children, asylum seekers and refugee children
- The correlation between Year 9 NAPLAN data and Year 12 student results is poor, yet schools' performance is judged on students' Year 9 achievement
- The level at which a child enters the school is not taken into account.

1b Is there anything you find difficult to understand or is there any different NAPLAN information you would like to see included on My School?

While Heads reported they had no difficulty understanding NAPLAN data, many Heads queried the value of the data as presented on My School, particularly the designation of 'statistically similar schools' (see Section 1c below) and the lack of rich contextual information about schools.

Heads were also asked if they were aware of any difficulties parents had in understanding NAPLAN data as presented on My School. While 'statistically similar schools' was reported as the main area of difficulty for parents, two key issues emerged from comments in response to this question: the impact of location, and family background, on parents' understanding of My School reporting and on its relevance to them. For example, some Heads reported parents of the school's students could not read English; another commented that parents in the (regional) school's community would prefer information on local schools and so comparisons of statistically similar schools in other states seemed irrelevant and/or confusing. Some Heads commented that their parent communities did not engage with NAPLAN at all.



Several Heads mentioned that parents want information about local schools, or schools within a specific area, not statistically similar schools. This suggests some parents may not be aware of the 'Schools map' option on the My School site to locate and link to schools. It may be worth considering highlighting features such as the map tool on the site's home page.

Another Head raised the issue of parents' lack of understanding of how schools contribute to student achievement:

Parents are more likely to look at the My School website at vulnerable times – starting primary and starting Year 7 – where the published results are the result of only a few months at that school so not actually representative of that school's performance.

Many Heads commented on the narrow view of education and/or student success promoted by the My School website. One Head who leads a school in a Very Remote location commented:

It takes considerable time for NESB students from very remote locations to gain academic EAL proficiency yet their progress is tracked and celebrated with students and their families at a community level. Perhaps the parameters of inclusion [on My School] need to be broadened to determine 'success', for example, what percentage of parents and family members attend school council meetings, or participate in school programs? What percentage of students in the town attend school, self harm, look after young siblings or their elderly, perform community maintenance tasks, drive community development projects etc?

1c Is the explanatory material on My School around 'statistically similar schools' sufficiently explained, easy to understand and does this support fair comparisons for schools?

As noted above, parents have most difficulty in understanding the presentation of My School data by the categorisation of 'statistically similar schools'. Heads' comments indicate that this may be because the data is not relevant as it is not localised or does not capture the similarities parents wish to compare (such as whether the school is single-sex, coeducational, boarding and so on) – that is, the terminology cannot be grasped intuitively because parents have in mind a quite different set of expectations as to what might be deemed 'similar' in relation to schools – or because parents may not have located or understood the available explanatory material.

Ninety per cent of Heads responding to the survey reported that the determination of 'statistically similar schools' does not support fair comparisons for schools.

Many Heads reported concerns about the validity of the ICSEA score itself, with comments indicating that the score is deemed by some to be a 'black box'. One Head commented, 'Total mystery to me how this exercise is carried out, as the outcome seems arbitrary and of no use to anyone'. Several Heads queried reliance on parent-reported data for the calculation of ICSEA scores, noting the inherent subjectivity associated with the data.

The apparent arbitrariness of the ICSEA score was a recurrent theme in comments. One Head, who has deep knowledge of two schools, commented that the schools could not be considered 'similar' in any way that would allow for meaningful comparison; the only thing the schools had in common was their ICSEA score.

Another Head identified a problem specific to regional schools:

The ICSEA calculation completely excludes any parents who are coded to level 1 (Professionals), thus these parents have no impact on the school's ICSEA. By contrast,

parents who are coded to level 2 (Associate Professionals) increase the school's ICSEA score. This leads to perverse outcomes.

By definition, farm owners are categorised as level 2 (Associate Professionals). This means that it is automatically more likely that schools in regional and rural areas will have a higher proportion of parents in level 2, thereby increasing their ICSEA scores relative to schools in metropolitan areas. For Victorian independent schools, rural and regional schools have, on average, much higher ratios of category 2 to category 1 students. Consequently our school is categorised as a similarly advantaged community to schools in Melbourne that are charging more than double our fees.

	School A	School B	School C
Professionals	20	5	50
Associate Professionals	20	20	20
Skilled Non-Professionals	20	20	20
Low Skilled	20	35	5
Not in Paid Work	20	20	5
In all other variables, the schools are identical			

While schools A, B and C educate very different demographics, because the ICSEA calculation process only takes account of Associate Professionals and Skilled Non-Professionals, these three schools would all receive the same ICSEA score.

For example our school SES is 96 and our fees are \$15,000 in Year 12 but our ICSEA score is 1127. An established Melbourne school charging double our fees has an SES of 120 and ICSEA of 1148.

Another Head queried the high scoring for the 'Director' employment category, given that it could disguise that both parents in the one family could be directors of a 'struggling two-person family company'.

It is apparent from responses that many Heads have little confidence in the determination of ICSEA scores. Even if Heads recognise the rationale for the use of an ICSEA score, they are concerned by its use in comparing schools:

Whilst I understand the reasoning behind the score and I do believe in its overall relevance as a scale of comparison, I also must acknowledge that there are many variables that it cannot, and will never be able to, measure and present to external stakeholders. Complexities such as student mental health concerns, medical issues etc cannot be measured in such a score and therefore the score does not accurately reflect the complexities that some schools face. I do concede that research demonstrates that students who have parents with higher levels of education and are more financially secure do generally have greater access to cultural capital and therefore greater learning outcomes – so I do understand why the score draws on the data utilised. In principle I do not disagree with the use of the score – but I do feel that it can be open to great misinterpretation if used without full understanding of the complexities behind it.

Most respondents queried the validity of using the ICSEA score as a comparative measure, given its failure to capture the complexity of schools and the multiplicity of variables at play in school communities. As a result, use of the score gives rise to misleading comparisons. Comments included:

- 'A very small number of schools across Australia have a similar ICSEA score to our school.'
- 'It ignores comprehensive/selective, intake years, different approaches to significance of tests etc.'
- 'Comparison of our school to selective schools, large boarding schools in capital cities and single sex schools is not helpful.'
- 'All schools are different, regardless of the ICSEA score. The score is just one more measure, not an equivalency.'

Of particular concern are comparisons made irrespective of schools' geographic location or cultural and academic contexts. Comments included:

- 'Some of the like schools are so geographically removed as for the comparisons to be meaningless.'
- 'Often very remote aboriginal community schools are lumped with schools in rural areas.'
- 'How can we (school in North Queensland) be compared to schools in inner city Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Perth!'
- '[According to the ICSEA score] our open entry rural school is "similar" to a metro school with an acceleration program.'

While some Heads commented that the option to select comparison by local schools would meet parental priorities, at the same time other Heads noted that neighbouring schools could be very different in terms of mission and vision, cultural context, subject offerings and student intake.

Other Heads questioned the validity of using comparative data as a form of accountability:

There is no argument that schools should be accountable for the provision of a quality education and that the public should have access to information to help inform their choice of schools. However, the system and process of collecting and reporting data for publication not only has the effect of narrowing the scope of an education, but creates a climate of competition that unfairly portrays schools as poor places of learning, ignoring the value of a true education worth having and the particular circumstances and needs of individual communities... The current approach to accountability in the form of comparison data on the My School website does little more than cast judgment without providing context.

One Head commented that use of the ICSEA score to compare schools was so invalid as to be 'more than unfair': 'It is unwise and not thought through'.

1d What consideration should be given to comparisons over time and between schools while schools progressively transition to NAPLAN online?

Ninety per cent of respondents agreed that comparison of NAPLAN online data with data from paper-based tests was an issue needing consideration, given the differences in the testing. This was reported as an issue within schools, not just in relation to comparisons between schools. As one Head commented, 'Our early thinking is our students are performing better with NAPLAN online and this has made comparisons across time very difficult'.

Some of those Heads responding 'no' to the question noted that their response assumed that 'the tests are valid and reliable in their evaluation of achievement'. One Head commented:

I understand that the methodology of NAPLAN testing uses item response theory, therefore each question is scaled for relative difficulty and the specific skills / knowledge it is evaluating, regardless of the format. NAPLAN online will be adaptive which allows greater accuracy in measuring the capabilities of a student at a point in time... Given the more static nature of the paper test there are fewer items at the extremes. Presumably the relative accuracy of assessments of the strongest and weakest students at a Year level will vary depending on the format used. However I imagine the assessment and measurement experts will be able to provide interpretation guidelines and/or statistically manage this.

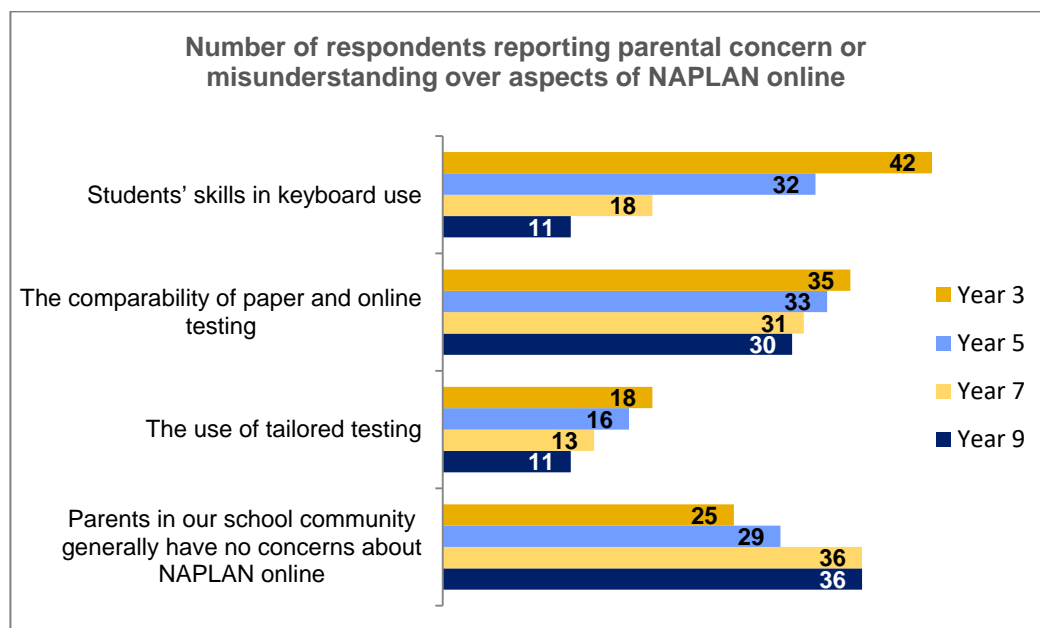
One Head suggested the data of schools that had already transitioned to NAPLAN online should be analysed to identify any trends that may be linked to the different testing mode: 'If there are significant changes to these trends then the data need to be moderated.'

Other Heads queried the viability of the data for comparisons between schools even when all testing was conducted online, for example:

- 'The capacity of a school to do tests online in itself builds differences between schools.'
- 'The question assumes that our computer system will allow the children to be able to do the test in a timed environment. [NAPLAN online] is not an even testing field, which impacts on the individual results and then the wider school results.'

As noted in Section 1a above, many Heads queried the validity of making public comparisons of NAPLAN data at all, irrespective of the mode of testing. One Head commented: 'Don't compare schools – provide the data for school use, not public comparison.'

AHISA's survey included a question on whether schools were aware of any parental concerns or misunderstandings in relation to the transition to NAPLAN online. As can be seen by the accompanying chart, not all parents raise concerns about the move to NAPLAN online and, when they do, the level and nature of their concern is related to the age of their child.



Some Heads commented that their parent community was not yet aware of the issue of tailored testing, or that parents had issues with NAPLAN in general rather than with specific aspects of

the testing regime, or were more concerned by the anxiety experienced by their children than with technical issues. One Head commented: 'The parent body is divided with regard to the efficacy of NAPLAN testing, as well as its value. The reporting and its impact on students is another concerning factor.'

Other Heads reported that teachers were more likely than parents to be concerned by NAPLAN, with one Head noting: 'Parents haven't expressed concern; however teachers have – especially about comparability and keyboard use as well as connection issues (internet). We had considerable issues when participating in test items for NAPLAN online.' Another Head whose school had experienced only minor difficulties in participating in NAPLAN online reported the school had few concerns, and parents had not expressed concern either.

2. HOW MY SCHOOL AND NAPLAN REPORTING CONTRIBUTE TO UNDERSTANDING OF STUDENT PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENT

2a To what extent do schools and school systems use NAPLAN student progress and achievement data, including comparisons with statistically similar schools, to inform their school improvement strategies?

As will be seen in Section 3a below, some Heads report they actively use student-level NAPLAN data to inform strategic school development. AHISA also questioned Heads about the use of comparisons of school-level data for this purpose.

Only 38 per cent of Heads reported that NAPLAN data as presented on My School were used to compare their school's overall NAPLAN results with results for other schools. These respondents were then presented with a range of possible comparisons and asked to rank these from 1 to 8 according to which were most useful for the purpose of informing school improvement strategies. The following table presents responses in rank order.

Factors most useful for informing strategic school development	
Comparison factor	Ranked score
Student gain by students with same starting score	5.45
Student gain by schools with similar students	5.13
Student achievement by other independent schools in area	5.10
Student achievement by all schools in enrolment catchment area	5.04
Student achievement by statistically similar schools in state/territory	4.71
Student achievement by other non-government schools in area	4.09
Student achievement by statistically similar schools nationally	3.74
Student gain by all Australian schools	3.59

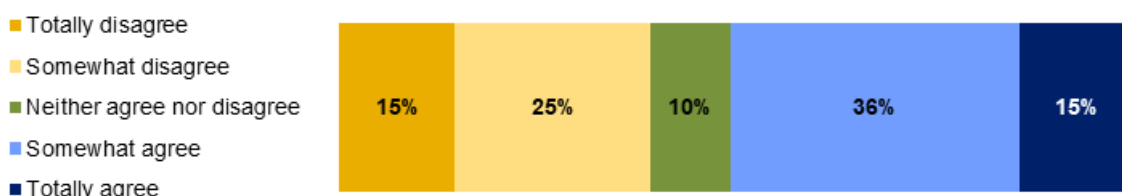
Although their school might not actively seek to use NAPLAN results for strategic school development, almost 60 per cent of Heads reported that a comparison of the school's results with results from other schools were presented to the school Board. The following table lists the comparison factors reported in order of number of mentions.

Comparisons reported to school Boards, by number of mentions	
Student achievement by other independent schools in area	27
Student gain by all Australian schools	27
Student achievement by all schools in enrolment catchment area	24
Student achievement by statistically similar schools in state/territory	24
Student gain by schools with similar students	20
Student achievement by other non-government schools in area	17
Student achievement by statistically similar schools nationally	17
Student gain by students with same starting score	16

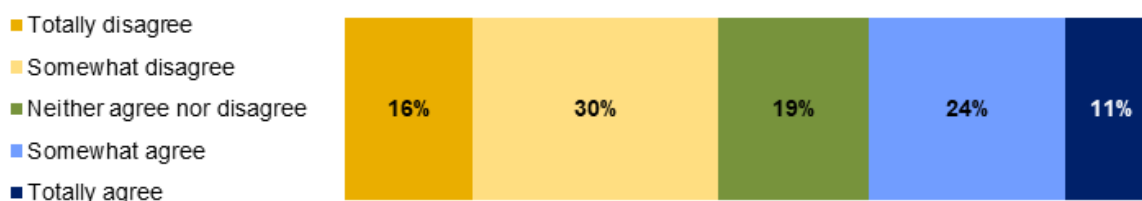
2b To what extent is whole-population assessment data necessary to meet school systems' and governments' need for sound information to support school improvement?

AHISA's survey sought respondents' opinions on NAPLAN as a tool for systemic and government policy making and intervention in schools. As the charts below show, there is a significant divide in opinion among educators as to whether the current NAPLAN testing regime has legitimacy in the context of providing the information that systems and governments need to support school improvement. Nor is there clear agreement that sample testing (such as used for NAP Civics & Citizenship, NAP Science Literacy and NAP ICT testing, and for international benchmark testing such as the OECD's PISA series) is a preferred model.

Whole-population assessment data such as gathered by NAPLAN is necessary to meet school systems' and governments' need for sound information to support school improvement



Sample testing is adequate to obtain information on students' literacy and numeracy achievement for the purposes of systems and governments



AHISA's survey gives limited insight into the foundations of Heads' views as expressed in responses to such statements. It is possible for some Heads that their views are shaped by the immediacy of school-level concerns. For example:

- 65 per cent of survey respondents agreed that 'NAPLAN testing diverts valuable teaching time from the curriculum'
- 49 per cent of respondents agreed 'NAPLAN testing is highly stressful for students' in their school, and a similar proportion agreed that 'NAPLAN testing is highly stressful for teachers'.

What is apparent from the survey is that schools' experiences of NAPLAN reflect the wide diversity among schools, and that location and student characteristics can influence Heads' views on the usefulness of NAPLAN. Given the serious concerns expressed by Heads in regard to the use of NAPLAN data for school comparisons, as discussed elsewhere in this submission, it is possible that many Heads have weighed the benefits and disadvantages of NAPLAN and that many have found the disadvantages that they see to teaching and learning and therefore the

impact on the quality of Australian education more broadly are not offset by any benefit to system and government authorities.

AHISA is aware of an emerging public discussion in Australia on whether alternatives to whole-population NAPLAN testing are desirable.¹ AHISA believes the views of educators must be taken into account in any discussion on NAPLAN that aims to inform public policy making. As AHISA's survey results show, there is likely to be a wide spread of opinion among teachers and school leaders. The survey results also suggest that, to inform policy development, it is not enough to be aware of educators' opinions; it is important to gain an understanding of the philosophies and experiences on which those opinions are based. Given that research has found that the leadership of a school is 'a key determinant of the potential uptake and usefulness of [NAPLAN] data'², there is value in further investigation of what informs principals' views on NAPLAN testing and its benefits and disadvantages.

¹ See for example *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Countries opt out of NAPLAN style tests', 11 March 2019, page 19.

² Johnston J (2017) Australian NAPLAN testing: In what ways is this a 'wicked' problem? *Improving Schools*, 20(1):18-34; <https://doi.org/10.1177/1365480216673170>.

3. HOW SCHOOLS USE ACHIEVEMENT DATA, INCLUDING NAPLAN, TO INFORM TEACHING

3a To what extent are NAPLAN data and the My School website used to inform teaching?

While some 62 per cent of Heads agreed NAPLAN data is useful to inform development strategies at class or Year levels or for wider school improvement, 86 per cent agreed 'the lag time between NAPLAN testing and receipt of test data undermines the usefulness of the data for teaching and learning'.

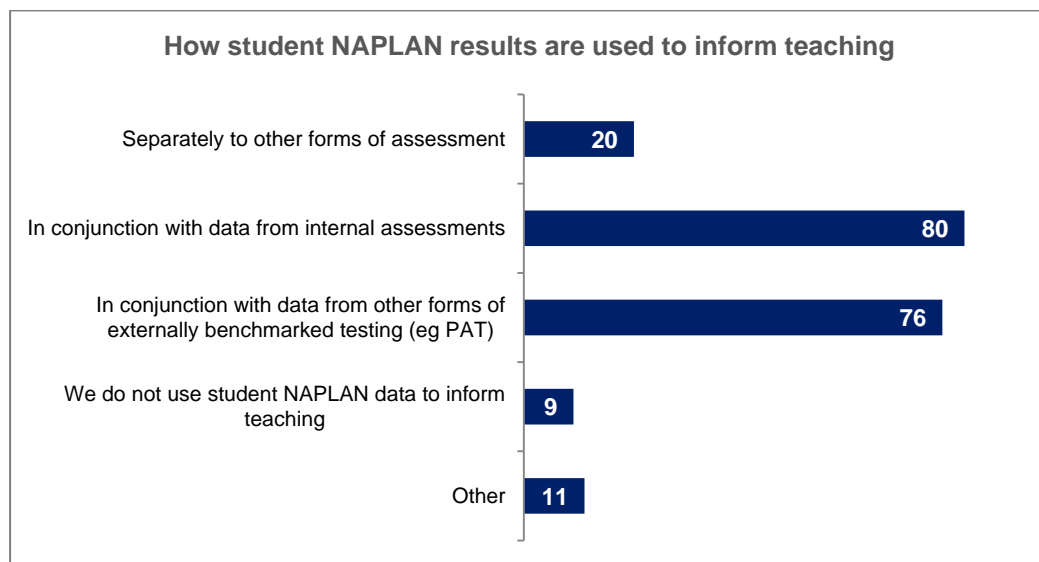
One Head commented:

Generally speaking we are aware that the NAPLAN data gives a very one dimensional perspective on the development of our students. It doesn't make the data unimportant, just limited in scope and value.

Another Head, however, commented that student gain data are 'particularly powerful' for informing decisions about teaching:

NAPLAN has been incredibly useful in identifying problems and dispelling myths about our students and teaching practice. NAPLAN allowed us to identify serious deficiencies in our learning program and to take decisive actions, which has made a radical and positive impact.

Even while most Heads are of the opinion that NAPLAN data are of limited value, they report making use of the data to triangulate other sources of information on student achievement:



Heads who selected 'other' in the survey question charted above commented that NAPLAN data are used to:

- Confirm teacher judgement
- Inform internal testing
- Developing interventions for students with identified needs and gaps
- Interrogate student growth.

One Head commented:

NAPLAN data provide just 'one piece of the puzzle' in terms of student achievement and progress data. Internal assessment, both formative and summative, in conjunction with regular standardised testing and NAPLAN data provide a holistic measure of student achievement and progress over time. We find this sort of measure more meaningful for students, parents and teachers as it informs teaching and learning practice, intervention requirements and opportunities for both enrichment and remediation.

3b Which assessment tools, approaches and data analytics services do schools and school systems use to inform teaching?

Some 65 per cent of Heads in the AHISA survey responded to a survey question on whether their school uses externally benchmarked testing other than NAPLAN. The following providers and/or products were mentioned:

- Academic Assessment Services (formerly Robert Allwell & Associates)
- Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) tests: Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT); ACER Scholarship Tests; TORCH (Tests of Reading Comprehension); AGAT (General Ability Tests); Compass Literacy and Numeracy Assessment; CogAT (Cognitive Abilities Test); Westwood maths tests. Some schools use ACER's OARS (online reporting and assessment system)
- Brigance Early Childhood Screens
- Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)
- EducationPerfect resources
- Edutest: Scholarship and entrance tests
- MAI (Mathematics Assessment Interview) testing
- Pearson: Raven's Educational; WISC (Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children); (KBIT) Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test
- South Australian Spelling Test
- UNSW Global: ICAS Assessments
- Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA): On Demand testing program.

Just over 80 per cent of Heads in the survey responded to a question on the use of data analytics software to analyse NAPLAN data. Of these, some 14 per cent reported their school does not conduct digital analysis of student assessment data, does not include NAPLAN data in that analysis or is in the process of developing a system to allow tracking of NAPLAN data against school generated data. Practices mentioned by the remaining respondents are listed in the table below in order of number of mentions.

Use of data analytics software to analyse NAPLAN data	
We don't use a specific data analytics software package but have an internal system of tracking student assessment based on spreadsheet software (eg Excel)	27
We use (or access online) state/territory departmental software (eg SCOUT in NSW)	21
We use a commercially available data analytics tool	20
We use software developed to the school's specifications by an external provider	11
We use software developed by our state/territory Association of Independent Schools	11
We use internally developed software	11

Schools also used the analysis available through their commercially provided testing regime, or presentation software such as Excel or Tableau. One Head reported the school analysed the student gain charts published on My School and expressly requested that these be retained should there be a revamp of the site following the NAPLAN Reporting Review.

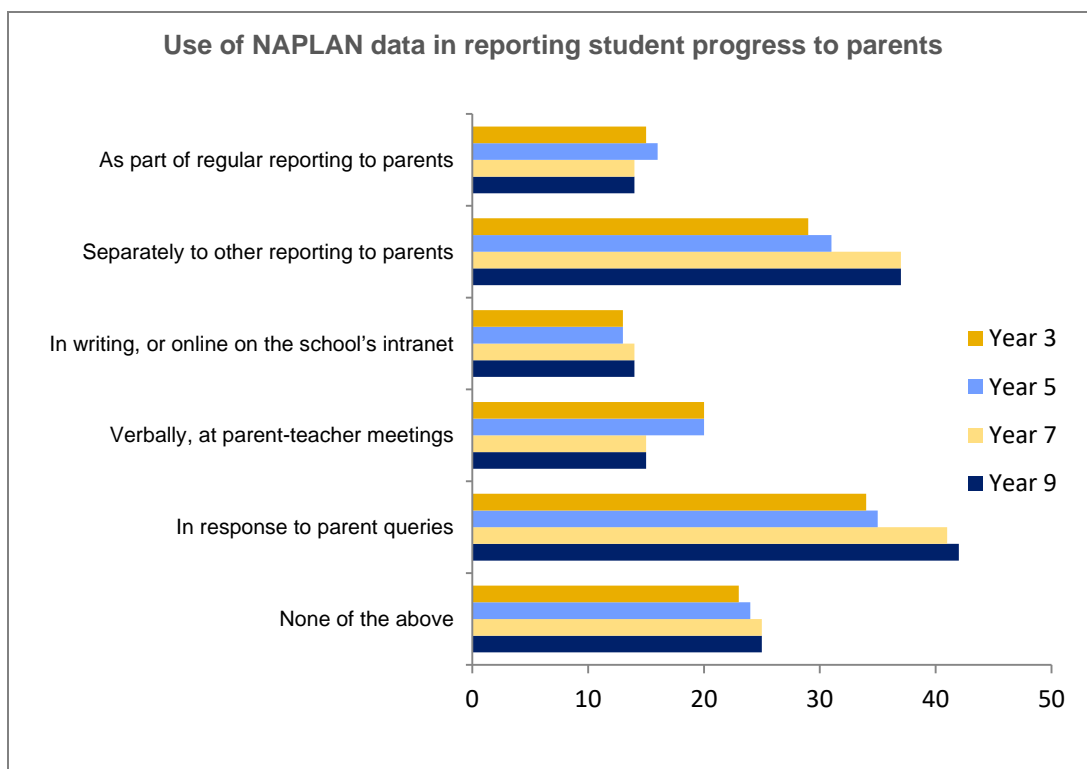
4. HOW MY SCHOOL AND NAPLAN DATA ARE REPORTED TO STUDENTS AND PARENTS

4a To what extent do schools communicate individual, whole school and comparative NAPLAN data to students, parents and families?

AHISA's survey asked Heads about the ways, if any, they used NAPLAN data to report to parents on student progress. A third of those responding to the question selected 'None of the above' from a list of six options. This possibly reflects the concerns of schools over the usefulness of NAPLAN data in supporting student achievement or to accurately reflect what students know and can do given the time lag in receipt of the data. Schools may consider that reporting NAPLAN data therefore risks misleading or confusing parents about the academic achievement and progress of their children.

The chart below shows that schools are most likely to discuss students' NAPLAN data in response to parents' queries or, if they do report NAPLAN data, to report NAPLAN data separately to other reporting to parents.

There are some differences on method of reporting depending on the Year level of students. For example, discussion of NAPLAN data at parent-teacher meetings is more likely to occur when students are in Years 3 and 5 rather than Years 7 and 9.



When asked if their school used NAPLAN data to engage students in their learning, Heads' responses varied from 'not at all' to using one or several different approaches depending on the Year level of students, including:

- Reporting back results to individual students, in class
- Reporting back overall class results
- Discussing results with students outside of class
- Offering additional tutoring for students whose results show a gap in understanding.

