

Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into the Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy

DEEWR Question No. 1

Senator Wright provided in writing.

Question

What is the total cost of developing, administering and reporting on the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing, to the Commonwealth government?

Answer

The Australian Government has contributed \$12.175 million over the 2011-12 financial year to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) budget. This funding enables ACARA to deliver on all aspects of its letter of expectation, including managing the national aspects of NAPLAN testing (test development, analysis and reporting of results at the national level) on behalf of the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood.

Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into the Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy

DEEWR Question No. 2

Senator Wright provided in writing.

Question

What costs (of developing, administering and reporting on the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing) are borne by state and territory governments?

Answer

ACARA is funded 50 per cent by the Australian Government and 50 per cent by the states and territories of Australia, with each state and territory government contributing an amount based on the relative student numbers within its jurisdiction.

Administration and delivery of NAPLAN tests, including printing, distribution and marking of test papers, and the printing and distribution of student reports is the responsibility of the relevant test administration authority in each state and territory. This obligation to meet the delivery costs is a requirement of the current National Education Agreement under which the Commonwealth provides general recurrent funds to state and territory governments.

Further information on costs incurred by state and territory governments may be obtained by contacting the Test Administration Authorities. Contact details are available at <http://www.nap.edu.au/contacts/contact-test-administration-authorities.html> The Test Administration Authorities are responsible for the administration and delivery of NAPLAN tests, including printing, distribution and marking of test papers, as well as preparation and distribution of data packages to schools and student reports to parents/carers.

Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into The Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy

DEEWR Question No. 3

Senator Wright provided in writing.

Question

What is the cost of operating the *My School* website, in each year from 2010-11 to the current financial year; and estimated over the forward estimates?

Answer

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations has transferred this question to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority for response.

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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into The Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy

DEEWR Question No. 4

Senator Wright provided in writing.

Question

In return, what value is being obtained by the collection of results? Many submissions to this inquiry have suggested literacy and numeracy could be better improved by spending the money allocated for NAPLAN into teacher development. What is your response to this?

Answer

There is considerable value in the collection of student literacy and numeracy results.

The advent of the *My School* website has, for the first time, provided Australia with nationally-comparable data and a single source of data on all schools. This allows the performance of all schools to be monitored in relation to their operating context and resources. Instances of under-performance, as well as schools performing better than expected, can be highlighted. It also provides a basis for analysis of policy options and rational and equitable distribution of national resources.

As well as benefitting policy makers, publishing NAPLAN results publicly is intended to build pressure for change in school communities. It is designed to achieve this by placing parents and the broader community in the same position as education officials in having access to the national data.

Quality Teaching

There is substantial evidence that confirms that high quality teaching is important in improving learning outcomes for students and teacher quality is the most significant influence on student achievement within the school setting. The Australian Government's investment in NAPLAN has not diverted attention or funding to promote teacher quality. The Government has invested in a number of significant national reforms to strengthen teacher quality through the \$550 million Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership.

This has included the development and implementation of the following initiatives:

- Australian Professional Standards for Teachers;
- a nationally consistent approach to teacher registration;
- the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework;
- the option for our best teachers to seek certification at the Highly Accomplished and Lead levels of the Standards; and
- a national approach to the accreditation of teaching degrees through the Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs: Standards and Procedures.

Further details can be found at www.aitsl.edu.au.

Implementation of these reforms will be embedded in the National Education Reform Agreement. In addition, states and territories will be required to commit to a number of new signature reforms to improve teacher quality as a condition of signing up to the new school

funding model. These include a range of measures to lift the quality of new and beginning teachers such as:

- enhanced selection and admissions processes for entry into teacher education courses;
- a mandatory literacy and numeracy assessment to be made part of every teaching degree;
- measures to increase the quality of classroom practicum; and
- a national approach to supporting beginning teachers through strengthened induction and mentoring programs.

The Australian Government will continue to work with states and territories as well as the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership to ensure quality teaching remains at the forefront of school reform.

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Inquiry into The Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy

DEEWR Question No. 5

Senator Wright provided in writing.

Question

A submission from Aitken College in Victoria says the administrative and staffing costs of NAPLAN testing are 'inordinate'. Many other schools have raised the same concerns that no additional funding is provided.

- a) What is the Department's estimate of costs to schools, with respect to staffing and administration?
- b) Should provision be made to cover the cost of coordinating the tests?

Answer

The Department is unable to estimate costs to schools.

The *Schools Assistance Act 2008* (the Act), the legislation under which Commonwealth funding for non-government schools is provided for the 2009–2013 funding period, includes a set of reporting requirements for non-government schools focused on ensuring appropriate accountability to government, parents and the community. The requirements arise from the National Education Agreement made by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), and parallel those for government schools.

The Act and accompanying Schools Assistance Regulations place the following five obligations on schools: to participate in national testing; to provide performance information for national reports on the outcomes of schooling; to provide individual school information to enable nationally-comparable information about each school to be made publicly available; to provide 'plain language' student reports to parents; and to publish a school annual report for parents and the community.

These obligations are set out in the funding agreements entered into by each non-government school and system authority receiving Commonwealth funding for the 2009–2013 funding period.