Concerns over the nature of NAPLAN data and the time lag in receiving it mean, however, that schools are most likely to restrict direct use of the data to teachers for diagnostic purposes only. As one Head noted: 'We don't find the process helpful. For teachers it confirms what they know already but we don't add to the pressure that students feel.' Another Head commented:

If interventions are put in place to improve in a particular area as a result of NAPLAN data, there is no opportunity for students to re-do that part of NAPLAN to assess improvement and progress. A system that is accessible continually over time would be more useful to the education of our young people.

The survey responses suggest that, as it is currently structured, the NAPLAN testing regime is not viewed as a useful tool to engage students in their learning, and does not provide a form of feedback to students that schools are comfortable for their students to access without the mediation of a teacher. ■

Queries about AHISA's submission or member survey may be addressed to AHISA's CEO, Ms Beth Blackwood, email ceo@ahisa.edu.au or telephone (02) 6247 7300.



AUSTRALIAN PARENTS COUNCIL Inc.
PO Box 5022, Launceston TAS 7259
www.austparents.edu.au

Submission to the Education Council of COAG review of the current approach to the presentation of NAPLAN data including information published on the My School website

March 2019

The Australian Parents Council has provided parents and governments with a trustworthy voice in education policy for over 55 years. We are a non-denominational, non-party political organisation that advocates for parents with children in non-government schools (Catholic and independent) and for Australian parents more generally. Our interests and activities extend down to early learning and up to post-school transitions, and to the ongoing support of Parents Australia Incorporated, which we established as a national charity and deductible gift recipient in 2011.

The work of the Australian Parents Council over many years, and of Parents Australia Incorporated more recently, has contributed to the improvement of children's educational experiences and outcomes, progressive reforms in schooling, and the social capital of school and Indigenous communities throughout Australia.

On numerous occasions over the last twelve months, the APC has publicly supported NAPLAN and the transition to NAPLAN Online. Parents in general understand the point-in-time nature of the assessment and appreciate the independent source of information on how their child is going. Of course, there is always need for review and improvement.

We welcome this opportunity to contribute our views on the presentation of NAPLAN data including information published on the My School website, from the parent perspective and thank you sincerely.

Mrs Shelley Hill

APC Chair

0428 740 743



1. PERCEPTIONS OF NAPLAN REPORTING AND MY SCHOOL DATA

Does the NAPLAN data currently available on the My School website provide an appropriate balance between the right to high quality information and the possibility of misinterpretation or misuse?

- There are a number of issues raised by this question and there are undoubtedly some situations where there is a possibility of misuse of the information on My School. Situations where league tables are published and students, teachers and parents at 'lowest' performing schools are approached by media for example are damaging to the interests of families and staff.
- APC supports the access to and publication of NAPLAN data providing it is done under strict agreed guidelines in all external publications that protect the interests of students.
- It is important to consider that it is parents who will lose access to the data if it is not published publicly, as proposed by some other stakeholders. APC believes that it is better to manage the use of the data, than to deprive parents of information about their child's school. Parents are the biggest stakeholders in education and, as such, should be able to access NAPLAN data about their child, their child's school and their child's prospective school.

Is there anything you find difficult to understand or is there any different NAPLAN information you would like to see included on My School?

- APC would like to see a greater emphasis on the 'value-add' of their child's school reported, to give a perspective on how well the school is performing in terms of effective teaching.
- APC would also like progression for individual students between years demonstrated on individual reports so that parents can see growth on a single report, rather than having to compare multiple reports.

Is the explanatory material on My School around "statistically similar schools" sufficiently explained, easy to understand and does this support fair comparisons for schools?

- This is not well explained for parents. While parents are generally accepting that the schools displayed would be a 'fair comparison' of their school, the "interpreting this graph" page within the NAPLAN results for a particular school doesn't adequately explain how the similar schools have been chosen. Information on the NAP website is difficult to find on this topic as it sits under both "Information for parents" and "FAQs".

What consideration should be given to comparisons over time and between schools while schools progressively transition to NAPLAN online?

- Whether a school has transitioned to NAPLAN online should be clearly stated and made very obvious for everyone using My School, for schools and on the individual student reports. How these comparisons are treated is problematic, given the differences in student performances due to mode of assessment. An option to only show 'like' schools where students have used the same mode of assessment could help parents make better comparisons.



2. HOW MY SCHOOL AND NAPLAN CONTRIBUTE TO UNDERSTANDING OF STUDENT PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENT

To what extent do schools and school systems use NAPLAN student progress and achievement data, including comparisons with statistically similar schools, to inform their school improvement strategies?

- Parents generally have limited oversight of this process, with experience limited to school board level, where the results are presented and discussed.

To what extent is whole-population assessment data necessary to meet school systems' and governments' need for sound information to support school improvement?

- Most parents understand the value of whole-population assessment data and expect that it would drive changes in teaching and pedagogy to achieve growth for the students in their school, and at a system level.

3. HOW SCHOOLS USE ACHIEVEMENT DATA, INCLUDING NAPLAN, TO INFORM TEACHING

To what extent are NAPLAN data and the My School website used to inform teaching?

- Parents are not usually involved in this process, but anecdotal reports of NAPLAN results not being provided to the next year level teacher and assessment starting all over again, worry parents.

Which assessment tools, approaches and data analytics services do schools and school systems use to inform teaching?

- This question is not applicable to parents.

What opportunities are there to improve the timeliness of NAPLAN reporting?

- Parents would like to see NAPLAN results reported within days rather than months, to aid schools, and to enable parents to have timely discussions with their child's teacher about any issues.

4. HOW MY SCHOOL DATA AND NAPLAN DATA ARE REPORTED TO STUDENTS AND PARENTS

To what extent do schools communicate individual, whole school and comparative NAPLAN data to students, parents and families?

- This varies across schools, but in most cases the school's NAPLAN results are summarised in a newsletter to parents. At the individual level, it is often left to the parent to initiate a conversation with the teacher about NAPLAN results.



To what extent do parents and families use NAPLAN data on My School to make informed judgements, make choices and engage with their children's education?

- Again this varies, but most parents understand that it is one assessment among many that their children do during the year. Many parents appreciate the value of a standardised assessment that indicate where their child is in relation to expected levels and other students, both at the school and national level.
- Only 5% of parents in APC's 2018 national survey reported using NAPLAN results when choosing a school for their child. NAPLAN data on My School is most likely to be considered by parents not familiar with the school, eg International and inter-state families who may look at results and also for high SES government primary schools and high SES non-government high schools, for example.
- Many parents feel very aggrieved when their child is not accepted into a school when they perceive the decision was based on their child's NAPLAN results. There are actually many situations where schools ask parents for NAPLAN results as a criteria for accepting students, including in the government sector. APC believes that secondary schools should not be able to use NAPLAN to determine enrolment. The report should only be provided after acceptance of a place at a school. School reports over a number of years provide a more holistic picture of a child's abilities and are more appropriate than a point-in-time assessment.

What NAPLAN reporting information do students need in order to contribute to their own education?

- There needs to be a method of contextualising the feedback for students about what the results mean for their learning, as this is not a test like others so the student/parent/teacher conversation around it needs to be foregrounded. Doing this properly would reduce the stress for students at all year levels.
- Students should only be given information in consultation with parents in Year 3 and 5.
- Students at Year 7 and 9 should receive all questions and responses so they have the opportunity to self-evaluate and reflect, and discuss with their teachers and parents.

Summary Report: APPA NAPLAN Online Trial Survey

INTRODUCTION

This survey was undertaken by APPA to gauge the perceptions of primary school principals as to the impact upon schools in conducting the Platform Trial and Readiness Testing (PTRT) for completing NAPLAN Online. The trial testing enabled principals and schools to test devices, connectivity, technology requirements and students' engagement with the online format. Schools were able to experience the administration and set up for the test, providing staff with an opportunity to identify actions required to prepare the school and its students to undertake a fully implemented NAPLAN Online.

APPA's NAPLAN Online Reference Group met with ACARA on a number of occasions and discussed the challenges of moving NAPLAN online. This Online Trial was viewed as a necessary phase and, while further research and trialling on other aspects of NAPLAN will continue, APPA is keen to see that the challenges faced by schools to move to an online testing environment are identified and addressed. It was also important to identify where the Trial was successfully held and that the key aspects of that success are communicated broadly to schools.

ACARA is working with each State and Territory Assessment Authority in managing the change required for successful implementation. APPA has met with ACARA and provided results of the survey. The desired outcome is to ensure that every student, no matter what school she or he attends, has a comparable experience in completing NAPLAN Online, and one that is fair and equitable.

OVERVIEW

APPA developed a short online survey that was sent to its National Advisory Council. State and territory representatives then provided their members (primary school principals) who participated in the Trial with the link to the survey. APPA's understanding was that the Trial was conducted in 1100 schools. The survey was completed by 191 principals or their delegate. The results are provided below. For some questions, principals were able to provide comments. The comments have been summarised into key themes and common issues. Only schools that participated in the Year 3 Writing component completed questions 9, 10 and 11.

While the survey showed that approximately 77% of principals recorded that their school's overall experience with the NAPLAN Online Trial was positive, there were a number of challenges and problems experienced in conducting the Trial. The survey reports that approximately 77% of principals indicated that overall their school is ready to undertake NAPLAN Online in 2017, while 23% would not be ready for 2017.

Significantly, a large majority of principals (84%) reported problems with technology and connections. It was also reported that in order to be ready, schools would need to increase time spent teaching keyboard and word processing skills, increase time teaching and assessing online, and increase technology support. There is also considerable concern over the viability of iPads to perform under test conditions.

Further to the above, the survey showed that 35% of principals estimated it would take 4 – 6 days to complete NAPLAN Online; 38% estimated 7 – 10 days to complete the NAPLAN Online tests. The survey also showed that 80% of principals reported that more than 6 hours was required in administration and set up for the Trial test.

Approximately 41% of principals indicated that Year 3 Writing should remain a pencil and paper test; 20% were undecided; 24% thought it could be either written or online: and 14% thought it should be online.

SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

Q1 Approximately how many total hours were spent in administration, preparation and set-up of the NAPLAN Online Trial at your school? (Collate the time spent by various people involved in the Trial.)

Answer Choices	Responses
1 or 2	3.70% 7
3 or 4	6.88% 13
5 or 6	9.89% 18
More than 6 Hours	79.89% 151
Total	189

Q2 Overall, our school's experience with the NAPLAN Trial was positive.

Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly agree	9.57% 18
Agree	67.55% 127
Disagree	15.43% 29
Strongly disagree	7.45% 14
Total	188

Overview of Q2 Comments

Key themes coming through in these comments relate to issues with the amount of time taken in preparation for the tests, dealing with technology issues, logging on and password management. A number of principals commented that once over the set up challenge, the Trial went well. Many commented about the additional time and workload required for set up. Respondents' experience of the online support or helpline was varied, with many acknowledging they used *in-school tech* support. Comments also noted the difference in student engagement with the observation that students who were known to have access to computers at home generally had a better experience of the Trial.

Q3 Overall, the students were able to follow the format and instructions of the test with ease.

Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly agree	15.59% 29
Agree	74.19% 138
Disagree	9.14% 17
Strongly disagree	1.08% 2
Total	186

Q4 Overall, the devices used by students successfully handled the requirements of the Trial.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	19.05%	36
Agree	64.02%	121
Disagree	14.81%	28
Strongly disagree	2.12%	4
Total		189

Q5 Overall, the students successfully managed logging on and starting the test.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	23.81%	45
Agree	56.08%	106
Disagree	15.87%	30
Strongly disagree	4.23%	8
Total		189

Q6 Were there any technical issues experienced by students (power, internet, mouse, screen type problems; computer / laptop 'crash' or freeze; online / test functions not working; etc)?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	84.49%	158
No	15.51%	29
Total		187

Overview of Q6 Comments

The survey received over 161 comments for this section with 158 identifying one or more technical issues. This aspect of the Trial was the most commented upon by principals and included a wide range of problems. While some principals reported no major problems, most found the technology aspect challenging in conducting the Trial and with students completing the test. The major challenges involved inconsistent functioning of iPads, the number of devices capable of downloading the test and management of devices. Many reported freezing or the screen froze. This freezing ranged from a short time to requiring the device to be rebooted. Students experienced problems with sound and compatibility of the headsets used. Maintaining power was identified as a challenge with iPads and laptops having poor battery reliability. One school had to connect all devices by extension cords to ensure power was maintained. This then created a safety issue for movement of students and supervisors. Internet connections were another source of concern with many dropping in and out and overloading the bandwidth. Some principals reported students losing work or not being able to review completed tests. The aspect of logging on was challenging as was ensuring browser lockdown.

Q7 Overall, our school is ready to undertake NAPLAN Online in 2017.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	15.59%	29
Agree	61.83%	115
Disagree	15.05%	28
Strongly disagree	7.53%	14
Total		186

Q8 Generally, NAPLAN is currently completed by students over three days. For your school, how many days do you estimate would need to be set aside to complete NAPLAN Online?

Answer Choices	Responses	
3 days	12.70%	24
4 – 6 days	35.45%	67
7 – 10 days	38.62%	73
10+ days	13.23%	25
Total		189

Q9 Overall, the Year 3 students were very engaged in the Writing task.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	16.13%	25
Agree	54.84%	85
Disagree	25.16%	39
Strongly disagree	3.87%	6
Total		155

Q10 Overall, in completing Year 3 Writing Online, the students successfully managed the technology requirements.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	10.97%	17
Agree	44.52%	69
Disagree	30.97%	48
Strongly disagree	13.55%	21
Total		155

Q11 Should the Year 3 Writing component of NAPLAN be an experience that is:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Online	14.10%	22
Pencil and paper	41.03%	64
Either	24.36%	38
Undecided	20.51%	32
Total		156

Q12 What areas below would your school need to address in order to undertake NAPLAN Online in 2017?

Answer Choices	Responses	
No areas need to be addressed	4.28%	8
Change the approach to the teaching of writing	39.95%	56
Increase teaching time allocated to developing keyboard skills (drop and drag, scroll, magnify, etc.)	78.61%	147
Increase teaching time allocated to developing touch typing skills	74.87%	140
Purchase additional classroom devices	38.50%	72
Upgrade Internet access	25.13%	47
Reallocate technology and/or other resources	30.48%	57
Manage devices e.g. storage and security, power and recharging	37.43%	70
Amend current BYOD policy	3.74%	7
Employ additional tech support	33.69%	63

Overview of Q12 Comments

Principals identified a number of suggested actions for their school to undertake prior to participating fully in NAPLAN Online. Many comments identified the need to increase time in teaching and practising keyboard and desktop navigational skills. Principals also reported the need to increase the *in-school tech* support and that NAPLAN Online will require additional resourcing.

Principals saw that training in, and familiarity with, the testing requirements will require additional support in understanding the format and administration of the test. This was particularly apparent in comments on the Writing component with a number of principals commenting that Year 3 Writing was problematic. Conducting NAPLAN Online also meant reallocating or purchasing additional iPads and computers; buying additional headphones, keyboards, mouse and mouse pads; and, training staff in test administration; and, releasing staff to manage and administer the tests.

Conclusion

The survey has enabled APPA to provide a view of the Trial from the perspective of school principals. While it would be expected for a trial to identify challenges, having a large percentage of schools reported as experiencing technology problems is a concern. Within the three-year implementation period, it is critical that ACARA, systems and schools identify strategies that address these concerns and also develop a risk management plan that ensures success for all schools. This might include revising policies around selecting and purchasing devices. Some schools may also wish to conduct additional trials with ACARA providing further communication on the test format (adaptive/branching). This would assist teachers and students to understand more fully the move to NAPLAN Online.

The survey results highlighted the range in technology experiences and skills of students across schools and within schools. School and system leaders will need to ensure equity of access to technology learning on devices suitable for the NAPLAN Online test. Some principals commented that students who had a higher level of access to computers outside the school were observed to be more comfortable with the test requirements.

The administration of NAPLAN Online will need additional support for school staff to develop confidence and competency in managing the tests. This may include additional training and opportunities to experience delivering the tests. It is likely that teachers will benefit from a suite of strategies that could assist students in dealing with possible interruptions such as freezing, power problems, Internet connections, sound or functioning challenges.

Schools will need time and resourcing to prepare for completing NAPLAN Online. Additionally, for schools whose technology hardware is not sufficient, systems may need to support the purchase of devices, and ensure connectivity and power supply is reliable. Principals also reported that they would need to have an *in-school tech* support person with a high level of technology knowledge in order to manage the challenges that may occur in running the tests. Comments from the survey suggested that the use of iPads as a device for NAPLAN Online would need further investigation and research to improve reliability in a test environment.

Schools that participated in the Trial will be able to provide valuable information to other schools on preparation to undertake NAPLAN Online testing. Given the results of this survey, it would be advisable that every school conducts a trial to test its technology, connectivity and student readiness to participate in NAPLAN Online. This would also enable schools to identify the number of days required to complete NAPLAN, and determine requirements regarding access to, for example, computer labs and/or devices.

APPA acknowledges and thanks the principals and school leaders who have taken the time to complete the APPA NAPLAN Online Survey and provide comments and suggestions. APPA will meet with ACARA and provide a report and feedback. This will include suggestions on improving the communication to school administrators, the planning time and setup for students, and 'tips' for schools that were not part of this Trial.

Dennis Yarrington

President

Australian Primary Principals Association

19 September 2016

The Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) is the national professional association for primary school principals in Australia representing over 7200 principals from affiliated Government, Catholic and Independent primary schools in every state and territory.

APPA's advocacy is founded on:

- Every child attending a good school with high-performing leaders and quality staff;
- Initiatives, actions and projects that are research informed and encourage contemporary professional learning and growth; and,
- The knowledge that primary schools are where Australian children have the opportunity to acquire the necessary foundational academic, social and emotional skills to lead full and rewarding lives.

APPA is committed to contributing constructively to developing good public policy that is responsive to the needs of children and the school community, and recognises the right of parents to choose the school that will work best for their child. In recent times, the association has been centrally involved in issues related to school funding, the Australian Curriculum, national testing and the My School website, teacher education and the Principal Standard, STEM initiatives, Indigenous education and students with special needs. APPA also holds a national conference each year.

INTRODUCTION TO THIS SUBMISSION

APPA has responded to the 12 questions provided in the Issues Paper. In responding, the approach has been to gather the experiences of practising principals and principals' associations in each state and territory that make up the APPA National Advisory Council. This means that APPA's responses to questions come from a wide range of schools across government, Catholic and independent primary school settings. They do not represent a collated APPA view of each issue but rather give insight into the spread of views and use around NAPLAN reporting.

Recognising that there have been a number of NAPLAN reviews in recent years, copies of previous papers and submissions are also included with this submission. These are:

- The Reporting and Use of NAPLAN – Overarching principles governing the reporting and use of NAPLAN (2010)
- Submission to Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee Inquiry into the administration and reporting of NAPLAN testing (2010)
- Primary Principals: Perspectives on NAPLAN Testing & Assessment – *canvass* report commissioned by APPA (2013)
- Submission to Senate Inquiry: The effectiveness of the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (2013)
- Summary Report: APPA NAPLAN Online Trial Survey (2016)

RESPONSES TO ISSUES PAPER QUESTIONS

- 1. Does the NAPLAN data currently available on the My School website provide an appropriate balance between the right to high quality information and the possibility of misinterpretation or misuse?**
 - APPA recognises the desire of governments and systems to be transparent with data and accountable to the community. However, it should be recognised that the My School website includes data that is not easily interpreted by members of the general community. Further, the apparent effort made in the presentation of the site inadvertently adds a weight to the data, APPA believes, beyond the intention of the NAP designers.
 - APPA has long held the view that the My School is susceptible to misuse and, in light of more recent developments in assessment methodology and practice, questions its purpose and relevance in the modern school. To avoid this, NAPLAN test data should be handled within jurisdictions in a manner that prevents data misuse and misinterpretation.
 - The information and ability to track learning achievement trends is worthwhile. It should though be recognised that schools regularly and systematically collect student and cohort data that is up-to-date and therefore utilised expediently to enhance student learning.
 - NAPLAN provides rich information for schools and systems on the ‘basics’ of literacy and numeracy. However, as the test is focused on only a part of the school curriculum it does not accurately represent nor portray a school’s overall achievement across other significant areas.
 - APPA recognises the My School website provides a solid overview of NAPLAN data. The colour of cells and graph diamonds, for example, provides a good indication of school progress. However, in its present form, an explanation of ‘similar schools’ could be provided on each page to minimise misinterpretation of similar school comparisons.
- 2. Is there anything you find difficult to understand or is there any different NAPLAN information you would like to see included on My School?**
 - There is always the need to consider the purpose/s of providing NAPLAN data. If it allows for school ‘choice’ then, for individuals who are familiar with the style and terminology used on My School, the website is relatively easy to navigate and follow, and meets its purpose. However, if this is not the case for all then the comparative operation of the site is lost and some individuals, usually parents / carers are significantly disadvantaged.
 - Using the terms ‘bottom’ and ‘top’ quarter in reference to student distribution on the front page of a school’s profile page is undesirable. It is pejorative and deficit language open to misunderstanding and should be removed.
- 3. Is the explanatory material on My School around “statistically similar schools” sufficiently explained, easy to understand and does this support fair comparisons for schools?**
 - While the explanatory material around similar schools is sufficiently explained, the term “statistically similar” can be misconstrued. Again, APPA recognises the desire for transparency. However, statistical similarity does not mean that schools are *identical*. Schools are, at most, just in some ways similar. The context of schools, even with identical ICSEA, vary so widely as to make comparisons at best questionable. Members of the general public, and some members of the education profession, do not understand the contextual variability of schools.
 - The infographic and video on ICSEA are relatively easy to follow and the graphic visuals are at an appropriate level.

- There is some question as to the accuracy and use of data that determines a school's rating. The comparisons, if not calibrated correctly would provide wrong or at least inaccurate information. An example would be a comparative search for a school in the Northern Territory bringing up a school in Coffs Harbour NSW as a similar school. The comparison feature of the site is fraught with difficulties.

4. What consideration should be given to comparisons over time and between schools while schools progressively transition to NAPLAN online?

- There is a lack of confidence that data sets can be comparable.
- At this moment in time, it is difficult to say what considerations should be given for the long-term comparison of NAPLAN paper and NAPLAN Online results. It is preferred to equate results to the historical NAPLAN scale, rather than reset the scale for NAPLAN 2019. However, as most schools transition to NAPLAN online in 2020 and 2021, there may be a need to reset the NAPLAN testing scale. If the NAPLAN 2019 comparability analysis shows ACARA's review and changes to the NAPLAN online testing processes have improved comparability of NAPLAN paper and NAPLAN online results, the NAPLAN data scale should not be reset.
- APPA's view is that publication of NAPLAN data has had adverse consequences for Australia's education system. These have included construction of league tables, misuse of data, simplistic and inaccurate judgements, failure to recognise contextual complexities and distortion of curriculum priorities.
- A system's data should be reported and analysed *within* jurisdictions in a manner that prevents continued inappropriate use of data.
- The transition to NAPLAN online will do little to ameliorate the negative consequences of public comparison and may potentially bring further issues that cause the validity of the data to be questioned.

5. To what extent do schools and school systems use NAPLAN student progress and achievement data, including comparisons with statistically similar schools, to inform their school improvement strategies?

- There is considerable variation across the nation and from time to time in how NAPLAN data is used to both identify student progress and achievement, and inform school improvement strategies. Schools where positive data changes occur are lauded while in schools where negative data changes occur questions can arise which may not be based on contextual fairness. This is particularly so in smaller schools where changes to cohort can have dramatic effect.
- Schools and systems often use NAPLAN data as a tool for inquiry into practice and performance at a school and system level. Mean scores allow for the review of school trends, which can be benchmarked against state, national and other schools. Percentages of student progress data (relative gains) are used with other school data to evaluate the effectiveness of literacy and numeracy programs. School student progress data can be used to a small extent to identify a school's areas of strength and areas of weakness.
- An indication of where the purpose of NAPLAN has changed over time is where NAPLAN data is used as a significant indicator of success in school improvement plans. Targets can be based on achievement in NAPLAN tests.
- Systems are making increasingly extensive use of NAPLAN data, including comparisons with 'statistically similar' schools, to assess school and system performance. Such comparisons often

extend beyond territory or state borders. That said, other assessments provide results instantly available to implement and inform teaching.

- NAPLAN is only one part of a school's comprehensive assessment regime and data collection. NAPLAN data is generally used in conjunction with other data and as preparation for future NAPLAN tests. Its usefulness is questioned while ever the availability of the information comes too late in the year.
- In some systems, NAPLAN is the most significant data set used to track progress, to compare years and schools, and to set direction. Increasing the number of children in high band achievement is a target of all schools and the national focus to be world class is based on numeracy and literacy NAPLAN targets. This has caused some leaders, particularly those in low SES schools, to feel troubled as student growth is not always apparent.
- Schools use NAPLAN to identify a challenge of practice in relation to literacy and numeracy. This raises the issue of *when will there be a nationally consistent understanding of one year's growth*.

6. To what extent is whole-population assessment data necessary to meet school systems' and governments' need for sound information to support school improvement?

- APPA believes that Australia has more than enough academic and educational capability to run a valid and reliable program of sample testing which would be an alternative to NAPLAN.
- Whole-population level data are useful to benchmark against at a state, national and international level. However, school level data is necessary to review programs and teaching impact; identify successes and failures in the school's approach; and, make changes. Furthermore, the efficient review and analysis of data is crucial in the improvement of a school's teaching and practices.
- While recognising the importance of schools tracking student progress and continuing to look at practice, there is a growing view that whole-population assessment is neither necessary nor desirable to gather evidence to improve individual school performance.
- NAPLAN can readily be replaced by sampling tests which will efficiently and effectively provide data about system level performance. Sampling tests will also minimise the disruption and costs associated with the testing of whole cohorts as currently occurs with NAPLAN.
- Overwhelmingly, schools using NAPLAN to measure improvement would also make use of other school-gathered data.

7. To what extent are NAPLAN data and the My School website used to inform teaching?

- This varies from location to location, and from time to time. Used as part of a triangulation process, the NAPLAN data can be informative and provide a useful stimulus for a broader discussion across a range of topics including assessment techniques, validity, reliability, cultural fairness and outcomes of national testing regimes.
- With NAPLAN data going back to 2008, the long-term data allows for schools and system trends to be readily analysed. Strand reports which explore patterns in numeracy, reading and writing results are used to inform teaching and school practice.
- At a school level, NAPLAN data and the My School website are used to a very limited extent to inform teaching due to the extended delay between testing and teachers being able to access, analyse and use other test data.
- Additionally, teachers find NAPLAN data to be of limited use in developing and reflecting on teaching practice.

8. Which assessment tools, approaches and data analytics services do schools and school systems use to inform teaching? (APPA has an extensive listing of assessment practices used in schools to provide aggregated data but if you have a 'main' one or two please mention.)

- Systems use NAPLAN and other standardised test data (e.g. PAT and PIPS) to inform teaching practice. A significant aspect is the quality of the data analysis a school can access to make use of the range of data received. Schools need to analyse their data effectively so as to inform practice.
- Popular examples of standardised testing include the suite of tests available for purchase from the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) including Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT) in Literacy and Numeracy and the also the Neale Analysis of Reading. The online ACER Reading and Maths tests have the advantage that data is available immediately after a test is completed making the test data much more usable for teachers.
- Tests are selected because they are fit for the particular context and purpose of the individual school. They are utilised as long as the cost and effort associated with administration is judged to be commensurate with the value of the data to the school.

9. What opportunities are there to improve the timeliness of NAPLAN reporting?

- The longer the gap between test and feedback the less useful is the data received. The growing calls for review of NAPLAN testing provide an opportunity for a transition to a timely and, therefore, more useful assessment system.
- The transition to NAPLAN Online should improve the timeliness of NAPLAN reporting.
- A new online and on-demand student learning assessment tool, based on newly developed Australian Curriculum learning progressions and as recommended in the Gonski Report 2018, would provide a workable option to what is currently in place. Such a tool would allow for testing at a particular point in a child's life rather than at a point in the school year determined by an outside agency.
- Online testing should make reporting faster but there is a need for the accompanying software system that enables sophisticated / mature analysis over time.

10. To what extent do schools communicate individual, whole school and comparative NAPLAN data to students, parents and families?

- This varies. In some schools, information is on the basis of questions asked. In some systems, students who score in the top 1% are lauded at system-wide public ceremonies. This represents something of the range of communication.
- Individual NAPLAN data is reported via the student reports issued to parents of each participating student.
- Generally speaking, schools determine the best way to inform their community. Several schools feature brief newsletter articles explaining their NAPLAN results. Some schools present reports on NAPLAN results to the School Board (the governing body) and some make it available to the Parents and Citizens / Friends Association. In some jurisdictions, guidelines are issued around informing their communities about NAPLAN results.
- Parents receive information about the reporting process but, as the feedback is several months after the assessment, its relevance is questionable. Schools make clear that NAPLAN is one test on one day and that the school has a more thorough knowledge of each student's progress and achievements.
- Interaction with parents after release of the individual report is often very limited.

- Schools include NAPLAN results in annual reports and discuss results in various forums including school community bodies, executive and staff meetings. In some cases, it expected to be part of individual / cohort performance planning.

11. To what extent do parents and families use NAPLAN data on My School to make informed judgements, make choices and engage with their children's education?

- On an individual student level, anecdotal evidence would say there is limited use of NAPLAN results in the home and to what extent parents use NAPLAN data and My School.
- Many parents are aware that NAPLAN data does not provide a comprehensive picture of a school. However, people new to an area quite often look at the My School website as their first source of information about local schools. This can be disadvantageous for schools in lower socio-economic areas.
- There is also evidence that parents are buying or renting homes in specific catchment areas of schools with particular NAPLAN results. It is clear that some parents equate school NAPLAN "results" with the likelihood of success for their children.
- It should always be recognised that parents engage with schools through a comprehensive reporting regime that includes parent/teacher conferences, twice-yearly formal reporting, written feedback on school-based assessment data and Learning Journeys.
- Schools would always talk about student achievement using a range of measures and using student work samples as well as classroom-based assessment.
- It should be recognised that, in primary school years, while a parent might ask about their child's NAPLAN results most conversations focus on general aptitude and achievement, happiness, belonging and friendships, sport and reading.
- Students with strong NAPLAN results are advantaged when moving to selective government schools and some independent schools is considered by parents.

12. What NAPLAN reporting information do students need in order to contribute to their own education?

- Students benefit from knowing their individual strengths and weaknesses within each domain and, in this regard, some of the NAPLAN information is useful if reported in a timely way. However, as is the case with class-based assessment tasks, it must be near instantaneous to be of any real value to the students.
- When assessment results are available promptly, students and teachers derive value from item analysis that identifies strengths and weaknesses, allows reflection and sets goals, and highlights areas of focus for the next iteration of teaching (i.e. use it as formative assessment). One test every two years is a small part of this process.
- When the community, politicians, education systems and media narrowly focus on NAPLAN as an important event in school life, the higher the NAPLAN stakes are raised and a biennial event of several hours becomes all-defining in terms of a child's and a school's achievements, progress and, more significantly, potential. From a primary principal's perspective this is disturbing as it has consequences outstripping its value.



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Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee Inquiry into the administration and reporting of NAPLAN testing

Submission from the Australian Primary Principals Association

The Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to the Australian Senate *Inquiry into the administration and reporting of NAPLAN testing*. The inquiry addresses important issues that are central to the long-term improvement of Australian education.

The Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) represents 7,200 Government, Catholic and Independent principals. It supports the adoption of high academic standards, the routine collection of evidence regarding the performance of students in key areas of the primary curriculum, and the responsible release of information about the resources available to schools and the performance of their students. APPA supports the principle of transparency embodied in the national transparency agenda and the value of the widespread availability of high quality information about schools.

APPA supports the use of the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). The Association believes that the results arising from the testing program provide schools with valuable standardized information about the performance of students. APPA has always maintained that primary schools should aim to ensure that every child achieves high literacy and numeracy standards. APPA also supports in principle the establishment of means for providing public access to a range of quality information about schools, including NAPLAN data, but has reservations about the *My School* website in its current form as a means of achieving this result.

The Association's support for these initiatives, while it has been consistent, is also conditional. It depends on the administration and management of the testing and reporting program to ensure that positive outcomes are achieved while possible problems are avoided. Any testing program must be justified in the end by its contribution to (or at least the absence of a negative effect on) the core purposes of education. It is important to have good quality, independent data about the performance of schools and students. It is even more important that every student gains the benefit of a high quality education, and that schools focus on higher order skills and deep understanding of important areas of human experience so that every child gains the educational foundation on which a satisfying life is built. A program of testing and reporting should contribute to these goals. It should not distract attention from them, or make them harder to achieve.

Large-scale high stakes assessment and reporting programs like NAPLAN and national reporting of its results can have unintended negative consequences which reduce the effectiveness of schools and school systems in achieving their core purposes. These dangers are not a reason to avoid testing and reporting. They are, however, a reason to be cautious in implementation and administration of testing and reporting, and to establish effective safeguards and protocols to ensure that testing and reporting programs deliver benefits and avoid pitfalls.

The negative consequence of large-scale high stakes testing can arise from:

- the narrowing of curriculum to focus on the content of tests at the expense of broader learning in other areas;
- a focus on what is tested at the expense of higher order skills and deep understanding which are central to educational outcomes, but more difficult to assess in whole cohort assessments;
- the use of valuable instructional time in coaching and test preparation;
- variations in the application of rules about which students sit the tests, affecting the comparability of results from different schools or jurisdictions;
- the growth of a testing industry which is driven by commercial imperatives rather than educational outcomes; and
- the implicit encouragement of 'gaming' (or in some cases cheating) by schools to improve performance.

These negative consequences can arise from the testing program and its administration. In addition, when test results are the subject of public reporting, further problems can arise. Negative consequences of public reporting can include:

- the creation of 'league tables' of school performance which ignore the circumstances of particular schools, and in particular the existence of factors which are out of the school's control;
- the publication of results in the absence of critical explanatory input data such as a school's income and resource base;
- the provision of data which facilitate ill-informed comparisons or judgments;
- a negative public focus on those schools which find it most difficult to achieve improvement, making their task even harder;
- the encouragement of competition between schools for students based on published results;
- the use of statistically flawed models of 'like schools' for comparison purposes, leading to false comparisons which disadvantage some schools; and
- the use of '**black box**' methods for statistically scaling scores which disempower schools and school principals.

These problems may be exacerbated when policy responses and public funding at the school and system level depend to some extent on the outcomes of testing programs. The kinds of initiatives that can negatively impact on schools and school systems include:

- the attachment of reward funding to schools or school systems based on test results; and
- the sanctioning of low performance leading to negative impacts on the quality of teaching.

This is a long list of potential negatives. It makes clear how important is the establishment and maintenance of safeguards to ensure that the conduct of testing, the release of information about students and schools and the public policy response to the results have a beneficial impact on primary education and nullify the potential negative effects. This is the heart of the submission to this Inquiry from the Australian Primary Principals Association. Our approach in this submission is to identify key issues and difficulties with the current arrangements and propose safeguards to avoid these problems and to ensure that the data that comes out of national testing serves the core purposes of education.

KEY ISSUES AND RESPONSES

1. **NAPLAN is treated as if it were the only, or the most important element of data about schools. This distorts parent and community judgments about schools.**

One difficulty with high stakes testing is that its undoubted value can be exaggerated in the public mind, and by some politicians and commentators. In the case of NAPLAN, the attachment of substantial reward money related to results and the publication of results on the *My School* website have made the testing program the focus of extreme levels of public and political attention. This has tended to distort judgments about schools by encouraging the use of NAPLAN data as if it were all that were needed to make such judgments.

NAPLAN provides useful data regarding student achievement in those areas of literacy and numeracy that are most amenable to whole cohort testing. APPA regards this as valuable, but does not see it as a complete statement about student or school achievement, or even as a large part of the overall picture. The history of whole cohort testing in Australia supports this view: when states and territories ran whole cohort testing the data was seen as useful but was never treated as the critical item of information about schools. During that decade or so, testing was simply one part of the landscape of schooling. It is only since testing data was made a factor in government financial decisions, and the *My School* website focused attention on the results, that a narrowing and distortion in valuation has occurred.

Schools engage in a wide range of other assessment procedures, all of which produce information about student achievement. This information covers other aspects of literacy and numeracy beyond those able to be easily assessed in a large-scale test; information about achievement in other subject areas that are also important to students and parents; and information about student attitudes, work habits, strengths and weaknesses. This information is also valuable in developing a complete picture of how well a school is serving its population and its community. The risk is that this information will be largely ignored by parents who will see the NAPLAN data as more reliable because it is independent and guaranteed by government.

Parents making judgments about schools also need access to information of other kinds. Schools have extra-curricular programs that form an important part of the total offering. They operate wellbeing programs designed to assist students in social development and engagement. Schools undertake community engagement activities. They develop plans for improvement and monitor and report their progress in a range of ways. All of these areas form part of the database that a parent or community member might need in order to make an informed judgment about how well a school is performing.

In the public debate, however, school performance is often judged almost solely by NAPLAN results. Newspapers produce tables of the best and worst performing schools. Local communities hear stories of disaster or triumph based solely on NAPLAN results for a single year. Politicians and public figures make pronouncements on the meaning of the data. The *My School* website privileges NAPLAN data as if this were a complete picture of a school's achievements. Parents, as a result, are likely to treat the NAPLAN data as a good surrogate for a rich picture of a school's practice and achievements. This difficulty is exacerbated when governments and system officials act as if NAPLAN is a sufficiently accurate indicator of a school's performance to provide a basis for important personnel and policy decisions.

It is essential to put in place a broader mechanism for making judgments about schools. Judgments about the performance of a school or an education system should be based on multiple sources of reliable evidence about all of the academic and social-emotional goals of schooling. Basing such judgments on a single indicator, as is often done either explicitly or implicitly, is both inadequate and potentially damaging.

The solution is not to develop more quantitative indicators, but to put in place appropriate professional appraisal mechanisms. Each school and each school system or sector should establish means by which rich, rounded and comprehensive information about a school and its achievements, including an honest appraisal of its weaknesses, can be collected and provided to parents and the community.

As users enter the section of the *My School* website concerning a particular school, the first page should include contextual and explanatory information about the school, with the NAPLAN data appearing as a linked page along with other such pages providing additional information about the school.

2. There may be a tension between diagnostic and accountability purposes for NAPLAN.

Large-scale whole-cohort testing is appropriate as a means of generating system-wide (or national) data that is comparable over time. There is value in a clear accountability tool at national, system, sector and school level. Such testing can also generate diagnostic data for use in classrooms and schools as a way of focusing the work of teachers. A difficulty can arise when these purposes, and others, are confused or where the testing program is driven by one to the detriment of the other.

The risk in the case of NAPLAN is that the focus on the tests and the results may lead to an assumption that it provides an adequate basis on its own for diagnosis of student learning, strengths and weaknesses. It is a form of testing which is ideally suited to accountability and also provides useful diagnostic data. It is not in itself a complete diagnostic tool.

NAPLAN does have diagnostic value at the school level, especially on a longitudinal basis when it is subject to close local analysis to take account of changes over time that illustrate trends in student learning. Its diagnostic value also lies in providing professional information to teachers and school leaders about the effectiveness of their practice, and focusing on areas where professional learning might be beneficial.

For the full range of diagnostic purposes, a teacher needs to know not only how a child performs on one test on one day, but how the child performs on the full range of a subject over time, under different circumstance and performing varying tasks. For parents, whether they understand this or not, the diagnostic data arising from multiple assessments and activities is a richer and more complete indication of student progress than a single whole-cohort test. This is particularly the case given the time lag between the conduct of NAPLAN tests and the availability of data to schools: the lag means that NAPLAN diagnostic data is always to some extent a look backwards.

This does not reduce the value of the NAPLAN data for accountability purposes on the larger scale. If the education system is, however, principally concerned with ensuring that all children gain foundational skills and knowledge, that their progress in achieving this are effectively diagnosed and that weaknesses are properly addressed, then a much wider range of assessment and data collection should also be supported.

For more detailed and thorough diagnostic purposes at the level of the school and the classroom, the kinds of assistance that would be most useful include:

- good quality classroom assessment material linked to the Australian Curriculum;
- rich assessment tasks which allow children to demonstrate achievement on complex, real-world tasks;
- support for teacher moderation and sharing of good practice;
- professional development support for teachers in enhancing their capacity to develop and use high quality assessment instruments and in the interpretation of assessment data.

While NAPLAN assessments absorb most of the available resourcing and are the focus of all of the public attention and debate, there is a potential for other areas, especially those related to the collection and use of rich diagnostic data, to be under-resourced. It would be valuable to ensure that, in addition to support for NAPLAN, there were effective mechanisms in place to support these broader diagnostic initiatives.

A further, related risk associated with NAPLAN concerns the range of other purposes to which the data could be put. There has been public speculation about the use of NAPLAN results to support the establishment of performance pay, or to justify measures including closure against schools that are perceived to be failing. APPA does not expect these approaches to be adopted but cautions that if they were, the considerable levels of professional support for NAPLAN would quickly evaporate.

APPA urges MCEECDYA to accompany NAPLAN support with a well-resourced program to support the enhancement of diagnostic capacity in schools, including assessment material linked to the Australian Curriculum, rich assessment tasks, support for teacher moderation and professional development support for teachers in using and interpreting high quality assessment instruments.

3. There is a lack of recognition of the range and complexity of factors that affect school performance.

Each school is in important ways unique. This is not to suggest that they cannot be compared. Parents often compare schools when they are deciding where to send their children. Communities make judgments about schools, sometimes on limited information. APPA recognises these imperatives and believes that the community members should have access to good quality information about schools to enable informed judgments and comparisons.

Schools are, however, different from each other and their performance of their core educational roles is affected by a wide range of factors that are complex both in themselves and in their interactions with each other. Each school is part of a community, and communities differ from each other in, for example, their infrastructure and their demographics. Schools differ by geographic location, affecting their access to support and resources. They differ in size, which can dramatically affect their capacity to resource curriculum breadth and specialisation. Their level of financial, infrastructure and personnel resourcing varies widely, affecting what they can bring to the task.

For this reason, the process of making a judgment on a school is not a simple matter. It is certainly more complex than identifying the school's position on a list of NAPLAN scores: it is unlikely that a judgment on a school can ever be adequately made on the basis of a list of numbers. There is a widespread recognition that, for example, the characteristics of a school's student population will significantly affect its capacity to generate literacy and numeracy outcomes.

On the *My School* website, an attempt is made to contextualise the NAPLAN numbers by the grouping of 'like schools'. It is APPA's view that this effort, based on the ICSEA scale, has failed. The evidence from the 2010 process is that ICSEA, which is based on census collector district data, does not produce results that are fine-tuned enough to yield an accurate score for all schools. The reliance on ICSEA as the single discriminator of school characteristics misrepresents differences in the intake for schools that are supposedly alike. It also ignores all of the other factors that affect a school's performance and capacity, and which are not captured in the ICSEA data.

The attempt to provide a simple tool to generate comparisons between schools is doomed to fail. School comparisons are essential, but if they are to be meaningful they should be based on recognition of the extraordinary range of factors which produce school difference, and the range of elements which contribute to producing a high quality school.

An alternative is to enable comparisons between schools based on a wide variety of criteria. It would be possible, for example, to compare the performance of small rural schools, or suburban primary schools, or schools with a high proportion of children from language backgrounds other than English. There would be no attempt to suggest, as is done with the 'like schools' idea, that these comparisons were other than useful means of analysing performance and looking for key factors. There would be no sense that the comparison would involve a ranking or a judgment that a school was satisfactory or unsatisfactory. The opportunity would be created to encourage thoughtful analysis on a number of parameters that might assist in identifying those factors that contribute to better performance in some schools. Schools could, for example, compare themselves with schools by factors such as location (remote, rural, urban), student numbers and demography, staffing numbers, resourcing, infrastructure and a range of other factors. As Dr Ken Boston, recently head of the English Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and previously Director-General of Education in New South Wales, says, using a comparison model of this kind would lead to 'the uniqueness of each school being reflected in the fact that it can be included in a number of like groups'.¹

APPA notes that the MCEECDYA meeting of 10 June 2010 endorsed proposals from ACARA which would go some way to addressing the issues raised in this section of the submission. APPA supports changes to make the ICSEA data more sophisticated (though it remains unconvinced about the value of the ICSEA approach to identifying like schools). APPA also supports greater flexibility for schools in searching *My School* for like schools, the addition of a school commentary on NAPLAN data and improved data about student absences and exclusions from NAPLAN testing.

The *My School* website should reflect the variety of circumstances and factors that affect schools. To facilitate this outcome, the 'like schools' concept should be abandoned. The website should be substantially redeveloped as a tool for inquiry rather than as a notice board on which to post school NAPLAN results. Principals, teachers, parents and community members should be able to use the website to compare school performance on a range of measures (including size, geographic location, level of resourcing, staffing, demographics and infrastructure) with a full understanding of the factors which affect that performance. The site should also include the range of kinds of information and data that will enable users to make an informed judgment about the effectiveness and characteristics of the school.

4. The over-valuation of NAPLAN results has negative effects on schools and students.

The NAPLAN assessments are high stakes assessments for schools. The results shape public perceptions of schools and can influence funding and resourcing decisions. Because of the perceived importance of NAPLAN results, schools are under pressure to change their practice and behaviour to improve scores. These changes have had the effect of weakening, rather than strengthening the capacity of some schools to deliver high quality educational outcomes.

¹ Boston (2009), pp 15-16

APPA's membership response to the testing program and the use of the *My School* website to disseminate results indicates the scale and range of these problems. Schools report that they are narrowing their curriculum to accommodate an increased focus on the areas covered by NAPLAN. This mirrors the experience in the United States where according to Diane Ravitch:

As teachers spent more time preparing students to take standardized tests, the curriculum was narrowed: Such subjects as science, social studies, and the arts were pushed aside to make time for test preparation.²

Boston makes a similar point about the position in England, where, he argues, 'the government's use of the key stage tests has seriously damaged the breadth and quality of primary education'.³ Some Australian schools reported that they are now spending a significant amount of time practising for the tests and also allocating homework for their students to undertake further practice. This has consumed valuable time that should have been spent on other important areas of literacy and numeracy and on the broader primary curriculum. Boston notes that in England:

Most schools prepare pupils extensively before they undertake the tests. A survey conducted by QCA in 2007 showed that 68 per cent of primary schools employed additional staff to prepare students for key stage 2 tests, 78 per cent set additional homework, more than 80 per cent had revision classes and used practice tests they had purchased commercially.⁴

It is also clear that the testing program has produced a focus in schools on ways to improve the results without a clear regard for the educational value of the methods used. In some cases, there is evidence of 'shallow' teaching aimed at improving test results. Some schools allocated most of their resources to those students who are just below the national benchmarks in order to improve results. This resulted in other high needs students who were well below the benchmark not receiving as much attention for the first five months of the year until the completion of the NAPLAN tests.

APPA is also concerned that there is a likely effect on innovation in schools. The high stakes nature of the testing program and the public focus on results could lead to an avoidance of innovation, which requires a climate of risk-taking and support for change. Masters notes that research evidence is now clear about what constitutes good teaching practice in the core areas of the curriculum, including literacy and numeracy. He argues 'there is clear research support for particular approaches to the teaching of these subjects, and ...evidence-based teaching strategies should be at the core of attempts to enhance primary teaching expertise'.⁵ If, however, what is known to be good teaching fails, for reasons beyond the control of teachers, to produce improved NAPLAN results, the likelihood is that there will be an impetus to adopt practices which are perceived as likely to achieve that improvement regardless of the broader research evidence, and to focus on test results rather than on deep learning and higher order skills.

² Ravitch (2010)

³ Boston (2009), op cit

⁴ Boston (2009), p 5

⁵ Masters (2009), p 74

Parents and students have also been affected. Schools report that some parents have become very anxious and have had their children spend a great deal of time at home practising for the test. There have also been reports that students have become upset or stressed, ended in tears or gave up and went home during the tests. While some degree of anxiety inevitably accompanies high stakes assessment, it is likely that the extreme focus on NAPLAN results and the pressure to perform exacerbate student stress.

APPA wishes to emphasise that these difficulties are not a direct function of the implementation of national testing. We support the NAPLAN program, but we argue that the significance of the results of whole cohort testing should be kept in perspective, and should be regarded as an important item of data about school performance, but by no means the whole picture. It is not NAPLAN that is the problem, but the over-valuation of results and the inappropriate public focus on those results to the exclusion of other important information.

The unintended negative effects on schools, parents and students should be closely monitored. APPA proposes that a small independent body should be established to monitor the impact of NAPLAN and *My School* with a view to mitigating any perverse consequences. The Ministerial Council (MCEECDYA) should appoint this body to report to it on an annual basis. The group should be completely independent and should be funded appropriately to enable it to report thoroughly and accurately.

5. There are no independent mechanisms to ensure the transparency and monitor the accuracy of NAPLAN results and the interpretation of those results.

There are weaknesses in the absence of mechanisms in the system to ensure public confidence in the reliability of NAPLAN data and processes. APPA does not claim that there are widespread failings in the calculation and reporting of NAPLAN results. The credibility of the system would, however, be improved if two present weaknesses were addressed.

The first concerns the transparency and openness to scrutiny of the NAPLAN process. MCEECDYA has adopted appropriate protocols to protect the privacy and rights of students participating in NAPLAN assessments. The protocols surrounding NAPLAN are, however, unduly restrictive as they deny ready access to researchers and policy analysts to information regarding the development of the tests, their properties, and other aspects of the information contained on the website. It should be possible for any qualified researcher to be given ready access to the de-identified data to replicate findings reported by ACARA, undertake new analyses, and use the NAPLAN database as a powerful research tool. This kind of use should be actively encouraged.

The second aspect requiring attention concerns potential mistakes in results or the interpretation of those results. Schools should have the capacity to challenge inferences drawn from NAPLAN results about their performance that they believe to be misleading and damaging to their reputation. Where newspapers, for example, generate 'league tables' from the NAPLAN data without taking account of factors affecting or contributing to the results, or relevant in their interpretation, schools involved should have a right to be heard.

It was clear from the initial response to the release of the 2009 NAPLAN results on the *My School* website that governments were unable or unwilling to intervene when the media published grossly simplistic results or even misinterpreted the results pertaining to individual schools. Once stories have appeared in the media it is almost impossible to have them retracted. Schools have little comeback and must bear the reputational consequences. It is unreasonable to expect each school to deal with such events.

APPA notes and supports the decision of the 10 June, 2010 meeting of MCEECDYA to endorse proposals from ACARA to investigate a mechanism by which users of *My School* would be required to indicate their agreement to terms and conditions controlling the use of data from the website; and to find ways of preventing users from engaging in the automatic 'scraping' of data from the site.

MCEECDYA should amend the guidelines and protocols governing access to NAPLAN data and procedures to ensure that qualified researchers have ready access to the de-identified data to replicate findings reported by ACARA, undertake new analyses, and use the NAPLAN database as a powerful research tool. MCEECDYA should actively encourage this use of the data.

MCEECDYA should establish an independent ombudsman with the capacity to quickly follow up complaints from schools concerning NAPLAN results or their interpretation. In order to guide public use of the NAPLAN data, the *My School* website should incorporate an 'Acceptable use' page stating the purpose and appropriate use of NAPLAN data and requiring user agreement prior to gaining access to the site.

6. There are no clear guidelines governing the use of rewards and sanctions or determining appropriate means of improving NAPLAN results.

NAPLAN results have become a key element of resourcing decisions at all levels of education, and there is evidence that this has produced inappropriate and in some cases unethical behaviour.

Governments are allocating reward funding totalling \$350million to states and territories that achieve performance targets. This is leading to pressure on schools from education systems to improve NAPLAN results at all costs. In some systems principals report that line managers are transmitting this pressure in ways that are threatening and unprofessional. Because schools with 'good' NAPLAN results gain such a reputational advantage, a climate is emerging where, in the absence of clear guidelines that can be monitored, unethical practices are being adopted in order to inflate the school's NAPLAN results.

In some cases schools attempt to 'game' the system. One school recognised that the students would only lose two points if they ignored the stimulus picture in the writing task. Students practised a piece of writing which they were encouraged to replicate in the test so they could maximise their scores.

There have been media reports that some schools have encouraged parents to keep their children at home on test day if the school judged that the student may not have performed well in the tests, demonstrating the tension between full participation in the process and achieving the benefits of improved performance according to the NAPLAN results, including financial benefits. A small number of teachers have provided assistance to students while sitting the tests to improve their test results. Media reports suggest that there may have been cheating in a small number of cases.

In part, this arises because of pressures perceived by schools. The pressure applied to schools in some cases by line managers has led principals to report feeling threatened that their jobs could be on the line if the school's results did not improve. As Diane Ravitch indicates, speaking of the effects of large-scale testing in the United States, 'What once was an effort to improve the quality of education turned into an accounting strategy: Measure, then punish or reward'.⁶ APPA is determined that this outcome will be avoided in Australia.

These problems arise because of the importance attributed to NAPLAN results, and the absence of clear, public guidelines regarding school and system strategies and behaviour. It is APPA's view that the use of NAPLAN to drive public policy and resourcing decisions, and the consequent negative effects on behaviour, constitute an example of Campbell's Law: 'The more any quantitative social indicator is used for social decision-making, the more subject it will be to corruption pressures and the more apt it will be to distort and corrupt the social processes it is intended to monitor.'⁷ Campbell argues that 'achievement tests may well be valuable indicators of general school achievement under conditions of normal teaching aimed at general competence. But when test scores become the goal of the teaching process, they both lose their value as indicators of educational status and distort the educational process in undesirable ways.' While it might not be possible to eliminate this effect, it should be possible to ameliorate it through effective safeguards and protocols.

MCEECDYA should issue guidelines that clearly specify what states, systems, sectors and schools may or may not do to enhance their NAPLAN results. These guidelines should aim at guaranteeing that all participants act ethically and in the best educational interests of children. They should include the expectation that preparation for testing should not affect the school's commitment to a broad and balanced curriculum.

⁶ Ravitch (2010), p 16

⁷ Campbell (1976)

CONCLUSION

The Australian Primary Principals Association reiterates its support for NAPLAN testing and the effective dissemination and use of the results of that testing. It is critical, however, that the tests be kept in proper perspective. They provide a valuable set of data for both accountability and diagnostic purposes, but they are not the centrepiece of Australian education.

This submission focuses on the kinds of protocols, initiatives and safeguards that are needed to ensure that NAPLAN plays an appropriate role but does not interfere with or distract attention from all the other processes and activities designed to guarantee that young Australians gain access to a high quality education, and that all of them benefit from the experience. At present the extreme public focus on NAPLAN results, and the use of the *My School* website to heighten this focus, have the potential to put other critical elements of Australian education at risk.

The proposals in this submission are designed to ensure that we gain the maximum benefit from NAPLAN, while continuing to foster and support all the other key elements of a high quality education.

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canvass report

Primary Principals:

Perspectives on NAPLAN Testing & Assessment

COMMISSIONED BY:

THE AUSTRALIAN PRIMARY PRINCIPALS ASSOCIATION >> APRIL 2013



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INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY

Canvass Strategic Opinion Research (Canvass) was retained by the Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) in February 2013 to conduct public affairs research (research) with Australian primary school principals concerning various impacts of NAPLAN and to provide an indication of other assessment practices used by primary schools in Australia.

Research Objectives

APPA commissioned the research to obtain information from primary principals on the following issues:

- The observations of primary principals concerning:
 - the effects of NAPLAN testing on:
 - student wellbeing
 - Year 3 & 5 curricula
 - Year 3 & 5 classroom pedagogy
 - the school budget
 - the level of parent interest in NAPLAN results and its implications, and
 - how NAPLAN results are reported to school stakeholders.
- Details of current assessment practices in primary schools to:
 - ascertain student achievement in all aspects of learning, and
 - meet internal and external accountabilities.

Research Participants

APPA's membership consists of the state and territory peak groups in Australia for primary principals. Approximately 95 per cent of Australian primary school principals are members of their state or territory peak groups. The combined membership of the state and territory peak groups is 7,200 primary principals (hereafter, the combined membership).

Methodology

Canvass and APPA agreed that an online survey of primary principals would be the most cost-effective method of achieving the research objectives, given that all primary principals are contactable via their work email addresses.

Member databases are held by the state and territory peak groups. Accordingly, in March 2013 APPA prepared an email containing a link to the Canvass survey which explained the purpose of the research and encouraged every primary principal to participate. The state and territory peak groups then forwarded this email to their members. All primary principals who are members of their state or territory peak group were invited to participate in the research.

Follow up email reminders were sent to primary principals to encourage participation. No incentive was provided for participation in the research. In total, the survey was in field for three weeks (7 to 28 March, 2013). There were 1,353 primary principals (the respondents) who completed the survey, comprising almost one fifth (19.3 per cent) of the combined membership. The Canvass Questionnaire forms **Appendix One** to this report.

The findings from this quantitative research with primary principals should be prefaced with the following comments:

- **Not a random sample:** to enable all primary principals to participate, it was a self-selecting sample of respondents rather than a representative sample. However, the results from the survey were weighted (see below) to ensure the findings mirror the demographics of the combined membership of the state and territory peak groups.
- **Small sample sizes in some states and territories:** sample sizes for respondents in Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory, the Northern Territory and for remote area primary schools are significantly smaller than from the larger states of Australia. Accordingly, some caution should be exercised when drawing conclusions from those findings. To this end, we report the specific state and territory results in **Appendix Two**. Where robust differences in findings among the states and territories exist, they are reported in the body of the report.
- **Margin of Error:** the margin of sampling error in the survey varies by a number of factors, including the sample size of the group concerned and whether the difference being considered is within a group or between two independent groups. As a rule-of-thumb, **within the same group**, the margins of error are:

Group sample size	95% confidence level	90% confidence level
1353	+/- 2.66%	+/- 2.24%
1000	+/- 3.1%	+/- 2.6%
500	+/- 4.38%	+/- 3.68%
200	+/- 6.93%	+/- 5.82%

By comparison, the margins of error **between similar sized groups** (eg. Catholic & Independent School Sectors) increase by about half (e.g. for n=500, +/- 7%).

- **Weighting of results to align with sector demographics by state:** To match the achieved sample to the parameters of the combined membership base, weighting was applied the matrix of Sector (Catholic/Government/Independent) by State. The following table shows the target and achieved sample across these two variables:

	Catholic Target (Achieved)	Government Target (Achieved)	Independent Target (Achieved)	TOTAL Target (Achieved)
ACT	0.8% (1%)	0.8% (1.2%)	0% (0.3%)	1.6% (2.4%)
NSW	6.1% (3.4%)	25.4% (13.4%)	1.7% (3%)	33.2% (19.7%)
NT	0.2% (0.2%)	0.8% (0.4%)	0.2% (0%)	1.3% (0.6%)
QLD	2.7% (1.3%)	15.7% (8.9%)	1.1% (1.7%)	19.5% (11.9%)
SA	1.7% (3.3%)	8.3% (9.3%)	0.5% (0.6%)	10.5% (13.2%)
TAS	0.5% (1%)	1.7% (0.1%)	0.2% (0.4%)	2.3% (1.6%)
VIC	3.8% (4.4%)	11.5% (25.4%)	1.3% (2.4%)	16.6% (32.2%)
WA	1.9% (5%)	12.4% (12%)	0.8% (1.5%)	15% (18.4%)
TOTAL	17.5% (19.6%)	76.6% (70.6%)	5.8% (9.8%)	100% (100%)

- **Reporting of ICSEA scores:** Respondents were asked to report their school's ICSEA score. Only 735 respondents (54 per cent) were able to supply a valid number within the range 500-1300. To facilitate a meaningful analysis, these valid scores were grouped into three - Low Scores (500- 931) Middle Scores (932 – 1073) and High Scores (1074 – 1221). These represent 20 per cent, 60 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively, of the valid scores. The respondents who did not provide a valid ICSEA score could not be included in this analysis.
- **Quoting Respondents:** Throughout this report, italics are used to indicate direct quotes (also known as *verbatim*s) from respondents in their answers to open-ended survey questions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OBSERVATIONS & CORRELATIONS

Throughout the results, there are a number of consistent trends. The most obvious is that **primary principals have differing views on most of the impacts of NAPLAN testing** according to the **location**, **size** and **sector** of their school. Broadly, around half observe NAPLAN impacts and half do not.

The negative impacts of NAPLAN appear to be felt the most by **remote area** and **small schools** around Australia. More **Independent sector** and **very large schools** report positive effects from NAPLAN testing. In terms of competitive stress and parental expectations, the **Independent sector** schools, along with **very large** and **metropolitan schools** are under considerably more pressure than their **government** or **non-metropolitan** counterparts.

Survey results were also analysed according to whether the respondent's school had an **ICSEA score** in the bottom 20 per cent, middle 60 per cent or top 20 per cent of the ICSEA score range. In many ways, the results for **low ICSEA score schools** mirrored findings for **remote area** and **small schools**.

There are a few differences in findings according to **number of years as a principal**. More of the respondents with several years of experience as a principal reported very negative impacts from NAPLAN on **student wellbeing** and more impact on **classroom pedagogy** generally (both positive and negative). However, they did not see greater impacts in relation to the curriculum. They see NAPLAN as changing *the way* students are taught more than *exactly what* is taught.

While there were few **differences between the states and territories** in relation to the impacts of NAPLAN (with the exception of curriculum impacts), different approaches exist in the **reporting of NAPLAN results**. There are slight differences in **levels of parent interest** as well. Accordingly, tables of state and territory results have been placed in **Appendix Two** rather than in the body of the report.

Finally, **general questions** concerning the impacts of NAPLAN elicited more negative results than **specific questions** about impacts. Further research would be useful to understand the basis for differences in the responses to general and specific questions.

PART ONE: THE IMPACTS OF NAPLAN

According to respondents, the greatest impact of NAPLAN is on **student wellbeing**. Two-thirds of respondents say the impact of NAPLAN on student wellbeing is negative, albeit slightly so. For other NAPLAN impacts – on the **curriculum**, **classroom pedagogy** and the **school budget** - opinion is **more evenly divided**: half of respondents cite a negative impact. The other half sees no impact, or a slight, positive impact from the national testing of Years 3 & 5 students.

Stress, Fear of Failure, Withdrawal, Sickness

As a baseline result, **half of all respondents** sometimes see students display **signs of stress or sickness, express fear of failure or withdraw** when faced with the tests. High levels of stress and fear of failure relating to NAPLAN testing are a reality for **one quarter of respondents**; ten per cent see sickness and withdrawal from the tests. The negative impacts on wellbeing appear to fall hardest on **remote area** and **small schools**. More **large schools** and **Independent schools** report more positive impacts on wellbeing from NAPLAN, such as excitement and enthusiasm.

Year 3 vs. Year 5

Half the respondents observe that **the burden of NAPLAN testing is harder on Year 3** as opposed to Year 5 students, while 38 per cent see no difference in impact. Those who say NAPLAN is harder on Year 3 say that testing of that nature is unknown to them and different from their every day school work, and that Year 3 children have less emotional/developmental maturity. Respondents also say that parents experiencing NAPLAN testing for the first time with their child can add to the stress children feel. Fourteen per cent say Year 5 students feel the impacts of NAPLAN more.

Impact on Curriculum

In terms of impact on the **curriculum**, half of respondents say their school spends **more time on literacy and numeracy** in the run up to NAPLAN each year. Fifteen per cent of schools spend more than three additional hours per week on those subjects. The impact is slightly greater in terms of hours lost **teaching non-NAPLAN subjects**: 60 per cent say their school spends *less* time teaching these subjects in the run up to NAPLAN, but most of these say the impact is relatively slight (*viz.* 1-3 hours less each week).

Compared to **high ICSEA score, metropolitan** and **Independent schools** (which show little change in curriculum or classroom pedagogy) **remote area** and **low ICSEA score schools** alter their curriculum and pedagogy to a greater extent in the lead up to NAPLAN each year. Respondents also point to **high levels of teacher stress caused by NAPLAN** and expectations surrounding NAPLAN in the run up to the tests. Others see national testing as **inimical to the culture and philosophy** of their school.

Class Preparation for NAPLAN & Rote Learning

Two thirds of respondents say that their schools do **allocate class time to NAPLAN preparation**. In terms of the number of weeks' preparation, the amount of time spent varies widely. Of those who do prepare, most allocate between 1-3 hours per week to preparation and say they spend between one-to-five weeks prior to NAPLAN in preparation. Around ten per cent say they begin preparation **more than ten weeks prior** to the tests. This preparation does not necessarily translate to more rote learning. About one third of schools note a **slight increase in rote learning** in the run up to NAPLAN each year.

Impact on School Budget

Half the respondents say that, generally speaking, NAPLAN **does have an impact on the school budget**. Yet when asked about specific costs, one third of respondents reported additional expenditure on those items.

When viewed **according to ICSEA score**, results show that the *higher* the ICSEA score, the more schools report having their budget impacted by NAPLAN. Yet when asked about specific NAPLAN-related expenses, results show that more *low* ICSEA score schools spend additional budget funds on those items. It may be that principals are not directly or closely tracking additional, NAPLAN-related expenses.

PART TWO: REPORTING NAPLAN RESULTS & LEVELS OF PARENT INTEREST

Reporting NAPLAN Results

While all schools report NAPLAN results to teachers and parents, half of schools report school NAPLAN results **directly to students**. Here, there is considerable **variation by state and territory**. Many respondents said that their approach is to **ask parents to discuss NAPLAN results with their child**. While 68 per cent of **Independent schools** report the results directly to the children, some prefer to so individually with each child rather than in a class setting. More **small schools** and **remote area schools** take the approach of **communicating results to students during class**.

Respondents also reported different ways they engage with teachers concerning NAPLAN results, including via **NAPLAN data analysis sessions**, PD meetings and one-to-one meetings with the principal. A number commented that NAPLAN had resulted in **increased teacher skills** in data analysis.

Parent Interest in NAPLAN Results

While there is parental emphasis and pressure on schools in terms of NAPLAN results in highly competitive contexts in the **Independent sector, very large** and **metropolitan schools**, generally parent interest in NAPLAN results is fairly muted and focused on their own child's results.

According to primary principals, for around one third of parents there is a '**baseline**' **medium level of interest** in their child's NAPLAN results, the school's results and teacher performance as it impacts on NAPLAN results. However the focus is really on their own child's results.

Around **half of all parents** have high/very high levels of interest in **their own child's NAPLAN results**. This figure rises to 70 per cent of parents of children at **Independent schools**. Parents of children in **very large schools** also express higher than average interest. By comparison, **small** and **remote area schools** recorded more low/very low parental interest levels. Similar trends are evident for interest in **school NAPLAN results** and **teacher performance as it impacts on NAPLAN results**, albeit at lower levels (school's results: 25 per cent, teacher performance: 16 per cent).

Some parents do consider NAPLAN results relevant and influential in competitive enrolment contexts. **School NAPLAN results** are a drawcard according to **one third of respondents**, who say parents seek to enrol their child on that basis. In the **Independent sector** and for **very large** and **metro schools**, **half of principals** say parents cite their school's NAPLAN results as a reason for seeking enrolment for their child. **A child's NAPLAN results** are also influential in obtaining enrolment, at least in the minds of some parents. Around **one fifth of respondents** say that parents have **cited their child's NAPLAN results** in seeking enrolment. This competitive behaviour occurs more at Independent, very large and metro areas schools.

PART THREE: ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

Principals cite many different types of assessment practices used by their school, some of which are able to be aggregated. These include **commercial/standardised tests, commercial scales and Inventories, School-based Tests** and other **School-based Assessments**. Around ten per cent specifically named NAPLAN as a part of this type of assessment for their school.

When asked what types of assessment they would recommend to provide aggregated results for all Australian schools, again principals provided many different types and examples of assessments.

However, the results revealed some opposing views: those who object to the very basis of NAPLAN and those who agree with it. **Sixteen per cent said no aggregable assessment practices were suitable**, many on the basis that 'one size does not fit all'.

Five per cent took the opposite view that **just about any of the assessment practices they listed would be useful** for Australian schools. A small percentage (2 per cent) of respondents was explicitly positive about NAPLAN. They said that NAPLAN results, if used in the right context, provided raw data which could be usefully compared between schools, providing a 'big picture' perspective.

Primary principals are clearly engaged by this issue of assessment; ten per cent of respondents volunteered their contact details for follow up regarding their school's approach to assessment. It is likely that further qualitative research on this topic would yield greater depth and understanding of this broad issue.

CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

- **Member Engagement:** In an encouraging sign of member engagement, almost 20 per cent of the combined membership participated in the survey; ten per cent of respondents volunteered their contact details for follow up regarding assessment practices.
- **Impacts of NAPLAN Testing on Wellbeing:** There are impacts flowing from NAPLAN, particularly on the wellbeing of students as a result of stress and fear of failure and particularly on Year 3 students. More serious psychological impacts on wellbeing fall on one quarter of students. In addition to student stress, teacher and parent stress were also impacts reported by respondents.
- **Contextual Issues surrounding NAPLAN:** There are three broad, contextual 'phases' where students engage with NAPLAN testing and where stress may be felt: preparation, testing & reporting results. Correlations in the results suggest that the way school NAPLAN results are communicated to students could be contributing to the wellbeing impacts noted by respondents. As school leaders, some principals may need to more actively manage these contexts. Working in collaboration with teachers and parent groups on this issue could help manage expectations and lower stress for all school stakeholder groups.
- **Impacts of NAPLAN on Curriculum/Pedagogy:** Some schools are experiencing a skewing of the curriculum/pedagogy, along with significant teacher stress, by devoting class time to NAPLAN preparation. The research found there is no standard amount of time that schools spend in preparation: schools vary widely on this issue. Recognising this, formal guidelines for NAPLAN preparation would help to reduce teacher stress and curriculum/pedagogical impacts, particularly in smaller and more remote schools.
- **Impacts of NAPLAN on School Budget:** Peak bodies could usefully encourage their members to more closely and clearly track expenditure that is directly related to NAPLAN testing.
- **Parent Interest:** While larger and Independent schools are clearly under pressure to perform, teacher stress may be reduced by the research finding that only a small proportion of parents are interested in teacher performance as it impacts on NAPLAN results.
- **NAPLAN Results & Enrolment:** In the competitive context of larger/Independent/metro schools, a student's and the school's NAPLAN results are clearly a factor in parent decision-making regarding enrolment or withdrawal of their child from primary school. Conversely, in low ICSEA score schools, a student's or a school's poor NAPLAN results are also a factor in withdrawing the student. Both scenarios place additional pressure on schools and students.
- **Objection to Aggregated Assessment:** Around 15 per cent of respondents are opposed to the concept of aggregated assessment. This may be influencing responses to general questions concerning the impacts of NAPLAN testing.
- **ICSEA Scores, Government Funding & Assessment Practices:** Responses reveal confusion among some respondents on certain issues. Only half the respondents provided a valid ICSEA score; when asked about the impact of NAPLAN on their school budget, a few respondents stated that it decreased their government funding; others said NAPLAN was for the benefit of the government, not students. Some of the responses to questions concerning aggregated assessment practices also suggest confusion on this issue. There may be a role for peak bodies to clarify these issues in member communications. These issues could also be pursued with those principals who volunteered further contact.

RESEARCH FINDINGS: PART ONE

THE IMPACT OF NAPLAN

Primary principals were asked a series of questions concerning the impact of NAPLAN testing on student wellbeing, the curriculum, classroom pedagogy and their school budget.

Impacts of NAPLAN: on Student Wellbeing

Two-thirds of respondents say that NAPLAN testing has a negative impact on the wellbeing of students.

The majority (59 per cent) say NAPLAN testing has a **somewhat negative** impact on **student wellbeing**. A further seven per cent say the impact of NAPLAN testing is **very negative** on wellbeing of students.

	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	VLarge	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
Q1 NAPLAN impact on student wellbeing												
A very negative impact	7%	5%	8%	4%	9%	7%	7%	5%	5%	10%	6%	18%
A somewhat negative impact	59%	69%	57%	57%	56%	62%	58%	58%	59%	62%	57%	55%
No impact	24%	16%	26%	27%	29%	22%	25%	23%	26%	20%	27%	22%
A somewhat positive impact	9%	10%	9%	12%	5%	9%	9%	14%	10%	9%	9%	4%
A very positive impact	1%		1%	1%	0%	0%	1%		0%		1%	1%

Student wellbeing appears to suffer most in **Catholic** and **remote area** schools. Almost one fifth of principals at remote schools say NAPLAN testing has a **very negative effect** on the wellbeing of their students. Likewise 69 per cent of Catholic sector schools say it has a **somewhat negative** impact on student wellbeing, ten points higher than the average.

However one third of respondents say NAPLAN testing doesn't harm student wellbeing: one quarter say NAPLAN testing has **no impact at all** and a further ten per cent say it has a **somewhat/very positive** impact. Respondents from **very large schools** are more positive about NAPLAN's impact on students; 14 per cent say it has a somewhat positive impact on their wellbeing, five points higher than the average.

The survey then probed for **specific behaviours and impacts relating to wellbeing**, as observed by respondents.

Stress, Fear of Failure, Withdrawal from Tests & Sickness

There is a clear pattern of approximately half of respondents **sometimes** seeing students **stressed**, **expressing fear of failure**, being **sick** around the time of the tests or **withdrawing from the tests**.

However, high levels of stress and fear of failure are considerably more prevalent than sickness or withdrawal from the tests. **One quarter** say students often/very often show signs of stress and around **one third** often/very often express fear of failure, but **less than ten per cent of respondents** say physical sickness or withdrawal of students happens often/very often.

Q2 Students exhibit signs of stress	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	V Large	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
Never	3%	1%	4%	1%	7%	3%	2%	3%	2%	3%	5%	6%
Rarely	17%	12%	18%	20%	16%	18%	18%	10%	18%	15%	18%	18%
Sometimes	55%	59%	54%	58%	49%	53%	57%	63%	57%	55%	55%	40%
Often	22%	26%	21%	17%	25%	23%	19%	22%	20%	24%	20%	28%
Very often	3%	2%	3%	4%	4%	3%	3%	2%	3%	3%	3%	9%

Q2 Students express fear of failure	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	V Large	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
Never	2%	3%	2%		3%	2%	2%	0%	1%	3%	2%	6%
Rarely	14%	9%	15%	24%	15%	14%	15%	13%	15%	10%	19%	14%
Sometimes	49%	48%	49%	45%	40%	50%	49%	58%	53%	49%	43%	37%
Often	28%	33%	27%	24%	31%	27%	27%	27%	27%	30%	30%	18%
Very often	7%	7%	7%	7%	11%	7%	7%	3%	5%	8%	7%	26%

Remote area and **small schools** feel the impacts more. Stress is seen often/very often in remote schools (37 per cent) and small schools (29 per cent), compared to an average of one quarter. Almost half (44 per cent) of principals at remote schools say fear of failure is expressed often/very often by the students, with a similar figure (42 per cent) for small schools, compared to an average of 35 per cent. This trend is seen below, with **higher levels of withdrawal and physical sickness** among children in small and remote area schools.

Q2 Parents/carers withdraw students	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	V Large	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
Never	12%	8%	13%	15%	24%	14%	7%	5%	9%	10%	20%	20%
Rarely	37%	41%	35%	46%	26%	37%	40%	44%	42%	30%	33%	36%
Sometimes	46%	48%	47%	35%	44%	44%	49%	46%	44%	55%	43%	36%
Often	4%	3%	5%	3%	5%	5%	3%	5%	5%	4%	2%	7%
Very often	1%		1%	1%	2%	1%	0%		1%	1%	2%	

Q2 Students gets physically sick prior	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	V Large	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
Never	11%	10%	12%	13%	19%	11%	10%	5%	10%	9%	15%	15%
Rarely	37%	32%	38%	37%	36%	37%	35%	43%	37%	35%	40%	35%
Sometimes	46%	53%	44%	43%	36%	47%	48%	49%	48%	49%	39%	36%
Often	6%	4%	6%	7%	8%	4%	7%	3%	5%	7%	5%	8%
Very often	1%	1%	1%		2%	1%	0%		1%	0%	0%	6%

The results **among the states and territories** are largely consistent. Bearing in mind small sample sizes from the smaller states and territories, respondents from the **A.C.T.** report higher than average levels of stress etc.

Enthusiasm & Excitement

While students do not often express **enthusiasm** or **excitement** about sitting the NAPLAN tests with children of their age across the country, around 20-25 per cent do so sometimes.

Q2 Students express enthusiasm	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	V Large	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
Never	28%	28%	29%	14%	39%	29%	25%	19%	25%	28%	33%	34%
Rarely	40%	42%	40%	42%	35%	41%	41%	45%	41%	42%	37%	39%
Sometimes	28%	28%	27%	36%	21%	27%	31%	30%	29%	27%	26%	24%
Often	4%	2%	4%	7%	5%	3%	3%	5%	4%	4%	4%	3%
Very often	0%		0%	1%		0%	1%		0%	1%		1%

Q2 Students show signs of excitement	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	V Large	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
Never	36%	40%	36%	25%	50%	36%	30%	32%	34%	35%	39%	48%
Rarely	40%	39%	40%	42%	31%	41%	42%	42%	40%	43%	39%	30%
Sometimes	21%	18%	21%	28%	18%	19%	24%	21%	23%	18%	20%	20%
Often	3%	3%	3%	4%	1%	3%	3%	4%	3%	3%	2%	1%
Very often	0%	0%	0%	2%		0%	0%		0%	0%		1%

Almost half (44 per cent) of students at **Independent schools** express some enthusiasm about NAPLAN (sometimes/often/very often), 12 points above the average. Slightly more students in **larger schools** also do so.

Impacts of NAPLAN Testing: Year 3 versus Year 5

Respondents were divided on the issue of whether **NAPLAN impacts Year 3 students or Year 5 students more**. Around half (48 per cent) of respondents say the impact of NAPLAN testing on the wellbeing of students is more pronounced on Year 3 students than Year 5 students.

Q3 Differing impact on wellbeing	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	V Large	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
No difference	38%	33%	40%	35%	45%	40%	35%	34%	38%	36%	41%	42%
More impact on Year 3	48%	51%	46%	58%	39%	47%	51%	54%	49%	50%	43%	46%
More impact on Year 5	14%	16%	14%	8%	16%	14%	15%	12%	13%	15%	16%	12%

A further third (38 per cent) say there is **no difference in the impact of NAPLAN** testing on the wellbeing of Year 3 as compared to Year 5 students, while 14 per cent say Year 5 feel the impact of NAPLAN more than Year 3.

In terms of results from the different states and territories, considerably more (about 10-12 per cent above the average) **A.C.T.** and **South Australian** respondents say the impact of NAPLAN falls harder on Year 3 students. In contrast, one fifth of **West Australian** respondents feel the impact is greater on Year 5 students, six points above the average.

Respondents say the main factor for Year 3 students regarding NAPLAN is 'the unknown'. Year 3 students have no prior experience with tests, are unsure what to expect – even despite practice - and lack developmental/emotional maturity compared to Year 5 students. Another factor adding to stress is the unfamiliarity of Year 3 *parents* with testing of this nature.

Year 3 have never undergone such rigorous testing as this before and get quite uptight. Multiple choice questions are not the norm in primary schools and hence students have to be taught about them. Parents get quite anxious – some even take their children to courses outside of school for intensive work.

Some Year 3 parents can inadvertently cause stress to their child because they are worried about the testing and focus on it, especially if it is their first child involved.

Those who see the impact of NAPLAN as heavier on **Year 5 students** cite stress-inducing reasons such as:

- Older students feel pressure from parents and teachers to do better than last time
- Some Year 5 students are fearful of the NAPLAN tests based on their previous experience in Year 3
- Developmentally, Year 5 students are more able to understand the importance of the tests and have an awareness of their own ranking and what it means
- Year 5 students have more at stake, viz. entry to high school
- Year 5 students are more exposed to school correspondence and media regarding NAPLAN testing.

For Year 5 students, the prospect of imminent secondary school entry and the pressure placed on parents to provide NAPLAN results, especially by independent schools, makes the stakes much higher.

Year 5 already have an awareness of what the testing entails, despite our very low-key approach to the preparation for the test. I guess this tends to heighten the stress in those children who are generally anxious anyway.

Other Impacts on Wellbeing

One quarter (26 per cent) of respondents indicated **further impacts on student wellbeing**, including:

- Pressures surrounding NAPLAN trigger self-esteem issues and anxiety, leading to disengagement, absenteeism, apathy and behavioural problems e.g. playground fights
- Particular logistical difficulties for disabled students sitting the tests
- The demands of extra-curricular tutoring for NAPLAN impacting on student welfare
- Student boredom and a lack of enjoyment in the NAPLAN preparation.

The testing does not help those with learning difficulties or disorders; in fact it reinforces they are struggling and below their peers. The school then spends a considerable amount of time demonstrating to parents it is about the learning growth. Parents are seeking tutors in Year 3.

On the plus side, a few respondents noted that NAPLAN testing was very 'affirming' to good students. Other comments on **positive wellbeing impacts** of NAPLAN testing included:

[NAPLAN] has a positive impact on confident students who enjoy the process.

The children can learn a new skill: that of being 'exam smart' not just content or process smart. A lot of my kids like that. We also use the criteria provided for marking writing and make reference to the job of the examiner. The children like the idea that someone is an audience for their work.

How Results Differ According to Years' Experience as a Principal

Survey responses differed in a few key ways according to the respondent's years' of experience as a principal, mainly in relation to the impacts of NAPLAN on student wellbeing:

- More of the experienced respondents reported 'very negative' impacts from NAPLAN testing generally on student wellbeing, by a margin of about ten points.
- More of the experienced respondents reported that the impacts of NAPLAN on student wellbeing are felt more by Year 3 students than Year 5 students.
- More of the experienced respondents reported an impact on classroom pedagogy in the lead up to NAPLAN each year – both positive and negative.
- Based on number of years as a principal, there is no discernible difference in respondent views on the impact of NAPLAN on the curriculum.

Impacts of NAPLAN: on Curriculum

Most principals (81 per cent) believe that NAPLAN is having an impact on their school's Year 3 & 5 curricula. However, while the majority (60 per cent) say the impact is **slight**, they are somewhat divided on whether the impact is **positive** or **negative**.

Around half (52 per cent) say it's having a slightly or significantly **negative impact**, but 29 per cent say the impact is slightly or significantly **positive**.

Q5 Impact on curriculum	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	V Large	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
significant negative impact	14%	13%	15%	10%	13%	16%	14%	10%	13%	13%	15%	22%
slight negative impact	38%	35%	38%	41%	40%	35%	38%	41%	38%	36%	38%	42%
not impacted curriculum	19%	17%	19%	21%	22%	17%	19%	20%	18%	21%	19%	12%
slight positive impact	22%	28%	20%	27%	19%	25%	21%	21%	25%	21%	20%	14%
significant positive impact	7%	6%	8%	2%	7%	8%	7%	8%	6%	8%	8%	11%

Respondents from the **Catholic** and **Independent** sectors report slightly more positive impacts from NAPLAN on their curriculum. The impact of NAPLAN on the curriculum of **remote area schools** seems to vary, from significantly negative to significantly positive, albeit from a small sample base.

In the Run-Up: Time Spent Teaching Literacy & Numeracy

Looking at specific impacts on the curriculum, in the lead up to NAPLAN testing each year almost half (44 per cent) say their schools spend **more time teaching literacy and numeracy each week** to Years 3 & 5. Around 29 per cent spend an additional 1-3 hours a week. Fifteen per cent spend more than three additional hours per week on those subjects.

However almost the same number (42 per cent) say the time spent teaching literacy and numeracy each week at their school in the run-up to NAPLAN **does not change**. Around 14 per cent say they teach **less** literacy and numeracy during this time.

Q6 Time spent teaching lit+num/ week	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	V Large	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
significantly less time	3%	4%	3%	2%	2%	5%	2%	3%	4%	3%	2%	5%
slightly less time	11%	11%	11%	7%	8%	11%	11%	12%	10%	13%	9%	10%
no change to time spent	42%	44%	41%	51%	47%	45%	39%	41%	42%	40%	45%	43%
slightly more time	29%	30%	28%	33%	28%	27%	30%	33%	29%	30%	29%	21%
significantly more time	15%	11%	16%	7%	15%	13%	18%	11%	15%	14%	14%	21%

The results show that **Independent schools** report less change to their curricula, while **remote area schools** seem to have more change to their curricula, and are **impacted to a greater extent** in the run-up to the NAPLAN testing period.

Teachers, despite knowing that they should not be teaching to the tests, do alter the regular curriculum delivery to 'train' the students in the peculiarities of the tests. Much time is given over even in the previous year to NAPLAN, to enable the students to have the best opportunity to demonstrate their skills and knowledge.

In the Run-Up: Time Spent Teaching non-NAPLAN subjects

The impact of NAPLAN testing on **time spent teaching non-NAPLAN-assessed subjects** seems to be stronger. Almost six in ten principals (57 per cent) say that their schools spend **less time** on those subjects in the run-up to NAPLAN tests each year. Of those, 40 per cent spend **slightly less time**

(between one-three hours less) on non-NAPLAN subjects and 17 per cent spend **significantly less time** (i.e. more than three hours) on them each week.

Q7 Time teaching non-NAPLAN/week	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	V Large	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
significantly less time	17%	17%	17%	11%	15%	15%	20%	14%	17%	18%	14%	19%
slightly less time	40%	40%	40%	38%	35%	41%	42%	40%	39%	43%	40%	30%
no change to time spent	39%	37%	39%	45%	43%	40%	35%	40%	39%	35%	41%	44%
slightly more time	4%	4%	3%	5%	4%	3%	3%	5%	4%	4%	3%	3%
significantly more time	1%	2%	1%		3%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	2%	4%

However, four in ten (39 per cent) report **no change** to the amount of time spent teaching non-NAPLAN subjects at their school in the lead up to NAPLAN testing each year and five per cent spend **more time** on non-NAPLAN subjects.

In the lead up to NAPLAN, it becomes 'all about academia' and the social/emotional/spiritual aspects of learning seem to take a back seat....NAPLAN limits our capacity to develop the non-NAPLAN aspects of holistic education.

The impact of NAPLAN on curricula in the various **states and territories** varies widely and the results are sometimes inconsistent within the one state or territory.

Speaking generally, Queensland, and to a lesser extent Victorian respondents report **more negative impacts** on their Year 3 & 5 curricula compared to the average. The Northern Territory, and to a lesser extent South Australia report **more positive impacts** on NAPLAN on curriculum than the average. Slightly more New South Wales and Tasmanian respondents than the average say their curricula **do not change** due to NAPLAN testing.

When pressed as to what those impacts on curricula are, for **Queensland** this is seen in more of a drop in the amount of time they spend on non-NAPLAN subjects than the average. But **Victoria** does not report impacts on amount of time spent on literacy and numeracy or non-NAPLAN subjects much different to the average, despite reporting a greater negative impact generally on their curricula. **Western Australia** also reports that more time is spent on literacy and numeracy than the average. It is likely that these discrepancies are explained by the other impacts on curriculum, reported below.

Other Impacts on Curriculum

A third of respondents (35 per cent) say that NAPLAN testing does cause **other impacts on the school curriculum** at this time of year, the main one being **increased stress on teachers**.

Teachers worry about covering all the other areas. They try to integrate as much as possible.

With the stress of NAPLAN and the results for teachers, they spend a lot of time getting ready for the test and the curriculum suffers because of this, let alone the stress placed on teachers afterwards by trying to catch up. When this happens the curriculum is not taught to its full potential.

Despite my insistence, staff are spending time teaching in a manner which will have an impact on NAPLAN results. They do more testing, longer periods of work time, all designed as preparation for the three days of NAPLAN.

There is a degree of finger pointing at teachers of previous year levels if students achieve poorly or appear to lack preparation for the tests. This has a huge impact on staff teamwork and morale. The level of stress amongst the teachers in the term leading up to NAPLAN week is immense and directly impacts on many other more positive and constructive initiatives we have in place.

NAPLAN testing can also be seen as **inimical to the culture and philosophy** of some schools.

The testing environment is so different to the collaborative processes encouraged at our school. It is very unusual practice for our students.

On the positive side, comments included:

NAPLAN has sharpened teachers' skills. The Writing Marking Guide is really helpful. It has provided good PD focus across the whole school.

Staff capacity to analyse data has improved and using the information gained has resulted in closer questioning of teaching and learning.

NAPLAN testing has triggered staff to think more about the type of language they use, e.g. ensuring students understand the mathematical terminology used in testing which may vary from what our school would use. This I believe to be a positive in that the students' knowledge is broadened. Our staff have learnt to program accordingly, e.g. currently focus persuasive writing in Term 1 and then move onto other genre. The other impact has been that staff spend time exposing students to these type of tests... this is probably an area the teachers feels adds additional pressure to their load, however it does not hurt students to learn to experience and decipher different ways of testing as they will undoubtedly encounter this at some stage in life.

Impacts of NAPLAN: on Classroom Pedagogy

Most principals (78 per cent) say NAPLAN testing does have a slight impact **classroom pedagogy** for Years 3 & 5, but they're **somewhat divided** on whether the impact is positive or negative.

While 45 per cent say it's had a **negative impact**, 33 per cent say it's had a **positive impact** on pedagogy. About one fifth (22 per cent) reports **no impact**.

Q9 Impact on classroom pedagogy	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	V Large	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
significant negative impact	9%	10%	9%	5%	11%	11%	7%	7%	8%	9%	8%	21%
slight negative impact	36%	39%	35%	44%	38%	36%	36%	37%	39%	36%	30%	40%
no impact on classroom pedagogy	22%	17%	23%	25%	29%	18%	21%	23%	22%	18%	28%	19%
slight positive impact	27%	31%	27%	23%	20%	30%	30%	25%	26%	31%	30%	14%
significant positive impact	6%	3%	6%	4%	3%	5%	6%	9%	6%	6%	4%	6%

In the Run-Up: Time Spent Rote Learning

Respondents were asked about changes to the amount of **rote learning** in class in the run-up to NAPLAN testing each year. The majority of principals (62 per cent) say that since NAPLAN data became available on the My School website, there has been **no change** in the amount of class time spent rote learning at their schools.

Q10 Class time spent rote learning	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	V Large	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
much less class time	2%	2%	2%	1%	4%	1%	3%	2%	2%	3%	2%	5%
slightly less class time	2%	3%	2%	3%	2%	2%	1%	5%	2%	2%	2%	
no change	62%	62%	62%	64%	60%	62%	64%	59%	61%	66%	64%	49%
slightly more class time	27%	28%	27%	29%	24%	28%	26%	32%	30%	23%	26%	26%
much more class time	7%	5%	7%	3%	10%	6%	7%	2%	5%	6%	6%	21%

One third say that Year 3 & 5 classes now spend **more** time rote learning, but most say only slightly more.

More **remote area schools** – more than double the average - report significant negative impacts on pedagogy in their classrooms in the run up to NAPLAN. Compared to the average, **three times as many remote area schools spend much more time rote learning** during that period.

In the Run-Up: Class Time Spent Preparing for NAPLAN

Two-thirds of respondents reported that Year 3 & 5 class time is allocated towards preparation for the tests in the lead-up to NAPLAN each year.

We don't allocate time for test preparation but classes do it anyway – and to excess. Staff and students are anxious about the results.

When asked **how many hours per week** they allocate in the run-up to NAPLAN testing, **half** of the respondents said their schools allocate between **1-3 hours of class time per week**. A further 12 per cent allocate 4-5 hours per week on preparation. Very few allocate more time than that.

In terms of **weeks of preparation prior to NAPLAN testing**, there is no commonly adhered to starting date for preparations. Likewise, there is no common trend among the various states and territories.

For the 58 per cent of schools which do spend class time preparing for NAPLAN, results were spread fairly evenly between one week and ten weeks. More than a quarter (28 per cent) allocates preparation time in the **1-5 weeks prior** to the NAPLAN tests.

Around ten per cent allocate time for NAPLAN preparation beginning **6-9 weeks before the tests** and a further nine per cent start allocating time for preparation **ten weeks out**. Around one tenth (11 per cent) allocate preparation time **more than ten weeks** prior to the tests, but very few allocate time more than 15 weeks out.

Prep	Time	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	V Large	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
		1353	265	955	133	200	496	494	163	717	316	261	59
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Hours	None	35.0	36.5	34.7	34.5	32.1	33.6	37.0	37.4	37.7	36.6	28.4	31.8
	1.0	16.1	12.5	16.3	25.2	15.0	14.1	16.3	22.8	16.6	14.4	19.9	5.3
	2.0	22.1	21.4	22.4	21.5	24.6	23.8	20.1	19.6	22.2	18.4	22.8	36.3
	3.0	10.6	11.6	10.7	6.4	10.0	12.5	9.5	9.7	8.8	12.4	12.9	8.7
	4.0	4.3	4.1	4.2	4.9	5.8	5.0	3.3	2.7	4.3	3.1	4.8	7.2
	5.0	7.6	8.9	7.6	4.1	7.7	6.8	9.6	4.0	5.8	11.6	7.7	3.5
	6.0	0.9	1.3	0.8	0.7	1.6	0.6	0.9	0.4	0.9	0.6	1.4	0.0
Weeks	None	42.0	43.1	41.5	45.1	39.0	41.3	43.7	43.3	45.7	44.6	32.0	38.5
	1.0	1.1	1.6	0.9	1.9	0.2	0.8	1.2	2.9	1.3	1.4	0.5	0.0
	2.0	6.6	8.6	5.9	10.4	4.6	7.6	6.6	6.9	7.3	7.2	5.0	4.6
	3.0	5.7	4.8	5.9	6.7	5.2	6.6	4.2	8.3	6.9	4.8	5.8	0.0
	4.0	8.5	11.8	7.7	8.7	10.5	9.5	6.7	8.2	9.1	6.7	9.3	9.0
	5.0	5.9	7.5	5.4	7.9	4.2	6.6	6.6	4.6	5.4	6.1	7.6	3.0
	6.0	4.2	4.7	4.3	1.5	5.6	3.4	4.7	3.1	3.7	3.9	5.0	7.2
	7.0	1.3	0.9	1.4	0.7	1.1	0.9	2.1	0.3	0.9	1.8	1.6	0.0
	8.0	3.9	1.1	4.8	0.7	6.3	3.5	2.2	6.0	4.8	1.5	5.3	2.3
	9.0	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.3
	10.0	9.1	7.7	9.6	6.5	8.6	6.5	11.9	9.0	5.7	11.0	11.4	18.3

Other Impacts on Classroom Pedagogy

One quarter (23 per cent) of respondents point to **further, additional pedagogical impacts** since the NAPLAN data began being published online. The main one noted by respondents is a **greater focus on explicit, specific teaching** and learning and **more structured, formalised**, teacher directed learning.

There is greater emphasis on teacher directed teaching rather than student self-directed learning.

There is a tendency to employ old-fashioned chalk and talk strategies, rather than child-centred inquiry.

It's both positive and negative – more explicit teaching but less integrated learning i.e. a lot more skills taught out of context.

On the plus side:

Pedagogy now better reflects the application of knowledge and skills.

Probably the analysis of deeper thinking items has made teachers think.

But on the downside:

[NAPLAN] limits the students' involvement in their education in a personalised and integrated way. There is less time for individual assistance. Some teachers are concerned that it limits their abilities to be creative and innovative in the manner in which they facilitate and implement literacy and numeracy programs.

Co-operative learning, student-centred learning and higher order thinking is put on the back burner to cram in all the loose ends that may have been missed but which may be in the test.

As an inquiry school we find that the NAPLAN structure compromises our pedagogical approach. The actual testing procedure works in opposition to our regular classroom practice of open and shared questioning and learning.

Impacts of NAPLAN: on School Budget

Almost **half** (47 per cent) of principals say that NAPLAN has had an impact on the school budget, with greater numbers at **Independent schools** (57 per cent) and in **Victorian schools** (57 per cent) (ten points higher than the average).

Q15 No NAPLAN impact school budget	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	V Large	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
no	53%	52%	54%	43%	53%	56%	50%	53%	48%	59%	55%	60%
yes	47%	48%	46%	57%	47%	44%	50%	47%	52%	41%	45%	40%

However, when asked about specific expenditure items, fewer principals reported allocating additional funds as a result of NAPLAN: about **a third of principals** say they have allocated funding for **preparation materials** (29 per cent) and **teacher professional development** (33 per cent) for NAPLAN. It appears from these differing results that respondents may not be completely clear on the financial impact that NAPLAN testing is having on their school.

Q15 Allocated funding for prep materials	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	V Large	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
no	71%	71%	71%	76%	72%	71%	72%	69%	74%	70%	69%	63%
yes	29%	29%	29%	24%	28%	29%	28%	31%	26%	30%	31%	37%

Q15 Allocated funding for teacher PD	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	V Large	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
no	67%	67%	66%	73%	71%	66%	66%	67%	70%	63%	67%	64%
yes	33%	33%	34%	27%	29%	35%	34%	34%	31%	37%	33%	36%

The **Victorian** results do not show expenditure greater than the average in relation to specific items. In contrast, more principals in **Queensland** report expenditure on preparation materials (47 per cent) and teacher PD (44 per cent). In a continuation of this pattern, 34 per cent of Queensland principals have allocated funding for additional teacher hours surrounding NAPLAN, almost double the national average.

Q15 More funding for extra teacher hrs	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	V Large	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
no	83%	87%	81%	89%	81%	82%	85%	79%	84%	79%	86%	75%
yes	18%	13%	19%	11%	19%	18%	15%	21%	16%	21%	14%	25%

The findings are very similar for expenditure relating to funds for **additional supervision** and **administration** during NAPLAN periods, although there is considerable variance between different states on this.

Q15 More \$ for s/vision+admin in tests	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	V Large	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
no	82%	83%	81%	86%	81%	81%	84%	78%	84%	79%	81%	75%
yes	19%	18%	19%	14%	19%	19%	16%	22%	16%	22%	19%	25%

When asked about *other* areas of expenditure concerning NAPLAN, almost all respondents (95 per cent) said there were no further expenses relating to NAPLAN. The five per cent who nominated additional expenses named:

- SSO time
- Funding to pay for the test papers
- Funding to analyse NAPLAN data
- Breakfast/food for students on NAPLAN days
- Funding for families to travel to sit NAPLAN tests.

Significantly, principals also pointed to the impact of the school's NAPLAN results on government funding received by that school.

How Results Differ According to ICSEA Score

For the purposes of analysis, survey results were analysed according to whether the respondent's school had an ICSEA score in the bottom 20 per cent, middle 60 per cent or top 20 per cent of the ICSEA score range.

In terms of impacts of NAPLAN testing, results differ according to a school's ICSEA score in the following ways.

Impact on Student Wellbeing:

- Middle ICSEA score school students are the least impacted by NAPLAN.
- As ICSEA scores increase, more schools experience instances of moderate impacts on student wellbeing. As ICSEA scores decrease, more schools experience extremes of NAPLAN impacts on student wellbeing.
- In relation to stress, fear of failure and sickness, the high and low ICSEA score bands tend to report higher impacts than schools in the middle band of ICSEA scores.
- Schools with low ICSEA scores had more negative impacts from NAPLAN testing, while schools with high ICSEA scores reported more positive impacts.
- More schools with a high ICSEA score say that the impacts of NAPLAN on student wellbeing fall harder on Year 3 versus Year 5 students.

Withdrawing Students from NAPLAN Tests:

- Schools with low ICSEA scores report more incidences of parents withdrawing their child from the NAPLAN tests.

Impact on Curriculum:

- The lower the ICSEA score, the more impact NAPLAN has on the curriculum, both positive and negative. High ICSEA score schools report fewer impacts on, and changes to, the curriculum in the run up to NAPLAN testing each year.

Impact on Classroom Pedagogy:

- As per impact on curriculum.

Impact on School Budget:

- As ICSEA scores decrease, fewer respondents say NAPLAN testing impacts on the school budget generally.
- Yet as ICSEA scores decrease, more respondents report additional spending on specific budgetary items (preparation materials, teacher PD etc.) in the run up to NAPLAN testing.

RESEARCH FINDINGS: PART TWO

REPORTING NAPLAN & PARENT INTEREST IN NAPLAN RESULTS

Respondents were asked whether, and if so how, their school reports the school's NAPLAN results to teachers, Year 3 & 5 students and the parents of those students.

To Teachers

Across the board, principals say that they communicate NAPLAN results to teachers. The results are communicated in a number of ways, the most popular being **via letter** (98 per cent), at the **staff meeting** (95 per cent) and **via email** (85 per cent).

Around one fifth (22 per cent) of principals also report the following contexts for reporting NAPLAN results to teachers:

- NAPLAN data analysis sessions
- Level, curriculum and literacy/numeracy teacher meetings
- Professional Development meetings
- One to one meetings with the principal
- Annual Report, Staff Bulletin, NAPLAN Newsletter
- Accessing the SMART data directly via the website.

To Students

In contrast, half of respondents say they report the school's NAPLAN results to students directly. More **Independent schools** (68 per cent) report the school's NAPLAN results to the students themselves. Fewer **remote area schools** (31 per cent) report results to students.

There is great variation between the states and territories: three quarters of **A.C.T. schools** report school NAPLAN results to students, compared to 30 per cent of **Queensland schools**.

Q17 Results not reported to students	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	V Large	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
no	50%	48%	52%	32%	57%	49%	49%	47%	45%	52%	53%	69%
yes	50%	52%	48%	68%	43%	51%	51%	53%	55%	48%	47%	31%

Around one quarter of schools communicate the school's NAPLAN results to students **in class**, with more **Northern Territory schools** (63 per cent), **Queensland schools** (40 per cent), **remote schools** (32 per cent) and **smaller schools** (30 per cent) taking this approach in particular. Three per cent of **Independent schools** report NAPLAN results to students in this way.

Given the divergence in the research findings, it may be that respondents interpreted this question in different ways: some responding that individual results are given to students in class and others responding that school and class results (but not individual results) are given to students in class. This could be clarified with further research.

Almost one quarter (22 per cent) of respondents report alternate means of communicating results to students, including **individually with each child** via one-on-one interviews. However many schools take an **indirect approach** to reporting NAPLAN results to students, sending results to parents to discuss with their child.

Email and the school assembly are not common ways of communicating NAPLAN results to students. Only one per cent of schools report results to students via email and only six per cent do so at assembly.

To Parents

Almost all schools (95 per cent) report NAPLAN results to the parents of students, with the exception of 15 per cent of A.C.T. and 11 per cent of Victorian schools, which do not communicate results directly to parents.

Communication with parents is done in a number of ways, the most popular of which are **by letter** (42 per cent), on the **school website** (38 per cent) and at **Parent/Teacher night** (27 per cent). Three per cent report NAPLAN results to parents **by email** (cf. **Independent schools**: 10 per cent, **very large schools**: 8 per cent).

In relation to communicating NAPLAN results, it seems that principals regard **the school website** as a more appropriate tool for informing parents (38 per cent) than with teachers (13 per cent) or students (15 per cent). Almost half of all **Catholic**, **Independent** and **very large schools** communicate NAPLAN results to parents in this way, among other methods of communication.

Q18 Results to parents via school website	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	V Large	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
no	62%	52%	65%	53%	78%	64%	55%	51%	59%	61%	68%	67%
yes	38%	48%	35%	47%	22%	36%	45%	49%	41%	40%	32%	33%

Other ways that NAPLAN results are reported to parents include: Newsletter, Annual Report, School Council/P&C Meetings and Parent Interviews. Overall, there is considerable variance between the **states and territories** in their use of email and the school website to communicate NAPLAN results.

How Results Differ According to ICSEA Score

For the purposes of analysis, survey results were analysed according to whether the respondent's school had an ICSEA score in the bottom 20 per cent, middle 60 per cent or top 20 per cent of the ICSEA score range.

In terms of reporting NAPLAN results, results differ according to a school's ICSEA score in the following ways:

- As ICSEA scores increase, fewer schools report NAPLAN results directly to students and fewer schools report NAPLAN results directly to students in class.
- More low ICSEA score schools use the school website to report NAPLAN results to teachers, among other methods.
- More low ICSEA score schools report NAPLAN results to parent by letter and at Parent/Teacher night, by a margin of around ten points.

Levels of Parent Interest in NAPLAN Results

The questionnaire asked primary principals to indicate, on the basis of their interactions with parents, **levels of parent interest** in their child's NAPLAN results, the school's overall NAPLAN results and teacher performance as it impacts on NAPLAN results.

Across the board, there is a **'baseline' medium level of interest** in these issues for between a **quarter** and a **third of parents**.

Interest in Their Child's Results

Predictably, parents are most interested in **their own child's NAPLAN performance**. **Half of parents** have **high or very high** levels of interest in their child's NAPLAN results, while 32 per cent have a medium level of interest.

Q13 Parent interest in child's results	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	V Large	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
Very low	4%	2%	5%	2%	9%	4%	2%	5%	4%	4%	4%	15%
Low	12%	14%	12%	6%	14%	14%	11%	6%	11%	14%	11%	15%
Medium	32%	32%	33%	22%	34%	32%	32%	30%	28%	34%	39%	26%
High	33%	34%	33%	40%	31%	34%	36%	29%	35%	34%	29%	38%
Very high	18%	17%	17%	29%	12%	16%	19%	30%	22%	14%	17%	6%

Parents of children attending **Independent schools** expressed higher levels of interest than the average, with 69 per cent showing high/very high levels of interest in their child's NAPLAN results. Fifty-nine per cent of parents whose children attended **very large schools** also expressed high/very high levels of interest in their child's results. Principals in **remote areas** reported that 30 per cent of parents there had low/very low levels of interest in their child's performance, almost double the national average. Low levels of parent interest were also reported by respondents from **small schools**.

The level of parent interest was about eight points higher than the average in the **A.C.T.** and about five points higher in **New South Wales**, but lower in the **Northern Territory** and **Tasmania**, even allowing for small sample sizes in those areas.

Interest in the School's Results

By comparison, **one quarter** (24 per cent) of parents have a **high/very high** level of interest in the **school's NAPLAN results**, with 35 per cent showing a medium level of interest.

Q13 Parent interest in school's results	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	V Large	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
Very low	11%	12%	12%	6%	22%	10%	8%	5%	8%	10%	14%	30%
Low	30%	28%	32%	13%	28%	32%	30%	26%	28%	33%	31%	27%
Medium	35%	34%	36%	34%	33%	35%	38%	34%	35%	37%	35%	30%
High	18%	20%	16%	32%	12%	18%	18%	27%	21%	16%	15%	10%
Very high	6%	6%	5%	15%	5%	5%	6%	8%	7%	4%	6%	3%

Again, parents of children attending **Independent schools** expressed higher levels of interest than the average, with almost half (47 per cent) showing high/very high levels of interest in the school's NAPLAN results. More than a quarter (27 per cent) of parents with children at **very large schools** expressed a high level of interest in the school's results, compared to an average of 18 per cent. Fifty-seven per cent of parents with children in **remote area schools** and half of those with children in **small schools** had low/very low levels of interest in the school's results, compared to an average of 41 per cent.

From a geographical perspective, parent interest in school results is six points higher than the average in **Western Australia**, but a little lower than average in **Queensland, Victoria** and the **Northern Territory**.

Interest in Teacher Performance

Sixteen per cent of parents have a **high/very high** level of interest in **teacher performance as it impacts on NAPLAN results**, with one quarter expressing a **medium** level of interest. These results were largely consistent across sectors, school size and location, with similar but smaller trends to those noted above. There were no major differences by state and territory.

Q13 Parent interest in teacher perform	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	V Large	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
Very low	25%	19%	27%	19%	30%	25%	23%	21%	22%	25%	28%	31%
Low	34%	36%	33%	32%	26%	32%	39%	34%	35%	37%	29%	26%
Medium	26%	29%	25%	26%	26%	28%	23%	28%	25%	24%	29%	26%
High	12%	13%	11%	17%	11%	12%	11%	13%	14%	11%	9%	12%
Very high	4%	4%	4%	7%	7%	3%	4%	5%	5%	3%	5%	5%

Influences of NAPLAN Results on Certain Parent Behaviours

Principals were asked whether, since NAPLAN testing began, parents had **removed or enrolled children** from their school based on the child's or the school's NAPLAN results; and whether parents sought to enrol their child based on the child's or the school's NAPLAN results.

Around 10 per cent of **respondents were not sure** whether these behaviours had occurred, suggesting that removal and enrolment in a school is often due to a complex set of factors.

The majority of respondents (80 per cent) said that parents **had not removed their child** from the school based on NAPLAN results, whether their child's or the school's. However ten per cent of principals had experienced this behaviour.

Q14 Child out citing child's poor results	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	V Large	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
Yes	11%	9%	11%	8%	9%	13%	9%	12%	11%	13%	8%	10%
No	79%	79%	78%	84%	77%	75%	82%	84%	78%	78%	81%	75%
Not sure	11%	12%	11%	8%	14%	13%	9%	4%	11%	10%	10%	16%

Q14 Child out citing school's poor results												
Yes	10%	10%	10%	7%	5%	14%	8%	10%	11%	10%	9%	9%
No	81%	82%	80%	89%	82%	76%	84%	84%	80%	80%	84%	76%
Not sure	9%	8%	10%	5%	13%	10%	8%	6%	9%	10%	7%	16%

Generally, respondents say parents do not cite their child's NAPLAN results **to obtain enrolment** in primary schools (cf. secondary schools). Three quarters (73 per cent) of principals said that this does not occur, but 19 per cent had experienced this kind of parent behaviour.

Q14 Enrol child citing child's good results												
Yes	19%	19%	16%	48%	3%	16%	24%	33%	24%	22%	7%	4%
No	73%	72%	75%	43%	83%	77%	68%	59%	69%	70%	84%	76%
Not sure	9%	9%	9%	9%	14%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	9%	20%

However, almost half (48 per cent) of principals at **Independent schools** see parents behave this way. Generally, as school size increases, parents are more likely to cite their child's results to gain entry, with one third (33 per cent) of principals from **very large schools** confirming that this occurs.

Likewise, principals report that parents in **metropolitan** (24 per cent) schools are more likely to behave this way, but this rarely occurs in **small**, **rural** and **remote** schools. Geographically, this sort of behaviour is reported to happen marginally more in **New South Wales**.

A school's NAPLAN results appear to be a relevant factor in some parents' decisions about selecting a primary school for their child.

Q14 Enrol child citing school good results	TOTAL	Cath	Govt	Indep	Small	Medium	Large	V Large	Metro	Region	Rural	Remote
Yes	32%	36%	30%	50%	9%	28%	43%	46%	40%	35%	19%	11%
No	59%	54%	62%	39%	76%	63%	50%	49%	54%	57%	70%	72%
Not sure	9%	10%	9%	11%	15%	9%	7%	5%	7%	9%	12%	17%

While around two thirds (59 per cent) of principals say parents don't express a desire to enrol their child on the basis of the school's NAPLAN results, 32 per cent say that they do.

This figure rises to half for **Independent schools**. As before, the larger the school the more this behaviour is seen, with principals from **very large schools** (46 per cent) and **large schools** (43 per cent) saying this occurs, compared to nine per cent from **small schools**.

This sort of parent behaviour is seen much more in **metropolitan** area schools (40 per cent) than **rural** (19 per cent) and **remote** (11 per cent) areas, possibly reflecting greater choice of schooling in the area.

Almost half of parents (46 per cent) with children in schools in the **A.C.T.** cite the school's good NAPLAN results as a basis for enrolment, 14 points above the national average.

How Results Differ According to ICSEA Score

For the purposes of analysis, survey results were analysed according to whether the respondent's school had an ICSEA score in the bottom 20 per cent, middle 60 per cent or top 20 per cent of the ICSEA score range.

In terms of levels of parent interest in NAPLAN results, results differ according to a school's ICSEA score in the following ways:

- As ICSEA scores increase, respondents report higher levels of parent interest their own child's results, the school's overall result and teacher performance as it impacts on NAPLAN results.
- As ICSEA scores increase, more schools report parents seeking to enrol their child on the basis of their child's and/or the school's good NAPLAN results.
- As ICSEA scores increase, fewer schools report parents removing their child from the school on the basis of their child's and/or the school's poor NAPLAN results.

RESEARCH FINDINGS: PART THREE

OTHER ASSESSMENT PRACTICES USED BY AUSTRALIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Primary principals were asked a series of questions regarding assessment practices:

- Which assessment practices used by your school provide aggregated data for your school?
- Of those, which (if any) would you recommend for use across Australian schools, and why?
- If you would like APPA to contact you to discuss the approach your school takes to such assessments, please provide contact details.

The first two questions resulted in voluminous amounts of information from respondents. These are outlined below and can be perused in detail from the Excel tables of survey results.

Almost **ten per cent of respondents** volunteered their contact details for further discussion with APPA about assessment practices.

IN CURRENT USE: Assessment Practices Providing Aggregated Data

In terms of the assessment practices used by primary schools, the leading categories were:

- Commercial/Standardised Tests
- Commercial Scales/Inventories
- School-based Tests
- Other School-based Assessments
- Unattributed

Commercial/Standardised Tests	Probe Envision, PAT R, PAT Maths, Westwood Spelling, SA Spelling Test, MTS Maths, Phase Spelling, Torch Reading, Easy Mark Reading & spelling, Waddingtons Spelling, Conquista Tests in ICT, Reading Recovery Tests, ACER Tests – Reading, Vocab, Spelling, Maths, MTS Maths, Single Word Spelling Tests, Early Numeracy Test, Edwards Quick Word Reading Test, Fitzgerald Diagnostic Spelling Test, Schonnel Spelling Test, Oxford Maths Plus Progression Tests, BURT, Middle Years Mental Computations, peters dictation, Morrison & McCall Spelling Scale and Tests, Holbourn, Fry's sight word testing, Dalwood Spelling Assessment, St Lucia, Brigance, AGAT (ACER), Sutherland (SPAT-R), WIAT, Count Me In Too-SENA, On Demand Testing, Numeracy online Interview, English online interview, JEMM and EMM (ACER), Robert Allwell testing
Commercial Scales/Inventories	PM Benchmark, BEE Spelling inventory, First Steps, Concepts of Print, Maths Interviews GiRN, Lexile Levels, PIPS Observation Survey, Best Start, Oxford Word Lists, ACER G & T, Student Performance Analyser (SPA), MSE Monitoring Standards in Education. Schedule for Early Number Assessment SENA, Screen of Communication Skills, MAI, NEALE, Middle Infant Screening Test, Peabody, AEDI, Assessment of Student Competencies, Marie Clay, Fountas and Pinnell Benchmarking, VELS assessments, I can do maths, International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme, Words Their Way WTW, mathletics, Prep Entry Assessment PEA, ESL Scopes and Scales, Commonly

	Used Words Checklist, McCalls Crabbs Comprehension Tests, Nelson Assessment Tasks, Diana Rigg, Phoneme Awareness, Talk the Talk Speech Pathology Screening, Jolly Phonics research project data, PAK maths, ABC reading eggs, Carmel Crevola Oral Language, Johnson Word list, NSW K-6 Numeracy continua, Ravens, Reading Misque Analysis, George Booker Numeracy Assessments, Munro assessments, NZ Poze Inventory, Year 2 Diagnostic Net, C2C Assessment, QCAT , Sunscreen, RENFREW Picture Tests, ENRP, ICAS, Talking Namba, ASC (NT), CARS and STARS, WRAP, ALPOS/ARCOTS (Melbourne University), DRA 2, SINE, Literacy Assessment Project, Literacy Advance, MICUPS, Allwell, Scaffold Maths, Bishop's RE Assessment Screening, EALD (ACARA), TEN, Big Idea in Number (SA), Trust the Count (VIC), CTJ, Quicksmart, EMSAD, EMU Maths (Catholic VIC), Prep PEAP Entry Assessment (Catholic)
School Based Tests	Annual Pre Tests, Phonics Tests, whole school testing, online testing, diagnostic testing maths, mastery placement, corrective reading, Testing on computer sites, teacher designed tests, weekly spelling and maths tests, Auditory Processing, Hearing Recording Sounds, Cloze Tests, criteria reference testing, unit assessments, grammar and punctuation testing, explicit 5 questions test in numeracy, Auswim – type grading for swimming, age tests, end of term and unit tests
School Based Other Assessments	Observations, Self Assessments, Running Records, Moderated Assessments, Teacher judgement, sight word assessment, whole school PBS Assessment, Writing Analysis, Australian Maths Competition, Projects, Interest, Tracking systems, rubrics, personal goal setting, Assessment maps, digital portfolios, moderated writing samples, work samples, presentations, reading and writing interviews, General work samples and photos, description summary sheets, individual student portfolios, Measuring social acceptance, self assessments – subject rating – co-operative learning evaluation, formal reports, K/P Speech Screening, video , writing audit, Literacy and Numeracy continua, fluency assessments, Exposition writing, three way conferences, parent meetings, attendance records, Newcastle Permanent Maths Comp, Work samples and portfolios in English, Maths, Inquiry, ICT and the Arts, counsellor assessment , contractions assessment, text orientation, Magic 100 words, Regional Maths Tests, individual learning plans, problem solving samples, peer assessment, conferencing, journals, letter sound association, self assessment interpersonal skills friendship, School nurse assessment, Data Wall (Records), Student Tracker, PIPS Observation survey, SMART Analysis tool, Mathematical Clinical Interviews, Most frequently used words, Setting Targets

Unattributed	SAIS, Sunlander, ENI, ART assessments, Easy Mark Literacy and Numeracy, First cut, Monster spelling, EYNI Rich Assessment Task, Assess Now P-2, DNPS, SREAMS Student Performance Analyser, VCE exams, Blitz Number maths tests, MPAST, Callingham and Macintosh, DMT Measurement, EYA, EYInd, Skillband, Duncan Work Task, SEA, Wrap Analysis, Grade Expert, TIC tests, TOWN, Watts Holburn, EARS, CAP
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Almost ten per cent of respondents named NAPLAN as one of their aggregated assessment practices. Respondents were not asked to comment, but a few chose to do so, saying:

NAPLAN results arrive too late. Nobody takes much notice of the results because they arrive too late to critically affect the teaching program for that year. We do look at trends, but they don't have a huge impact on our priorities. We know what our priorities are from our other data.

Our focus is not on aggregated data, this only assists governments, not children. Test scores, as long as they are standardised (with the same thing applying to everyone) do NOT reflect teacher ability, school quality or a student's future.

NAPLAN is used to highlight the trend rather than to drive instruction.

NAPLAN is everybody's business in this school. It is viewed as a point in time test of good teaching and positive learning. Teachers collect a significant range of data, both regionally required and school required, to track students as they go through this school. There is a whole of school assessment plan which is comprehensive and detailed. It has also been approved by the auditor.

We are a school for students with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities, whose parents withdraw them from NAPLAN. Consultation with parents occurs prior to this and our assessment practices are most formative and curriculum based and linked to individual programs.

RECOMMENDED: Assessment Practices Providing Aggregated Data

As with the previous question, respondents provided voluminous numbers of different assessment practices when asked which they would recommend for use across Australian schools. Again, these can be perused in detail from the Excel tables of survey results.

Notably, a proportion of respondents said:

<i>I don't recommend any aggregated assessment practice</i>	16%
<i>I recommend any/all aggregated assessment practices</i>	5%
<i>Specifically named NAPLAN as a recommended aggregated assessment practice</i>	2%

It is apparent from some responses that **not all respondents fully understood the nature of the question**. Qualitative research into this area would help to clarify principal views on this issue and categorise the different assessment practices.

Despite this, there is **a small minority who fundamentally do not support aggregated assessment practices**, for reasons stated below.

Respondents who did not recommend any aggregated assessment practices commented in the following ways:

None. Schools need freedom to choose data collection tools for their own specific site and circumstances. We do not need more national testing demands. Each school situation is different and schools use a variety of different assessment tools as best fits their situation. While many of these are widely used already, I don't think there is 'one size fits all'.

None - they are out dated and do not give a full picture of a child's ability. Need to be based on school needs and stakeholders. There is too much site specific background information that needs to be used when looking at data. General comparisons to other schools or states is pointless

None. We need more up to date tests and these are expensive and we have to do NAPLAN and the children are over-tested. "Weighing the pig each day does not make it fatter."

I don't have a huge objection to national testing, not even the NAPLAN (except that to expect children to write a persuasive text 'cold' in the given time is not good teaching or assessment practice) but I do object to the status of the results. Yes, give the results to schools and expect them to respond to the information, but don't judge, don't make it the be-all and end-all of how well a school's doing, don't put it on the web, don't beat teachers up about the results. There are much better ways of bringing about improvement. (See the Grattan Reports)

None. As long as such results are allowed to be hijacked to provide lists of 'well-performed' or 'poorly performed' schools/teachers, they will always be open to rorting of the system and as such lack any genuine validity or accuracy as a measure.

None - one size does not fit all. Schools need to choose assessment strategies that suit their community. I don't totally believe such a philosophy is appropriate at this age if we have a clear Australian Outcome based curriculum. The purpose is for what????

None. We should not be trying to compare our students. It should be used for collecting of own site data for directional improvement and goal setting within the site!!

None. We are a unique school and they wouldn't be relevant to others. I believe school specific assessment meets the needs of your culture and setting. NAPLAN creates a culture of unhealthy competition.

It is not up to our school to recommend anything. Our schedule suits us. The use of NAPLAN as a national testing schedule is flawed, as schools like ours are being forced to teach to the test. This will provide skewed results. If the NAPLAN results were available only to the staff and parents of each school individually and not to the whole world via My School, the pressure would be lessened for schools and more reliable results would be available to politicians and statisticians.

Everyone in this school is on the same page philosophically and therefore, the team has built the assessment regime and the team follows through with regional input. What happens in this school may not work in others. We can share the details, but many school s would be doing things as regional requirements as well, I suspect.

Those who recommended NAPLAN commented as follows:

NAPLAN - if used in the correct context. Raw data provides schools with useful comparative data, is linked to the Australian Curriculum. Needs to be used without political interference and with relevant departmental support. The current 'big stick' approach is not useful and opens the door for potential narrowing of the curriculum and undue pressure on schools, teachers and students.

NAPLAN because it gives a "big picture" view of the Nation. It provides nationwide consistency.

NAPLAN allows individual school data to be compared to a national 'average'. School performance data gives individual schools a snapshot of current year and allows comparison to previous years therefore trend data can be used for planning and staffing.

Are you suggesting standards assessment tasks of a more specific nature than NAPLAN? If so then assessment tasks directly relating to the Literacy and Numeracy continuums would be a bonus as now every school/and or Teacher is having to design their own. E.g. I am currently pulling on Count Me In assessment tasks to measure achievement in numeracy. My concern is the time I am taking to assemble these assessment tasks/resources, we are continuing to reinvent the wheel, massively time consuming.

NAPLAN as it provides whole school information that allows us to make decisions about student progress. Teacher Judgements as it allows teachers to have a better understanding of the student.

NAPLAN already does this and the comparison to like schools is helpful, also the trend data of the cohorts and across time in the academic areas.

Those who recommended all or any of the assessment practices commented:

All are sound ways for teachers to determine grades. Educative, valid, comprehensive and relevant.

All provide the school with student data across all years and allow the school to validate teacher judgement. All assessments have some element of teacher judgement. I believe by triangulating data using different sources is the only way to ensure consistency.

All provide a cross section of all aspects of literacy and numeracy and give teachers excellent information about the needs of the students in their class.

All provide diagnostic assessment, results are immediately available so can be utilised for program planning in group and individual situations.

All. Meet the particular needs of the students in our care. Focus on where they need to go- NOT WHAT THEY DONT KNOW!

All of these are useful to help teachers make informed decisions about student achievement and planning for their future growth. Together the aggregated data can be triangulated so they have clear evidence of a student's progress.

All - part of the teaching and learning and not seen by anyone as a major test more weighted than any other. Seen as a way to inform teaching and learning for improved outcomes, not as a summative assessment which is maybe how parents see NAPLAN results - too weighted.

APPENDIX ONE – Canvass Questionnaire

canvass»

strategic opinion research

Level 6, 432 Kent Street, Sydney 2000 >> GPO Box 5395 Sydney NSW 2001 Australia
www.canvass.net.au T 0448 094 899 ABN 351 447 90873

Instructions to respondents: *While recognising that several Australian states include Year 7 students in the primary years, this survey is conducted in relation to Years 3 and 5 only so as to provide a clear and unambiguous national picture of the impact/s of NAPLAN testing on primary-aged students. Accordingly, please answer the following questions only in relation to classes in Years 3 & 5 at your own school.*

Q1. Based on your observations, what impact has NAPLAN testing had on the wellbeing of students in your school?

- A very negative impact
- A somewhat negative impact
- No impact
- A somewhat positive impact
- A very positive impact

Q2. Based on your observations, please indicate how often the following behaviours occur at your school:

never/rarely/sometimes/often/very often

- Students express enthusiasm about the challenge of NAPLAN testing
- Students show signs of excitement about participating in a national event with other children their age
- Students exhibit signs of stress (eg. sleeplessness etc.) prior to/during the NAPLAN tests
- Parents or carers withdraw students from the NAPLAN tests
- Students express a fear of failure prior to/during the NAPLAN tests
- Students gets physically sick prior to/during the NAPLAN tests

Q3.

a. Based on your observations, what difference (if any) is there in the impact of NAPLAN testing on the wellbeing of Year 3 as compared to Year 5 students?

- There is no difference
- There is more of an impact on Year 3
- There is more of an impact on Year 5.

b. If you feel there is a difference in the impact on wellbeing of Year 3 and Year 5 students as a result of NAPLAN testing, please indicate in what way the impact differs (eg. type of impact or severity of impact, etc.)

Please specify:

Please answer the following questions only in relation to classes in Years 3 & 5 at your own school.

Q4. Have you observed any other impacts of NAPLAN testing on the wellbeing of students?

Yes/No/Not sure

If yes, please specify:

Q5. What impact, if any, has NAPLAN testing had on the curriculum offered at your school?

NAPLAN testing has:

- had a **significant negative impact** on the curriculum offered at my school
- had a **slight negative impact** on the curriculum offered at my school
- **not impacted** on the curriculum offered at my school
- had a **slight positive impact** on the curriculum offered at my school
- had a **significant positive impact** on the curriculum offered at my school

Q6. In the lead-up to NAPLAN testing of Years 3 & 5 each year, what impact has NAPLAN had on the amount of time spent teaching literacy and numeracy each week in those year levels?

- We spend **significantly less time** (more than 3 hours less per week) teaching literacy and numeracy
- We spend **slightly less time** (between 1-3 hours less per week) teaching literacy and numeracy
- The amount of time we spend teaching literacy and numeracy has **not changed**
- We spend **slightly more time** (between 1-3 hours more per week) teaching literacy and numeracy
- We spend **significantly more time** (more than 3 hours more per week) teaching literacy and numeracy.

Q7. In the lead-up to NAPLAN testing of Years 3 & 5 each year, what impact has NAPLAN had on the amount of time spent teaching non-NAPLAN assessed subjects each week in those year levels?

- We spend **significantly less time** (more than 3 hours less per week) teaching non-NAPLAN assessed subjects
- We spend **slightly less time** (between 1-3 hours less per week) teaching non-NAPLAN assessed subjects
- The amount of time we spend teaching non-NAPLAN assessed subjects has **not changed**
- We spend **slightly more time** (between 1-3 hours more per week) teaching non-NAPLAN assessed subjects
- We spend **significantly more time** (more than 3 hours more per week) teaching non-NAPLAN assessed subjects

Q8. Have you observed any other impacts of NAPLAN testing on the curriculum offered at your school?

Yes/No/Not sure

If yes, please specify:

Please answer the following questions only in relation to classes in Years 3 & 5 at your own school.

Q9. What impact, if any, has NAPLAN testing had on classroom pedagogy at your school?

NAPLAN testing has:

- had a **significant negative impact** on classroom pedagogy at my school
- had a **slight negative impact** on classroom pedagogy at my school
- **not impacted** on classroom pedagogy at my school
- had a **slight positive impact** on classroom pedagogy at my school
- had a **significant positive impact** on classroom pedagogy at my school

Q10. Since the publication of NAPLAN data on the My School website was introduced, has there been any change in the amount of class time spent rote learning material in preparation for NAPLAN testing at your school?

- There is **much less class time** spent rote learning now
- There is **slightly less class time** spent rote learning now
- There has been **no change to class time** spent rote learning
- There is **slightly more class time** spent rote learning now
- There is **much more class time** spent rote learning now

Q11. In the lead-up to NAPLAN testing of Years 3 & 5 each year, how much school time, if any, is directed towards preparation for NAPLAN in those year levels?

- We **do not** allocate school time to NAPLAN preparation
- We **do** allocate school time to NAPLAN preparation

If time is allocated, please specify hours allocated per week _____ over _____ weeks.

Q12. Have you observed any other impacts of NAPLAN testing on classroom pedagogy at your school?

Yes/No/Not sure

If yes, please specify:

Please answer the following questions only in relation to classes in Years 3 & 5 at your own school.

Q13. Based on your interactions with the parents of students at your school, what is their level of interest in:

Very low/low/medium/high/very high

- Their own child's NAPLAN results
- The school's overall NAPLAN results
- Teacher performance as it impacts on NAPLAN results.

Q14. Since NAPLAN testing began in 2008, have any parents:

Yes/No/Not sure

- taken their child out of your school, citing their child's poor NAPLAN results?
- taken their child out of your school, citing your school's poor NAPLAN results?
- sought to enrol their child in your school, citing your school's good NAPLAN results?
- sought to enrol their child in your school, citing their child's good NAPLAN results?

Q15. Since NAPLAN testing began, what impact, if any, has it had on the school budget? Please select as many as are relevant:

- There has been **no impact** on the school budget
- We have allocated funding for **NAPLAN preparation materials**
- We have allocated funding for **NAPLAN-related teacher professional development**
- We have allocated funding for **additional teacher hours**
- We have allocated funding for **additional supervision and administration during NAPLAN test periods**
- Other: *please specify*

Q16. How are your school NAPLAN results reported to teachers? Please select as many as are relevant.

- They are not reported to teachers
- Email
- Letter
- Staff meeting
- School website
- Other: *please specify*

Please answer the following questions only in relation to classes in Years 3 & 5 at your own school.

Q17. How are your school NAPLAN results reported to students? Please select as many as are relevant.

- They are not reported to students
- Email
- In class
- School assembly
- School website
- Other: *please specify*

Q18. How are your school NAPLAN results reported to parents? Please select as many as are relevant.

- They are not reported to parents
- Email
- Letter
- Parent/Teacher night
- School website
- Other: *please specify*

Q19.

a. Which assessment practices used by your school provide aggregated data for your school?

Please list:

b. Of those assessment practices which provide aggregated data for your school, which (if any) would you recommend for use across Australian schools, and why?

Please write 'none' or list, with reason/s:

APPA is interested in understanding **different and innovative approaches to student assessment** which provide **aggregated data** and which are currently used by Australian primary schools.

If you would like APPA to contact you to discuss the approach your school takes to such assessments, please provide contact details below.

NAME: _____ SCHOOL: _____

TELEPHONE: _____ EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

Many thanks.

And finally, some demographic questions to help us in our analysis:

Q20. To which sector does your school belong?

- Catholic
- Government
- Independent

Please answer the following questions only in relation to classes in Years 3 & 5 at your own school.

Q21. In terms of size, which of these descriptions best fits your school?

- Small (<100 students)
- Medium (100-300 students)
- Large (300-600 students)
- Very Large (600+ students)

Q22. In which state/territory is your school located?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Capital Territory • New South Wales • Northern Territory • Queensland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Australia • Tasmania • Victoria • Western Australia
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Q23. What is your geographic designation?

- Metropolitan
- Regional
- Rural
- Remote

Q24. What is your ICSEA score (as designated by My School)?

Please specify: _____

Q25. How many years have you been a principal?

Please specify: _____

OPTIONAL:

Q26. Please indicate your age range.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21-25 • 26-30 • 31-35 • 36-40 • 41-45 • 46-50 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 51-55 • 56-60 • 61-65 • 66-70 • 70+
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Q27. Please specify your gender.

- Male
- Female

THANK YOU

APPENDIX TWO – State & Territory Findings

Survey results as they relate to the different states and territories are reported as an Appendix for direct comparison.

Impacts on Student Wellbeing

	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
	1353	33	267	8	161	178	21	436	249
Q1 NAPLAN impact on student wellbeing									
A very negative impact	7%	6%	6%		8%	6%	5%	9%	8%
A somewhat negative impact	59%	73%	57%	54%	64%	58%	52%	62%	54%
No impact	24%	15%	28%	23%	17%	27%	24%	21%	27%
A somewhat positive impact	9%	3%	9%	23%	9%	8%	19%	7%	11%
A very positive impact	1%	3%	0%		1%	1%		1%	

Q2 Students exhibit signs of stress	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
Never	3%		5%		3%	2%		2%	2%
Rarely	17%	12%	16%	23%	11%	20%	19%	20%	22%
Sometimes	55%	61%	57%	46%	52%	59%	57%	55%	53%
Often	22%	24%	20%	16%	30%	19%	24%	19%	19%
Very often	3%	3%	2%	16%	4%			5%	4%

Q2 Students express fear of failure	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
Never	2%		3%		3%	2%		2%	1%
Rarely	14%	15%	15%		10%	13%	29%	15%	21%
Sometimes	49%	51%	52%	61%	47%	52%	43%	45%	44%
Often	28%	28%	24%	23%	33%	30%	29%	29%	25%
Very often	7%	6%	6%	16%	8%	4%		9%	9%

Q2 Parents/carers withdraw students	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
Never	12%	6%	18%		10%	6%	14%	7%	12%
Rarely	37%	35%	38%	46%	30%	38%	43%	37%	39%
Sometimes	46%	51%	39%	54%	54%	54%	43%	47%	45%
Often	4%	9%	3%		6%	3%		6%	3%
Very often	1%		1%					2%	1%

Q2 Students gets physically sick prior	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
Never	11%	6%	11%	7%	11%	16%	19%	11%	10%
Rarely	37%	25%	37%	63%	33%	38%	43%	38%	38%
Sometimes	46%	66%	46%	23%	47%	43%	33%	44%	46%
Often	6%	3%	5%	7%	8%	3%	5%	7%	6%
Very often	1%		0%		1%			1%	1%

Q2 Students express enthusiasm	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
Never	28%	19%	32%	16%	24%	25%	29%	31%	27%
Rarely	40%	46%	39%	23%	42%	37%	48%	42%	40%
Sometimes	28%	30%	26%	54%	30%	29%	19%	23%	30%
Often	4%	6%	3%	7%	4%	8%	5%	3%	3%
Very often	0%				0%	1%		1%	1%

Q2 Students show signs of excitement	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
Never	36%	43%	39%	16%	30%	36%	34%	40%	36%
Rarely	40%	33%	39%	23%	41%	39%	48%	39%	43%
Sometimes	21%	19%	20%	47%	26%	22%	14%	18%	18%
Often	3%	6%	3%	14%	3%	3%	5%	3%	3%
Very often	0%				0%			1%	0%

Q3 Differing impact on wellbeing	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
No difference	38%	35%	42%	54%	34%	27%	43%	44%	35%
More impact on Year 3	48%	58%	45%	46%	52%	60%	52%	42%	45%
More impact on Year 5	14%	7%	13%		14%	13%	5%	15%	20%

Impacts on Curriculum

Q5 Impact on curriculum	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
significant negative impact	14%	15%	11%		20%	10%	5%	14%	19%
slight negative impact	38%	39%	33%	16%	45%	38%	43%	44%	34%
not impacted curriculum	19%	22%	28%		9%	16%	33%	20%	13%
slight positive impact	22%	21%	22%	61%	17%	30%	19%	18%	23%
significant positive impact	7%	3%	6%	23%	9%	7%		4%	12%

Q6 Time spent teaching lit+num/ week	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
significantly less time	3%	3%	2%		5%	2%	5%	5%	4%
slightly less time	11%	3%	7%		20%	8%	10%	15%	4%
no change to time spent	42%	48%	48%	61%	28%	48%	47%	48%	36%
slightly more time	29%	34%	31%	7%	28%	32%	24%	23%	30%
significantly more time	15%	11%	11%	32%	19%	11%	15%	9%	26%

Q7 Time teaching non-NAPLAN/week	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
significantly less time	17%	12%	12%	7%	22%	11%	29%	18%	23%
slightly less time	40%	40%	37%	23%	50%	42%	29%	38%	34%
no change to time spent	39%	39%	47%	70%	24%	42%	38%	37%	39%
slightly more time	4%	6%	3%		3%	4%	5%	5%	3%
significantly more time	1%	3%	0%		1%	1%		2%	2%

Impacts on Classroom Pedagogy

Q9 Impact on classroom pedagogy	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
significant negative impact	9%	3%	6%		12%	7%	10%	11%	12%
slight negative impact	36%	43%	35%	7%	36%	43%	43%	41%	32%
no impact on classroom pedagogy	22%	18%	23%	16%	21%	18%	29%	27%	18%
slight positive impact	27%	34%	31%	54%	24%	29%	14%	19%	29%
significant positive impact	6%	3%	4%	23%	7%	4%	5%	3%	9%

Q10 Class time spent rote learning	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
much less class time	2%	3%	2%		3%	2%		2%	3%
slightly less class time	2%		2%		2%	3%		2%	1%
no change	62%	73%	70%	77%	51%	65%	61%	63%	56%
slightly more class time	27%	22%	23%	23%	31%	26%	24%	27%	33%
much more class time	7%	3%	3%		14%	4%	15%	6%	8%

Q11	b	A.C.T.	N.S.W	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
Prep	Time	33	267	8	161	178	21	436	249
Hours	None	26.5	33.0	22.8	26.9	42.5	42.7	26.9	55.2
	1.0	18.0	22.2	7.1	15.8	13.7	4.6	15.1	6.8
	2.0	21.3	20.5	31.5	29.0	21.8	19.1	23.6	15.0
	3.0	11.8	10.0	15.7	12.3	10.5	19.1	15.3	3.8
	4.0	6.7	5.3	7.1	3.4	2.0	9.7	4.8	3.5
	5.0	12.3	6.6	15.7	7.8	8.2	4.8	9.5	6.0
	6.0	3.4	0.5	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.0	1.0	2.2
	7.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0
	8.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.5
	9.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	10.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	2.1	0.6	0.0	2.1	3.2
Weeks	None	34.9	41.1	22.8	32.4	51.2	61.8	36.3	57.6
	1.0	0.0	0.6	0.0	2.1	1.2	0.0	1.6	0.5
	2.0	12.3	7.9	15.7	3.9	7.1	4.6	10.7	1.1
	3.0	9.0	5.6	15.7	3.0	11.1	0.0	9.0	1.3
	4.0	3.4	7.7	7.1	9.2	8.0	4.8	16.3	1.9
	5.0	10.1	6.5	15.7	4.1	5.5	0.0	9.2	2.8
	6.0	9.5	4.5	0.0	5.6	2.6	9.7	5.2	1.5
	7.0	0.0	1.8	0.0	2.0	1.3	0.0	0.6	0.2
	8.0	3.4	3.9	15.7	4.7	3.5	4.8	2.2	3.9
	9.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	10.0	8.5	9.4	7.1	11.6	4.2	4.6	5.7	12.8
	11.0	2.8	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.0	4.8	0.0	1.5
	12.0	2.8	4.1	0.0	2.4	2.2	0.0	1.7	5.9
	13.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.1	0.6	0.0	0.0	3.4
	14.0	0.0	0.8	0.0	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.8
	15.0	0.0	2.6	0.0	4.3	0.4	0.0	0.8	1.9
	16.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	20.0	3.4	1.2	0.0	0.5	0.6	0.0	0.4	1.0

Impact on School Budget

Q15 No NAPLAN impact school budget	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
no	53%	54%	49%	77%	70%	47%	67%	43%	55%
yes	47%	46%	52%	23%	30%	53%	33%	57%	45%
Q15 Allocated funding for prep materials	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
no	71%	67%	78%	93%	53%	82%	76%	79%	63%
yes	29%	33%	22%	7%	47%	18%	24%	21%	37%
Q15 Allocated funding for teacher PD	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
no	67%	74%	66%	70%	57%	77%	81%	73%	67%
yes	33%	27%	34%	30%	44%	23%	19%	27%	33%
Q15 More funding for extra teacher hrs	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
no	83%	83%	87%	93%	66%	91%	76%	87%	82%
yes	18%	17%	13%	7%	34%	9%	24%	14%	18%
Q15 More \$ for s/vision+admin in tests	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
no	82%	76%	84%	69%	77%	73%	71%	87%	84%
yes	19%	24%	16%	32%	23%	27%	29%	13%	17%

Parent Interest in NAPLAN Results

Q13 Parent interest in child's results	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
Very low	4%	3%	4%		5%	5%		5%	4%
Low	12%	6%	12%	32%	13%	11%	19%	13%	9%
Medium	32%	38%	26%	47%	41%	38%	52%	32%	28%
High	33%	41%	38%	7%	29%	30%	24%	31%	36%
Very high	18%	12%	21%	14%	12%	16%	5%	18%	22%

Q13 Parent interest in school's results	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
Very low	11%	12%	10%		11%	13%	5%	17%	8%
Low	30%	31%	25%	54%	35%	33%	29%	33%	27%
Medium	35%	34%	39%	46%	34%	37%	48%	28%	34%
High	18%	20%	21%		14%	15%	19%	15%	23%
Very high	6%	3%	5%		6%	2%		7%	7%

Q13 Parent interest in teacher perform	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
Very low	25%	12%	23%		30%	27%	33%	32%	17%
Low	34%	49%	34%	32%	31%	36%	34%	33%	34%
Medium	26%	30%	26%	69%	26%	24%	33%	22%	27%
High	12%	9%	12%		10%	11%		9%	19%
Very high	4%		5%		4%	3%		5%	5%

Reporting of NAPLAN Results

Q16 They are not reported to teachers	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
no	99%	97%	99%	100%	100%	100%	100%	99%	100%
yes	1%	3%	1%					1%	0%

Q16 Email	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
no	85%	100%	94%	69%	71%	94%	72%	84%	77%
yes	15%		6%	32%	29%	7%	28%	16%	23%

Q16 Letter	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
no	98%	100%	98%	100%	98%	97%	95%	99%	98%
yes	2%		2%		2%	3%	5%	1%	2%

Q16 Staff meeting	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
no	5%	3%	4%		6%	4%	5%	6%	4%
yes	95%	97%	96%	100%	94%	96%	95%	94%	96%

Q16 School website	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
no	87%	93%	91%	86%	79%	89%	76%	94%	82%
yes	13%	7%	9%	14%	22%	11%	24%	6%	18%

Q17 Results not reported to students	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
no	50%	27%	45%	86%	70%	41%	57%	44%	49%
yes	50%	74%	55%	14%	30%	59%	43%	56%	52%

Q17 Email	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
no	99%	100%	99%	100%	96%	100%	100%	100%	100%
yes	1%		1%		4%				0%

Q17 In class	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
no	76%	83%	84%	37%	60%	82%	76%	78%	78%
yes	24%	17%	16%	63%	40%	18%	24%	23%	22%

Q17 School assembly	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
no	94%	94%	94%	100%	88%	99%	90%	98%	93%
yes	6%	6%	6%		12%	1%	10%	2%	8%

Q17 School website	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
no	85%	97%	87%	93%	76%	90%	76%	94%	80%
yes	15%	3%	13%	7%	24%	11%	24%	6%	20%

Q18 They are not reported to parents	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
no	95%	85%	96%	100%	98%	94%	95%	89%	97%
yes	5%	15%	4%		2%	6%	5%	11%	3%

Q18 Email	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
no	97%	100%	98%	100%	92%	100%	91%	99%	95%
yes	3%		2%		8%	0%	9%	1%	5%

Q18 Letter	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
no	58%	60%	58%	37%	57%	56%	38%	49%	72%
yes	42%	40%	42%	63%	43%	44%	62%	51%	28%

Q18 Parent/Teacher night	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
no	73%	64%	71%	69%	66%	79%	76%	84%	74%
yes	27%	37%	29%	32%	34%	21%	24%	17%	27%
Q18 Results to parents via school website	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
no	62%	76%	62%	63%	51%	62%	62%	79%	57%
yes	38%	24%	38%	37%	49%	38%	38%	21%	43%

Influence of NAPLAN on Certain Parent Behaviours

Q14 Child out citing child's poor results	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
Yes	11%		11%	7%	10%	9%	15%	12%	13%
No	79%	82%	76%	93%	81%	81%	76%	80%	77%
Not sure	11%	18%	13%		9%	10%	9%	9%	10%
Q14 Child out citing school's poor results	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
Yes	10%	3%	14%	7%	5%	9%	5%	9%	11%
No	81%	85%	74%	93%	87%	84%	86%	83%	81%
Not sure	9%	12%	12%		8%	8%	9%	8%	8%
Q14 Enrol child citing school good results	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
Yes	32%	46%	34%	23%	30%	29%	33%	32%	31%
No	59%	51%	56%	70%	62%	64%	43%	59%	59%
Not sure	9%	3%	10%	7%	8%	7%	24%	9%	10%
Q14 Enrol child citing child's good results	TOTAL	A.C.T.	N.S.W.	N.T.	QLD	S.A.	TAS	VIC	W.A.
Yes	19%	22%	24%	14%	14%	9%	28%	17%	20%
No	73%	75%	66%	79%	76%	84%	62%	75%	72%
Not sure	9%	3%	9%	7%	10%	7%	10%	8%	9%



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5 June 2013

Committee Secretary
Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committees
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Emailed to: ewr.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Secretary

**SENATE INQUIRY: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM
LITERACY AND NUMERACY (NAPLAN)**

Introduction

The Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) is grateful for the opportunity to provide this submission. APPA has been a constructive critic of the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy since its inception. Our position papers and other public documents have highlighted concerns and suggested improvements.

These documents include:

June 2008	Current educational issues at the national level
April 2009	Assessment, Accountability and Transparency
May 2009	The publication of nationally comparable school performance information
March 2010	Overarching Principles Governing the Reporting and Use of NAPLAN
June 2010	Submission from the Australian Primary Principals Association to the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee Inquiry into the administration and reporting of NAPLAN testing
September 2010	Feedback on 2010 NAPLAN Tests
September 2012	The Damage to Student Wellbeing Caused by High Stakes Testing

APPA embraces accountability and does not resile from the roles and responsibilities placed upon schools and principals to ensure full transparency of assessment and reporting. However, we believe there is a growing body of evidence that indicates improvements to NAPLAN are vital if it is to achieve its objectives while simultaneously ensuring there are no negative impacts of the testing on student wellbeing. There is also a growing conviction among primary school principals that lowering the high stakes nature of its reporting, and preventing the use of the data in ways for which it is not fit, are now necessary.

Our submission is based in large part on an independently conducted survey which resulted in the CANVASS Report *Primary Principals: Perspectives on NAPLAN Testing & Assessment*. This survey is provided as an attachment to this submission. Besides presenting data from the survey this submission includes comments from responding principals to illustrate key points.

This submission will specifically address the terms of reference.

The effectiveness of the National Assessment Program Literacy And Numeracy (NAPLAN). With specific reference to:

(a) Whether the evidence suggests that NAPLAN is achieving its stated purpose;

ACARA states:

"NAPLAN is the measure through which governments, education authorities, schools, teachers and parents can determine whether or not young Australians have the literacy and numeracy skills that provide the critical foundation for other learning and for their productive and rewarding participation in the community.

"The tests provide parents and schools with an understanding of how individual students are performing at the time of the tests. They also provide schools, states and territories with information about how education programs are working and which areas need to be prioritised for improvement.

"NAPLAN tests are one aspect of each school's assessment and reporting process, and do not replace the extensive, ongoing assessments made by teachers about each student's performance."

APPA believes the capacity of NAPLAN to achieve these purposes was always problematic and has been further compromised over the period since its introduction six years ago.

For instance, the long time between test completion and access to results has always made it impossible for teachers to use NAPLAN data effectively to adjust education programs to improve the learning of those students tested. Primary school principals have always been concerned, and are supported by an increasing body of evidence, that the narrow band of literacy and numeracy tested by NAPLAN is not a sufficient predictor of 'whether or not young Australians have the literacy and numeracy skills that provide the critical foundation for other learning and for their productive and rewarding participation in

the community.’ Placing too great an emphasis on those data may, in fact, give governments, education authorities, schools, teachers and parents erroneous views on the achievements of students.

The purposes for which NAPLAN data are now used compromise the achievement of its stated objectives because they serve to make NAPLAN high stakes. For example, the use of NAPLAN results to compare schools and prepare 'league tables' clearly has the potential to privilege those tested elements above others in a school's curriculum programs. Likewise, the use of class data to compare teachers clearly causes individual teachers to consider the inclusion of more test preparation in classroom programs than might otherwise occur.

The CANVASS survey provides evidence that both these unintended consequences have occurred. This evidence will be highlighted in the section of this submission addressing the effects of NAPLAN on teaching and learning.

The use of only NAPLAN data to determine the Schooling Resource Standard privileges that data to an extraordinary degree. This use of NAPLAN is not mentioned in its stated objectives. APPA believes if the current reality of NAPLAN's use is not substantially revised then a redefining of its objectives is necessary.

(b) Unintended consequences of NAPLAN's introduction;

APPA believes a serious unintended consequence of NAPLAN is the effect the testing program has on student wellbeing. There is evidence that teacher and parent stress is also caused by NAPLAN. The CANVASS survey found sixty-six percent of respondents said NAPLAN testing has a negative impact on the wellbeing of students. Fifty-nine percent said the impact was somewhat negative, while the other seven percent said the impact was very negative.

When the survey probed for specific behaviours and impacts relating to wellbeing there was a clear pattern of approximately fifty percent of respondents sometimes seeing students stressed, expressing fear of failure, being sick around the time of the tests or withdrawing from the tests. However, high levels of stress and fear of failure are considerably more prevalent than sickness or withdrawal from the tests. Twenty-five percent say students often or very often show signs of stress and around one third report students often or very often express fear of failure. Less than ten per cent of respondents say physical sickness or withdrawal of students happens often or very often.

Student wellbeing appears to suffer most in Catholic and remote area schools. Almost twenty percent of principals at remote schools say NAPLAN testing has a very negative effect on the wellbeing of their students. Sixty-nine percent of Catholic sector schools say it has a somewhat negative impact on student wellbeing, ten percent higher than the average.

The CANVASS survey did not specifically ask about the effect of NAPLAN testing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. However, principals in remote schools that are attended by a larger proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, report students feel the impacts more. Student stress is reported often or very often in remote schools by thirty-seven percent of principals compared to an average of twenty-five percent. Forty-four percent of principals at remote schools say fear of failure is

expressed often or very often by the students compared to an average thirty-five percent. There are higher levels of withdrawal and physical sickness among children in remote schools. APPA believes these data show Indigenous students may suffer more negative wellbeing impacts from NAPLAN testing than other students.

Respondents were divided on the issue of whether NAPLAN impacts more on Year 3 students or Year 5 students. Forty-eight percent of respondents say the impact of NAPLAN testing on the wellbeing of students is more pronounced on Year 3 students than Year 5 students.

A further thirty-eight percent say there is no difference in the impact of NAPLAN testing on the wellbeing of Year 3 as compared to Year 5 students, while fourteen percent say Year 5 students feel the impact of NAPLAN more than Year 3.

APPA believes that the level of student stress, anxiety and illness reported by primary school principals is unacceptable.

Another unintended consequence of NAPLAN is the cost borne by schools in administering the tests. Forty-seven percent of principals say that NAPLAN has had an impact on the school budget, with greater numbers at Independent schools and in Victorian schools (fifty-seven percent in each case).

However, when asked about specific expenditure items, fewer principals reported allocating additional funds as a result of NAPLAN. Twenty-nine percent of principals say they have allocated funding for preparation materials and thirty-three percent for teacher professional development for NAPLAN. It appears from these differing results that respondents may not be completely clear on the financial impact that NAPLAN testing is having on their school.

The Victorian results do not show expenditure greater than the average in relation to specific items. In contrast, more principals in Queensland report expenditure on preparation materials (forty-seven percent) and teacher professional development (forty-four percent). In a continuation of this pattern, thirty-four percent of Queensland principals have allocated funding for additional teacher hours surrounding NAPLAN, almost double the national average.

The findings are very similar for expenditure relating to funds for additional supervision and administration during NAPLAN periods, although there is considerable variance between different states.

When asked about other areas of expenditure concerning NAPLAN, ninety-five percent of respondents said there were no further expenses relating to NAPLAN. The five percent who nominated additional expenses identified the following:

- Student Support Officer time
- Funding to pay for the test papers
- Funding to analyse NAPLAN data
- Breakfast or food for students on NAPLAN days
- Funding for families to travel to sit NAPLAN tests.

Significantly, principals also pointed to the impact of the school's NAPLAN results on government funding received by that school.

These findings disturb APPA because these funds are being diverted from other curriculum areas.

The third unintended consequence that causes concern for APPA is the growth of publication and tutoring industries around NAPLAN. While these industries do not impact directly on schools they serve to make NAPLAN more visible to parents and the general public, and subject students to often expensive tutoring that would be more wisely deployed on enrichment or remediation activities.

(c) NAPLAN's impact on teaching and learning practices;

The CANVASS survey asked a number of questions about the impact of NAPLAN testing on curriculum and pedagogy. Eighty-one percent of the principal respondents believe that NAPLAN is having an impact on their school's Year 3 & 5 curricula. Fifty-two percent say it's having a slightly or significantly negative impact.

Looking at specific impacts on the curriculum, in the lead up to NAPLAN testing each year forty-four percent say their schools spend more time teaching literacy and numeracy each week to Years 3 and 5. Twenty-nine percent spend an additional one to three hours a week. Fifteen percent spend more than three additional hours per week.

The results show that Independent schools report less change to their curricula, while remote area schools seem to have more change to their curricula, and are impacted to a greater extent in the run-up to the NAPLAN testing period.

'Teachers, despite knowing that they should not be teaching to the tests, do alter the regular curriculum delivery to 'train' the students in the peculiarities of the tests. Much time is given over even in the previous year to NAPLAN, to enable the students to have the best opportunity to demonstrate their skills and knowledge.'

The impact of NAPLAN testing on time spent teaching non-NAPLAN-assessed subjects seems to be stronger. Fifty-seven percent of respondents say that their schools spend less time on those subjects in the run-up to NAPLAN tests each year. Of those, forty percent spend slightly less time (between one-three hours less) on non-NAPLAN subjects and seventeen percent spend significantly less time (more than three hours less) on them each week.

'In the lead up to NAPLAN, it becomes 'all about academia' and the social/emotional/spiritual aspects of learning seem to take a back seat.... NAPLAN limits our capacity to develop the non-NAPLAN aspects of holistic education.'

Thirty-five percent of respondents say that NAPLAN testing causes other impacts on the school curriculum at this time of year, the main one being increased stress on teachers. These comments typify those from respondents.

'Teachers worry about covering all the other areas. They try to integrate as much as possible.'

'With the stress of NAPLAN and the results for teachers, they spend a lot of time getting ready for the test and the curriculum suffers because of this, let alone the stress placed on teachers afterwards by trying to catch up. When this happens the curriculum is not taught to its full potential.'

'Despite my insistence, staff are spending time teaching in a manner which will have an impact on NAPLAN results. They do more testing, longer periods of work time, all designed as preparation for the three days of NAPLAN.'

'There is a degree of finger pointing at teachers of previous year levels if students achieve poorly or appear to lack preparation for the tests. This has a huge impact on staff teamwork and morale. The level of stress amongst the teachers in the term leading up to NAPLAN week is immense and directly impacts on many other more positive and constructive initiatives we have in place.'

NAPLAN testing can also be seen as inimical to the culture and philosophy of some schools.

'The testing environment is so different to the collaborative processes encouraged at our school. It is very unusual practice for our students.'

Respondents were asked about changes to the amount of rote learning in class in the run-up to NAPLAN testing each year. Thirty-four percent say that Year 3 and 5 classes now spend more time rote learning, but most say only slightly more.

More remote area school principals – more than double the average – report significant negative impacts on pedagogy in their classrooms in the run up to NAPLAN. Compared to the average, three times as many remote area schools spend much more time rote learning during that period.

Two-thirds of respondents reported that Year 3 & 5 class time is allocated towards preparation for the tests in the lead-up to NAPLAN each year.

'We don't allocate time for test preparation but classes do it anyway – and to excess. Staff and students are anxious about the results.'

When asked how many hours per week they allocate in the run-up to NAPLAN testing, half of the respondents said their schools allocate between one to three hours of class time per week. A further twelve percent allocate four to five hours per week on preparation. Very few allocate more time than that.

In terms of weeks of preparation prior to NAPLAN testing, there is no commonly adhered to starting date for preparations.

For the fifty-eight percent of schools that do spend class time preparing for NAPLAN, results were spread fairly evenly between one week and ten weeks. Twenty-eight percent allocate preparation time in the one to five weeks prior to the NAPLAN tests.

Around ten percent allocate time for NAPLAN preparation beginning six to nine weeks before the tests and a further nine percent start allocating time for preparation ten weeks out. Eleven percent allocate

preparation time more than ten weeks prior to the tests. Very few allocate time more than fifteen weeks out.

These data clearly indicate that NAPLAN testing is having an impact on teaching and learning in primary schools that, on balance, principals consider is negative.

(d) The impact on teaching and learning practices of publishing NAPLAN test results on the My School website;

Twenty-three percent of respondents to the CANVASS survey point to additional pedagogical impacts since the NAPLAN data began being published online. The main one noted by respondents is a greater focus on explicit, specific teaching and learning and more structured, formalised, teacher directed learning. These comments are typical:

'There is greater emphasis on teacher directed teaching rather than student self-directed learning.'

'There is a tendency to employ old-fashioned chalk and talk strategies, rather than child-centred inquiry. It's both positive and negative – more explicit teaching but less integrated learning i.e. a lot more skills taught out of context.'

'[NAPLAN] limits the students' involvement in their education in a personalised and integrated way. There is less time for individual assistance. Some teachers are concerned that it limits their abilities to be creative and innovative in the manner in which they facilitate and implement literacy and numeracy programs.'

'Co-operative learning, student-centred learning and higher order thinking are put on the back burner to cram in all the loose ends that may have been missed but which may be in the test.'

'As an inquiry school we find that the NAPLAN structure compromises our pedagogical approach. The actual testing procedure works in opposition to our regular classroom practice of open and shared questioning and learning.'

Also, APPA has concerns with the concept of schools' comparability based on them having statistically similar students. The complexity of school, family and community contexts makes APPA question the reliability of any comparisons made on this basis.

The reporting of these comparisons using colour codes that mask the numerical result causes confusion for parents, the general public and even members of the education profession. This confusion makes rational decision-making based on questionable NAPLAN data even more problematic. In view of this confusion, APPA believes the publication of NAPLAN scores only on school websites would meet the needs for accountability and improve clarity.

This is evidenced in the CANVASS survey by the sense of frustration principals from small and remote schools express about their schools' responses to NAPLAN reports. The CANVASS Report states that '(the)

negative impacts of NAPLAN appear to be felt the most by remote area and small schools around Australia.'

Generally, these schools have less experienced professional staff and greater mobility of teachers and school leaders and might be expected to respond to NAPLAN data in less nuanced ways than larger less remote schools.

(e) Potential improvements to the program, to improve student learning and assessment;

Given the stated ACARA objective that 'NAPLAN is the measure through which governments, education authorities, schools, teachers and parents can determine whether or not young Australians have the literacy and numeracy skills that provide the critical foundation for other learning and for their productive and rewarding participation in the community' then APPA believes greater consideration needs to be given to annual sample testing of Australian students. This methodology is used in the PISA, TIMMS and PIRLS assessment programs to provide data on students that is internationally accepted as accurate. NAPLAN sample testing would achieve this objective without loss of fidelity. In fact, there is evidence that, over time, sample testing provides more accurate data on student achievement than census testing.

The advantage of sample testing for Australian students is that it does not lead to any lasting negative impacts on their wellbeing.

The stated objective that, '(the) tests provide parents and schools with an understanding of how individual students are performing at the time of the tests' would be more successfully achieved if the results of NAPLAN tests were available to students in a more timely manner.

The United Kingdom, through the recommendations of the Bew Report, is moving to school-based assessment in some areas to assist in speeding up the availability of data for schools. Similarly, the online testing in South Carolina and Virginia is contributing to more rapid return of data to schools. Both these potential improvements to the program would have a positive influence on student learning.

First, the Bew Report in the UK has recommended several adjustments in relation to the standardised testing of some of the key skills. For example, writing, speaking and listening, and science will be subject to summative teacher assessment. The change to teacher judgment in writing is an attempt to build the quality of creativity from students. As well as providing immediately available results, this adjustment also fits with the general direction toward the acquisition of contemporary knowledge and skills.

Second, in Virginia schools are phasing out pen and paper tests. In 2013, online testing of the Virginia Statements of Learning (SOL) will be the main form of completion of these tests. Where students have a documented need for pen and paper testing, this method will be available.

The benefits of online testing for students and schools include:

- Faster return of student scores
- Increased instructional and remediation time due to timely return of student results
- Improved efficiency of data collection and management

- Increased accuracy of student data
- Increased security of test content and student data
- Reduced administrative burdens on school and division staff
- The ability to include ‘technology-enhanced’ items that allow students to indicate their responses in ways other than multiple choice that also may demonstrate critical-thinking skills.

This greater flexibility emerging in the United States is further enhanced with states now functioning with an assessment window to enable schools to plan when they will be best placed to carry out the external assessments. This lessens the high stakes element for schools. In South Carolina, schools plan for a six week period within an eight week window. Other states operate in a similar way. The South Carolina model also has a ‘pause function’ where students can stop completing the tests on a set day and can resume the test at a later time without being able to change the already recorded entries of their test.

APPA believes both these improvements – teacher judgment of student performance and assessment windows – should be incorporated into the NAPLAN testing program.

ACARA points out that, ‘NAPLAN tests are one aspect of each school’s assessment and reporting process, and do not replace the extensive, ongoing assessments made by teachers about each student’s performance.’

In the CANVASS survey primary principals were asked a series of questions regarding assessment practices:

- i. **Which assessment practices used by your school provide aggregated data for your school?**
- ii. **Of those, which (if any) would you recommend for use across Australians schools, and why?**
- iii. **If you would like APPA to contact you to discuss the approach your school takes to such assessments, please provide contact details.**

The first two questions resulted in voluminous amounts of information from respondents. Almost ten per cent of respondents volunteered their contact details for further discussion with APPA about assessment practices.

In terms of the assessment practices used by primary schools, the leading categories were:

- Commercial Standardised Tests (approximately forty examples provided)
- Commercial Scales and Inventories (approximately eighty examples provided)
- School-based Tests and Other Assessments (approximately eighty examples provided)
- Unattributed Assessment Types (approximately forty examples provided)

This is clear evidence that primary teachers are routinely gathering normed data about their students. APPA believes making use of this data in a national assessment program is necessary for a complete and accurate picture of student achievement.

(f) International best practice for standardised testing, and international case studies about the introduction of standardised testing;

APPA believes the exceptional success of the Finnish system over an extended period of time is based in part upon the trust successive Finnish governments and the people of Finland have placed in teacher professionalism. This includes teachers' ability to assess and report student achievement accurately. The Finland education system is quite different to most others in the world. APPA has noted these elements:

- Finland has developed its own vision of educational and social change connected to inclusiveness and creativity, rather than using a standardised testing model that has been used elsewhere.
- The system relies on high quality, well-trained teachers with strong academic qualifications, who enter the profession with a societal focus and mission. Schools provide an autonomous and supportive environment for teachers to develop professionally.
- The system has an inclusive special education strategy where nearly half the students in Finland will have received some special education support before reaching Year 9.
- The Finnish system has developed teacher capacity to be collectively responsible for developing curriculum and diagnostic assessments instead of prescribed curriculum and standardised high stakes testing.
- Finland has linked educational reform to the creative development of economic competitiveness, social cohesion, inclusiveness and shared community within the wider society.

Finland has been successful in PISA, PIRLS, and TIMSS over the last decade. APPA believes this success arises from the trust mentioned earlier. Greater valuing of teacher professionalism and use of teacher judgments about student achievement would strengthen the National Assessment Program.

(g) Other related matters

APPA advocates for changes to a number of aspects of the National Assessment Program.

First, the cost to schools of diagnostic testing of students could be much lower if a freely available bank of test instruments were available online. Given proper safeguards, the data gathered as a result of schools using these instruments could be aggregated to provide information on the achievements of Australian students.

Second, the guidelines on student support during administration of the test must be altered to account for the age of students and the variability of their needs. This issue could be addressed very simply if teachers were trusted to interpret more general instructions to assist students as required without providing them with any 'competitive' advantage.

Third, the capacity of online testing to use activities such as simulations to test higher order thinking skills must be exploited. Testing higher order thinking skills would be more cost effective if sample testing were introduced.

Fourth, the National Assessment Program must be altered in ways that makes it more inclusive of the diversity of peoples and cultures that make up our nation. Through dialogue with Indigenous school

principals represented by APPA the following has been highlighted in regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students:

- The test is culturally biased in the use of language, structure and organisation.
- NAPLAN causes unnecessary stress to those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students whose first language is not English.
- NAPLAN results do not reflect the complexities and validity of the context for Indigenous communities.
- NAPLAN has been viewed as an imposed initiative similar to the Northern Territory 'Intervention'.
- NAPLAN does not improve learning outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in any context.

Additionally, APPA is concerned about the increasing numbers of students being withdrawn from the National Assessment Program each year. We believe there needs to be a comprehensive investigation into the reasons behind this trend and any necessary adjustments to the program made as a result.

Conclusion

The CANVASS survey states, '(throughout) the results, there are a number of consistent trends. The most obvious is that primary principals have differing views on most of the impacts of NAPLAN testing according to the location, size and sector of their school. Broadly, around half observe NAPLAN impacts and half do not.' While APPA accepts this qualifier, we believe that the number of principals expressing concerns, and the level of those concerns, is more than sufficient when combined with other evidence as justification for this submission.

In addition to what is implicit in this submission we urge the Governments of Australia to implement the following actions:

1. Employ sample testing to achieve the objectives of NAPLAN wherever possible and consult widely with the profession before considering any expansion of the National Assessment Program.
2. Improve the administration of existing NAPLAN tests to include teacher judgements as part of the assessment; more timely reports to schools, parents and students; student support arrangements based on their individual needs; and, the provision of an 'assessment window' for students to sit the tests.
3. Implement online testing that incorporates an 'assessment window', pause function and capacity to test higher order thinking.
4. Investigate the harm to student wellbeing caused by NAPLAN testing, with particular reference to students in small and remote schools, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Improve NAPLAN administration and reporting arrangements to eliminate any harmful impacts on student wellbeing.

5. Provide clear and unambiguous guidelines for schools and parents that detail appropriate test preparation activities and the amount of time that should be devoted to them.
6. Improve the way NAPLAN data is reported to minimise improper use of those data and confusion for parents, schools and community.
7. Prevent the use of NAPLAN data for purposes for which is not fit.
8. Trust teachers to assess student achievement through, for example, the provision of affordable online diagnostic instruments that provide data on the achievement levels of Australian students.

APPA believes NAPLAN testing, because of the way it is reported and the way its data are used, has become high stakes. This has resulted in negative impacts on student wellbeing. Actions such as these will address the concerns of primary school principals.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Norm Hart', with a stylized, cursive script.

Norm Hart
APPA President



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The Reporting and Use of NAPLAN

APPA supports the use of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) because the test results provide schools with standardised diagnostic information about the performance of students. However, problems can arise from using national tests when the stakes are high, that is, where serious consequences for system officials, principals and teachers hinge on the results.

APPA has developed the following principles to ensure that the reporting and use of NAPLAN has a beneficial impact on primary education and that the potential negative effects are nullified.

The Reporting and Use of NAPLAN

Overarching Principles Governing The Reporting and Use of NAPLAN

1. *Making informed and balanced judgments*

Global judgments about the performance of systems and schools should be based on multiple sources of reliable evidence that pertain to all of the key socio-emotional and academic goals of schooling.

Though public statements about school NAPLAN results are sometimes prefaced with the observation that they form only one piece of evidence about the performance of a school, this caveat is commonly disregarded in practice. The situation is exacerbated when governments and system officials act as though NAPLAN is a sufficiently accurate indicator of a school's performance on which to base important personnel and policy decisions.

The solution, however, is not to be found in developing more quantitative indicators, or to turn to value added statistical models, but to develop appropriate professional appraisal mechanisms. This should be a school system, rather than Australian government responsibility.

2. *Recognising the complexity of factors shaping school performance*

The reporting of NAPLAN results should be undertaken in a way that recognises that there are many systemic and local factors that mediate the performance of students on NAPLAN and which invalidate simple comparisons of school performance.

Many principals found the 'like school' comparisons of school performance based only on the ICSEA scale to be misleading. The ICSEA scale, derived from census collector district data, does not produce results that are fine-tuned enough to yield an accurate score for all schools. As a consequence, in 2010 it misrepresented differences in the intake for schools that were supposedly alike.

By relying solely on ICSEA to identify 'like schools', MySchool also ignored important factors that explain the performance of schools.

MySchool should be developed as a tool for inquiry rather than as a notice board on which to post school results. The 'like schools' concept should be abandoned. Instead, principals and other interested parties should be able to use the website to compare their school's results on many factors other than ICSEA, for example, size, geographic location, level of resourcing, and staffing.

The Reporting and Use of NAPLAN

Overarching Principles Governing The Reporting and Use of NAPLAN

3. *Using rewards and sanctions ethically*

National, state and school system regimes of rewards and sanctions related to NAPLAN performance should comply with explicit, publicly available guidelines.

Governments are allocating reward funding totaling hundreds of millions of dollars to states and territories that achieve performance targets. This is leading to downward pressure on schools to improve NAPLAN results at all costs.

In some systems principals report that line managers are transmitting this pressure in ways that are threatening and unprofessional. Because so much kudos is being assigned to schools with 'good' NAPLAN results, a climate is emerging where, in the absence of clear guidelines that can be invigilated, unethical practices are being adopted in order to inflate the school's NAPLAN results.

MCEECDYA should issue guidelines that clearly specify what states, systems and schools may, and may not, do to enhance their NAPLAN results.

4. *Redressing erroneous imputations of performance*

Schools should have the capacity to challenge inferences drawn from NAPLAN results about their performance that they believe to be misleading and damaging to their reputation.

It was clear from the initial response to the release of the 2009 NAPLAN results on the MySchool website that governments were unable or unwilling to intervene when the media published grossly simplistic results or even misinterpreted the results pertaining to individual schools. Once stories have appeared in the media it is almost impossible to have them retracted. Schools have little comeback and must bear the reputational consequences.

It is unreasonable to expect each school to deal with such events. MCEECDYA should establish an independent ombudsman with the capacity to quickly follow up complaints from schools.

The Reporting and Use of NAPLAN

Overarching Principles Governing The Reporting and Use of NAPLAN

5. *Reviewing the effects of NAPLAN on schools*

An independent body should monitor the impact of NAPLAN with a view to mitigating any unintended and perverse consequences.

Overseas evidence indicates that the high stakes attached to the NAPLAN results are likely to produce a gradual narrowing of the curriculum because schools will be pressured to give greater emphasis to the subject matter that is tested. Further, pedagogy can be negatively influenced and standards, contrary to expectation, may fall.

MCEECDYA should appoint a small, independent group to monitor the implementation of MySchool and report to it on an annual basis. The group should be funded appropriately in order to enable it to achieve this task. The independence of the group should be made unambiguous given the vested interests that are likely to want NAPLAN and MySchool shown only in the best possible light.

6. *Making NAPLAN fully transparent*

All facets of the NAPLAN assessment and reporting system, other than the identification of students, should be fully transparent.

The current protocols adopted by MCEECDYA for NAPLAN properly protect the privacy of students. However, they are unduly restrictive insofar as they deny ready access to researchers and policy analysts to information regarding the development of the tests, their properties, and other aspects of the information contained on the website. It should be possible for any qualified researcher to be given ready access to the de-identified data to replicate findings reported by ACARA, undertake new analyses, and use the NAPLAN data base as a powerful research tool. This kind of use should be actively encouraged.

The Reporting and Use of NAPLAN

Examples of Perverse Effects from 2010 NAPLAN Tests

The research evidence from the United States and Great Britain clearly shows that high stakes assessment program, such as NAPLAN, can have an unintended, negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning. In particular:

- Schools narrow the curriculum around the focus of the tests and areas of the curriculum that are not assessed are diminished.
- Large amounts of valuable instructional time are consumed by coaching and practising tests.
- A testing industry grows which is driven by its own commercial interests.
- Schools are encouraged to participate in various forms of 'gaming' designed to improve performance.

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The following examples of perverse effects already evident from the 2010 NAPLAN tests sound a clear warning about the potential direction in which we are heading in Australia. Whilst so far only a small number of cases have been reported, it is important that inappropriate practices are sanctioned. Schools must be protected from such negative consequences.

1. Some line managers exerted pressure on principals to improve their test results at all costs without taking into account what the school has been doing to improve the students' performance and the particular factors that have made progress so challenging. As a consequence, principals reported feeling unfairly "threatened" if they failed to treat raising the average test performance as their absolute goal. It was implied that their job would be on the line if the school's results did not improve.
2. Some schools were required by their line manager to lift their results by a certain percentage. These schools then identified the students most likely to show improvement if given extra assistance. They then allocated their resources to this select group of students. Other students with greater needs did not receive as much attention for the first five months of the year until the completion of the NAPLAN tests.

Examples of Perverse Effects from 2010 NAPLAN Tests

3. To improve test results, some schools spent a significant amount of time on test preparation techniques, allocating test practice as homework for their students. This has consumed valuable time that should have been spent on literacy and numeracy and other important areas of the primary curriculum.
4. A plethora of commercial products have been produced and are now available from retail outlets. Schools are also being contacted by companies offering to test their children and provide the results prior to NAPLAN. Assessment of this kind is often inappropriate and can undermine good teaching.
5. Some parents became very anxious and had their children spend a great deal of time at home practising for the test. They can now buy tests at supermarkets and, by administering them, unintentionally heighten their anxiety and confuse their children.
6. There have been media reports that some schools have encouraged parents to keep their children at home on test day if the school judged that the student would not perform well in the tests.
7. Some children became anxious on the test days (in particular Year 3s). Some became stressed, ended up in tears, gave up, went home, were upset that they did not complete the task, reported they felt ill, etc. There may be negative, longer term consequences for these young students.
8. A small number of teachers have provided assistance to students while sitting the tests to improve their test results, in some cases arguing that the students knew the answers but were confused or overly anxious on the day.
9. Some schools are being pushed to extraordinary lengths to anticipate what is in the test and to teach those aspects which are awarded the most marks and ignore other aspects. For example, a school found out that the students would only lose two points if they ignored the stimulus picture in the writing task. Students practised a piece of writing which they were encouraged to replicate in the test, irrespective of the stimulus picture, so they could maximise their scores. It was reported that a system line manager spoke to a group of principals endorsing this technique.
10. A principal reported that his year 3 and 5 teachers had found the pressure of the tests too much and have already requested a change of year level for 2011.

These examples show why the Australian Primary principals Association is concerned that without appropriate guidelines NAPLAN testing may eventually undermine the quality of primary education.



NAPLAN Reporting Review Submission

Written and submitted by
Catholic School Parents Victoria
14th March 2019

Catholic School Parents Victoria
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Catholic School Parents Victoria (CSPV)

Review of NAPLAN Reporting

14th March 2019

Catholic School Parents Victoria (CSPV) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission for the NAPLAN Reporting Review 2019.

Catholic School Parents Victoria represents parents of students in Victorian Catholic schools at diocesan, state and national levels, through member schools with school boards, or where none exist, through school-based parent support groups.

Catholic School Parents Victoria addresses key issues that are important to Catholic school parents and seek to highlight parents' perspectives on these.

The key areas of focus for Catholic School Parents Victoria are,

Parent Engagement in:

- Child Safety
- Wellbeing
- Curriculum
- Catholic Community

Parent Leadership in:

- Parent Engagement
- School Funding
- National Issues (Victorian representatives of Catholic School Parents Australia)

Catholic School Parents Victoria speaks from a perspective of parents who value education in the Catholic faith and tradition for their children, but also as interested Victorian and Australian citizens.

Throughout this review paper we have used the term '*parent*', this term is used to include natural, adoptive or foster parents, guardians and caregivers of students.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Rachel Saliba".

Rachel Saliba
Executive Officer
Catholic School Parents Victoria



Catholic School Parents Victoria contribution to education

Catholic School Parents Victoria has contributed to education as representatives of parent perspective in education reform in Victoria over the past 11 years.

In 2016, Catholic School Parents Victoria was invited to contribute to the Initial Teacher Education Reforms in response to the discussion paper '*Working Together to Shape Teacher Education in Victoria*'

During 2017 Catholic School Parents Victoria participated in a review of the Victorian Institute of Teaching resulting in various changes to the organisation responsible for the registration of teachers in Victoria.

Having reflected on the progress of the reforms and subsequent reports stemming from the reviews thus far, CSPV would like to expand on the points raised in our initial submissions and explore opportunities to contribute further to the implementation of various new initiatives in education, not only across Victoria but throughout Australia.

Catholic School Parents Victoria has also previously contributed to education reform in Victoria and throughout Australia through our association with Catholic School Parents Australia through the following submissions:

- 2016-2018 – CSPA Research Project in collaboration with ARACY, University of Southern Queensland, Department of Education and Training – *Re-energising parent engagement in primary and secondary schools*.
- 2018 National Schools Resourcing Board Review of SES
- 2018 VCAA Review of minimum standards in senior secondary literacy and numeracy
- 2018 Optimising STEM Industry-school partnerships: Inspiring Australia's next generation
- 2017 Federal Government Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools
- 2017 Review of Victorian Institute of Teaching
- 2017 Independent Review into Regional Rural and Remote Education
- 2016 Victorian DET Initial Teacher Education Submission
- 2016 VCE Text Review Submission
- 2016 National Education Evidence Base

Catholic School Parents Victoria would like to present this review paper for consideration related to NAPLAN reporting for parents of children in Catholic schools.



Statement of Purpose

Catholic School Parents Victoria provides this submission for the review of NAPLAN Reporting for parents to:

- support and improve the capacity of parents to interpret information related to NAPLAN results to benefit their child's learning improvement
- improve parent understanding of the data and how it will be used by their school to improve student learning
- Highlight the need for NAPLAN to be less about filtering enrolment applications or the need for comparisons across Australian schools. NAPLAN reporting for parents must be about their individual child's learning progress, highlighting that this is just one assessment among many others to determine further learning needs of children.
- to highlight that NAPLAN is not a specific measure of a school's effectiveness nor is it a basis for parents in choosing a school or a child's overall ability for learning
- to encourage ACARA to provide an explanation of the actual purpose of the My School website and why parents should use it and how it is related to improved learning outcomes for their child.

The areas of focus for this review paper are:

1. Perceptions of NAPLAN and My School data, including the potential for misinterpretation or misuse of data;
2. How My School and NAPLAN reporting contribute to understanding of student progress and achievement;
3. How schools use achievement data, including NAPLAN, to inform teaching; and
4. How My School and NAPLAN data are reported to students and parents.



CATHOLIC SCHOOL PARENTS VICTORIA SUBMISSION

Catholic School Parents Victoria (CSPV) welcomes the opportunity to provide parent perspective on the various questions related to the reporting of NAPLAN as representatives of parents of children in Catholic schools:

Perceptions of NAPLAN and My School data, including the potential for misinterpretation or misuse of data

Does the NAPLAN data currently available on the My School website provide an appropriate balance between the right to high quality information and the possibility of misinterpretation or misuse?

Since the introduction of NAPLAN into the annual timetable of schools throughout Australia, certain perceptions have been created and influenced through various media channels, and in some cases by teachers, placing emphasis on the importance of the assessment. Combined with the use of the My School website to compare schools, this has in many ways created a skewed view in how parents interpret the quality of a school and the progress of student learning.

The influence of the media on public perceptions of the purpose of NAPLAN and the unnecessary stress it has or could cause students has perpetuated into a fear that has had a ripple effect that no other test in schools has ever seen. While students are often tested at school through various assessments to determine their learning progress, NAPLAN has become a central focus and target of the media with an unnecessary sensationalised approach that in itself has perhaps caused more stress than the actual test itself.

Many principals have applauded the introduction of the assessment due to the extra data it provides for them to use as an additional reference point for improvement in student literacy and numeracy attainment levels. What the assessment has exposed for parents, however, is how far children have slipped in these most important areas and that there is cause for concern, particularly in the first few years of secondary schooling where results seem to slide. For parents it has provided some transparency with the revelation that standards have decreased. This has also provided a catalyst for parents to have higher expectations of our teachers and of schools to do something about it. This is not a negative outcome for parents, however how these expectations are communicated by parents and met by educators can cause issues particularly if data is misinterpreted.

NAPLAN provides useful diagnostic data to inform teacher planning towards tailoring curriculum delivery for individual student learning. As a standardised test, NAPLAN also provides useful individual and cohort trend data every two years across Year 3 - Year 5 - Year 7 - Year 9.

CSPV believes that NAPLAN data should not be used to filter school enrolment applications. Unfortunately, with the introduction of the My School website, this has been the case.



CSPV understand that My School was initially designed for use by government, governing and educational authorities as well as school leaders to monitor and study data and progression of the learning standards of students over time. The website itself states that parents can use the site to find information about each of Australia's schools. This is not necessarily an activity most parents would need to partake in nor have the time to do. The purpose of the site doesn't really relate to how parents might use the information provided.

The use of the My School website to view NAPLAN scores as an indicator of what constitutes a 'good school' has perhaps been the greatest misuse and misinterpretation of information. Once in the hands of the public, however, the My School website was suddenly providing transparency for parents they had sought but never received. The information on the site was then able to be taken advantage of by some, even by certain schools who use NAPLAN results as a marketing tool to boost enrolments. This then presents a different perception for parents of what a school has to offer their child with an overemphasis on academia and only one test as a gauge of student and school success.

Whilst NAPLAN data is most useful in conjunction with other data within any one school to assist with school improvement, it should never have been used as a means of competing with other schools. The constant attention by the media should be cause for concern for schools particularly if this is the only source for information parents are receiving about NAPLAN. Communication between home and school is critical so there are no alarm bells or fears being perpetuated by misinformation from external sources. Parent engagement in understanding the purpose of NAPLAN and how to interpret the data once received should be the focus of schools rather than parents forming perceptions based on news stories and not understanding what their child's NAPLAN results actually mean.

Is there anything you find difficult to understand or is there any different NAPLAN information you would like to see included on My School?

The ICSEA value of a school is difficult to interpret and the way it is determined is cause for concern. Use of parental occupation, how many children are from ESL background and how many indigenous students attend a school to indicate a school's educational advantage is emphasising that schools are valued by the quality of their families and NAPLAN results. This doesn't consider the overall culture of a school or the rich teaching and learning being implemented in each school. Therefore, comparison by scores is not a true indicator of what that school experience might be like for a child. CSPV would question what the purpose is of comparing a school based on these elements? What is the My School website aiming to achieve by providing this information for parents?

Information related to each school is provided through a link to a schools website so there would be no need for the My School website to contain such detailed information for each school. What could be included though is a statement from ACARA to ensure the data being interpreted is not in any way a persuasive tool. The information being provided needs to be relevant to parents and have a purpose. If the purpose is not clearly stated, parents will use the information as they wish and base decisions on school value on information that isn't reflective of the school itself. Encouraging parents to visit schools and discuss what the school can do for their child and their learning should be



included on the My School website along with an explanation of how to use the data provided to make a more informed decision.

The interpretation of data is not necessarily a skill that all parents have the capacity to do. The information provided is often irrelevant and too complex for parents to decipher to make a good judgement on how well a school is performing or in making a decision to choose one school over another. The data is not always current either, particularly enrolments and staff numbers as the population in some schools is transient. Much of the information requires further reading to understand how to interpret data and most parents would not have the time or the need to do this.

Some feedback from a parent suggested that "As a parent you need to allow yourself considerable time to fully understand the following:

- Operating the system correctly,
- Understanding / reading the data correctly
- What to do with the data once collected.

While the site does contain explanations/guidance on how to use the website, a walk through with the school would be beneficial for parents of children in year level 3."

Whilst the My School website does give an overall picture of a school's population and past results, CSPV believe that NAPLAN results should be provided in a way that is easy for parents to understand, using language that is easily understood for the purpose of indicating an individual child's results which they receive from the school. Emphasis must be on improvement for each individual child, not for use as a comparison of schools on a public website that is open to misinterpretation of the true nature of a school and its overall teaching philosophy, culture and approach to student learning.

When viewing NAPLAN results, the numbers are provided but then there is no explanation for parents in what they could or should do with the information they are receiving:

An example from another parent was, "my child's school has a score of 452 in year 3 reading which on the graph is indicating it is substantially above 'like schools'. Yet Year 5 reading score is 481 which is considered below other 'like schools'. This is particularly confusing as it is difficult to know how to interpret this information or how it relates to my child and their education progress."

"When viewing results in bands, it is difficult to interpret the data and then to understand what to do with that information. If I click on the link 'interpreting the data' the graphic doesn't explain how to interpret the data or what to do with the information. The site therefore is not really relevant or particularly user-friendly for parents."

Is the explanatory material on My School around "statistically similar schools" sufficiently explained, easy to understand and does this support fair comparisons for schools?

Use of data to compare schools can unfairly disadvantage many great schools who are trying to increase their enrolments and improve student learning. This can then provide an unfair advantage for



other schools within the same geographical area. When parents are looking for a school there are so many other important factors for parents that are relevant for the decision-making process than data.

Whilst CSPV understand this was not necessarily the initial purpose of the website, it has become a website with a different purpose which does not provide a fair comparison of schools. Schools are more than data, they are about people and community, they are about children ultimately who are more than just their academic results. The emphasis on performance of a school based on data has contributed to a change in the culture of how some parents view schools. This is not always fair on educators or the school communities who are working extremely hard to improve student learning and increase their enrolments as the data doesn't reflect the human aspect of a school community or the learning that is actually happening each day.

What consideration should be given to comparisons over time and between schools while schools progressively transition to NAPLAN online?

The comparison of schools places more pressure on students to do well in NAPLAN as many a school's reputation and enrolments have become dependent on this. These are adult issues that have been inflicted on students, often causing anxiety that impacts student wellbeing. This may not have been then intention initially, but this has been the result in some schools.

The transition to NAPLAN online should still be focussed on individual student progress and while CSPV understand the need to compare over a period of 7 years, it should be explained to parents, the differences between the written and online tests and how they both assess the learning of each child. This explanation should explain what assessors actually look for and how schools can use the data to improve each child's learning.

Communication with parents as to whether their child is participating in the written or online test is important, however how accurate the comparison will be is yet to be determined. There may be some concerns from parents that their child will be disadvantaged if they haven't had the opportunity to sit the online test yet. It's important to not place too much emphasis on comparisons between the haves and have nots in this case as it comes down to the individual results being one of many tools to use to determine areas for improvement in student learning. CSPV has received information from VCAA that 44% of schools will be providing the online test for students in Victoria, 56% of schools will still be implementing the written test for various reasons. This should not be seen as a disadvantage so ACARA as well as communication from Principals in schools will need to ensure this is communicated with parents.

When it comes to comparing a child's progress over the 7 years, many parents would not have been briefed or included in discussions about how to support children's learning at home, otherwise known as parent engagement in learning. It would be beneficial if parents were provided with an understanding of interpreting the NAPLAN report they receive to then be able to discuss learning needs of their child with their teacher to then determine how they can provide support at home.



How My School and NAPLAN contribute to understanding of student progress and achievement.

To what extent do schools and school systems use NAPLAN student progress and achievement data, including comparisons with statistically similar schools, to inform their school improvement strategies?

CSPV question to what extent whole-population assessment data is necessary to meet school systems' and governments' need for sound information to support school improvement? The Catholic system in Victoria utilises other data collection methods to assess areas for school improvement, alongside NAPLAN data and other assessment methods as a combined approach to school improvement. Catholic Education Melbourne has also developed their own matrix for whole school improvement that provides a broader picture of what is required to improve a school.

To our knowledge this doesn't rely on NAPLAN results for the improvement of student learning outcomes but a broader approach to overall school culture, teaching and learning improvement integrated with Catholic identity and school leadership and teacher development as well as working in partnership with parents.

To what extent is NAPLAN data and the My School website used to inform teaching?

CSPV does not speak on behalf of teachers but we understand that NAPLAN is most often used in conjunction with internal data that is collected and depending on each school, there may be more emphasis on the internal data, such as the schools own testing, rather than only NAPLAN results.

Feedback from parents indicates that schools are only using the information as small part of the overall picture of a student's learning journey, "I believe schools review the data to get a snap shot of where the students are at, does this actually influence their teaching – not sure? I believe schools are more about teaching to the individual."

CSPV believe that one of the purposes of NAPLAN results should be to indicate critical areas for improvement in teaching and teacher training as well as act as a guide for further professional development of teachers in general. There needs to be more focus on providing resources to support educators and schools to improve the teaching of literacy and numeracy for children across all schools.

Quality pre-service training is critical particularly for the early foundational years of primary schooling where teachers need further training as specialist teachers of literacy and numeracy integrated throughout the curriculum.

Teachers are expected to teach across a broad curriculum which may result in less emphasis on a specific focus in literacy and numeracy. The need to cover everything in the curriculum could cause some teachers to spend less time on improving critical literacy and numeracy skills, particularly with the increase in children with additional learning needs. Teachers are also not equipped with the skills to engage parents as partners in learning to strengthen literacy and numeracy skills at home. This is a missed opportunity for improvement in overall teaching practice and student learning.



Which assessment tools, approaches and data analytics services do schools and school systems use to inform teaching?

Most schools undertake a range of tests and follow up data analytics to inform teaching and learning. ACER testing including PAT-M and PAT-R tests are commonly used and schools/systems are likely to have benchmarks as part of goal setting in place re these tests. Various other tests regarding reading, writing, numeracy and spelling seem to be commonly undertaken in many schools and make up a data plan to inform teaching and learning.

These may include:

- Assessment upon student entry to school
- Transfer statement from early childhood centre or kindergarten
- PAT testing
- Reading recovery intervention
- INSIGHT assessment program; shared cross-sectoral DET platform
- English Online – prep interview to assess reading ability

It would seem that it is highly varied regarding the degree to which individual teachers are able to utilise these data, however it is increasingly an expectation of schools and systems that all teachers will utilise such evidence to inform their decision making/planning. The significant change in use of data for assessing student additional needs is particularly important and a skill that teachers will need now and into the future.

Other schools are now using elements of visible learning and learning sprints to provide differentiated teaching and learning assessment where students don't necessarily know they are being tested as such – it is a part of the learning process and experience. This type of learning puts less pressure on students to be compared, instead to be assessing themselves against their own learning, where they are improving and where they need to get to next through regular and purposeful feedback.

What opportunities are there to improve the timeliness of NAPLAN reporting?

Delivering the results of NAPLAN seems to have become an urgent requirement for parents and some schools who perhaps rely more on NAPLAN results for improvement of teaching practices than others. The urgency for parents in receiving results may have come about through a requirement for NAPLAN results to be available for inclusion with applications for secondary school or so parents are informed of their child's progress sooner rather than later. If the latter is the case, there may be issues in how often parents are informed of their child's progress and how. The timeliness of reporting NAPLAN will really depend on the need, how results will be communicated with parents and for what purpose. The release of the results should really be a timely opportunity for understanding how together teachers and parents can focus on the child's strengths as well as support the child's learning improvement.



How My School and NAPLAN data are reported to students and parents

To what extent do schools communicate individual, whole school and comparative NAPLAN data to students, parents and families?

CSPV understand that parents in the Catholic system receive the printed data report related to their own child and in some schools there may be further communication of comparative data. It really is up to each individual school how they communicate with parents and how much more information they share. There may be some parents who would visit the My School website to find out further information, however most parents' focus would most likely be on their own child and their individual improvement through their school report and face to face meetings with the teachers.

Feedback from parents varies in terms of the value they place on NAPLAN as part of their child's reporting, "As a family I find the information from my daughters' NAPLAN interesting but don't place much value on it. It is simply a piece in the puzzle of their learning, a snapshot. I worry that some schools and families place an unnecessary importance on the results of students."

To what extent do parents and families use NAPLAN data on My School to make informed judgements, make choices and engage with their children's education?

CSPV understand that parents may use the My School website to make a decision about which schools they may be interested in exploring further but the data alone would not be the only reason for choosing a school. There are many and varied reasons for parents' choice of school. In saying this, the My School website has provided parents with further transparency of information about different schools but this would only be one small element in their decision-making process.

What NAPLAN reporting information do students need in order to contribute to their own education?

CSPV believe that students should be able to view and to understand their own results but to also be informed with feedback on where they have done well and what they need to improve. They should be provided with the opportunity to express what they found challenging and areas they feel they need support.

Using the data in a positive way for the purpose of assessment in the first place would mean there is less emphasis on the specific results of NAPLAN and more focus on where we (parents and teachers) can support children to improve in their learning.

Children need to have an understanding prior to sitting the test of its purpose in a language that young children from grade 3 and above understand in a context that is relevant to them. It is unnecessary for teachers to place any pressure on children sitting the test and it should be treated as any other test or formal assessment at school is treated. This will ensure children are less anxious about being judged on their performance and are encouraged to just do their best.