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Inquiry into The Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy

DEEWR Question No. 6

Senator Wright provided in writing.

Question

It is apparent in the submissions to this inquiry is that there is confusion and inconsistent statements about the purpose of NAPLAN.

For example:

According to then ACARA Chief Executive Peter Hill (October 2010):

The purpose of national testing has been to get a snapshot of student performance for reporting back at different levels. That was the purpose from the beginning, and the purpose has never been diagnostic assessment.

According to ACARA Chair Barry McGaw (March 2011):

NAPLAN is not a test students can prepare for because it is not a test of content. The federal government's intention in introducing and reporting NAPLAN results was to provide a diagnostic tool for teachers and parents, identifying gaps in students' skills.

What is the predominant purpose of NAPLAN testing?

Answer

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations has transferred this question to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority for response.

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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into the Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy

DEEWR Question No. 7

Senator Wright provided in writing.

Question

Separate comments from the previous Education Minister, Julia Gillard, stated that NAPLAN was diagnostic at a cohort level (to identify disadvantage and provide further support) and a way to evaluate teachers and teaching practice. How can a test like NAPLAN successfully deliver on all these competing priorities?

Answer

NAPLAN testing is a valuable diagnostic tool at the classroom level. It is one of a number of important tools used by teachers to assess student progress in the context of a national snapshot of the minimum standards in literacy and numeracy.

NAPLAN data provides an informative external reference framework for expected levels of achievement. At the school level, schools can actively intervene to support those students who have not reached minimum standards. In this way, NAPLAN data can be used to assist in identifying when and where targeted teaching resources should be more effectively deployed, so that students who need the most help can receive that help.

The analysis of NAPLAN data at schools, class or student levels assists school leaders and teaching staff to work together to identify where they are succeeding in meeting the needs of their students and where further attention is required. This analysis enables them to refine teaching and learning strategies, share what might be considered to be exemplary practices, or reinforce the quality of their approaches, to help maximise outcomes for students. The Queensland Government's Department of Department of Education, Training and Employment submission to the Committee states that –

'...there have been positive impacts of the program. These have included encouraging teachers to re-examine and refine strategies to help maximise outcomes for children and promoting collegial approaches to the sharing of professional practices.' [page 3]

NAPLAN has enabled and highlighted the ongoing need for all teachers to reflect on their teaching practice. States and territories provide diagnostic and other support to assist their teachers to use NAPLAN data effectively and appropriately.

The evaluation of teaching practice is the core of the newly implemented Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework which all education ministers endorsed in August 2012. The Framework calls for the creation of a performance and development culture in all Australian schools and highlights what is required to build a comprehensive and effective approach to high performance and development. It is available at the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership website - <http://www.aitsl.edu.au/teachers/performance-and-development.html>. Quality teaching is also a key focus of the Australian Government's Better Schools Plan. The new Professional Standards for Teachers require teachers to be able to assess, provide feedback and report on student learning.

As a formal assessment, NAPLAN results provide one indication of student learning, and will combine with other measures under the Framework as it increasingly becomes an important

way teachers evaluate and continue to develop their teaching practice over the course of their careers.

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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into The Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy

DEEWR Question No. 8

Senator Wright provided in writing.

Question

The Department's submission says "test developers must ensure NAPLAN tests are not culturally biased against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students". This inquiry has received a wide range of submissions (for examples, see Trevor Stockley, Australian College of Educators, NT Principal Mr Leonard Freeman, Multicultural Development Association and Townsville Multicultural Support Group, Ms Denise Angelo) that are extremely critical of NAPLAN testing for ATSI students and say it has been "destructive".

Is the Department aware of these submissions and what will be done to improve NAPLAN testing in light of this feedback?

Answer

The Department is aware of the submissions from Mr Stockley, Mr Freeman and Ms Angelo. NAPLAN tests are developed collaboratively by the states and territories, and the Australian Government and the non-government sectors. The development of NAPLAN test items is extensively quality assured through highly specific and rigorously applied processes, continuous quality control and auditing.

As part of the test development process, proposed test items undergo quality assurance that takes cultural background into account. In preparing the assessments, test developers must ensure NAPLAN tests are not culturally biased against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The development process involves the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) working with specialist item writers under contract, and supported by expert review and recommendations from officials from all states and territories, including assessment and curriculum specialists in Indigenous education.

NAPLAN is a standardised testing program that is administered and scored in a consistent manner for all students in the country. The tests are designed in such a way that the questions, administration conditions, scoring procedures and analysis are consistent for all students.

The tests also identify whether all students have the literacy and numeracy skills that provide the critical foundation for their learning. While it is recognised that all students do not have the same background knowledge, competency in Australian English is essential for all students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, to allow them to participate fully in Australian society.

NAPLAN tests are standardised and serve a national comparability purpose. The test development process is designed to ensure that test content is aligned to the curriculum expectations of each state and territory, and they will be based on the Australian Curriculum in a few years' time. The development process includes having each state and territory review all proposed test items for cultural appropriateness.

Specifications for the development of NAPLAN tests state that:

'The assessment should allow equity of access for students of both genders and from different cultures and language backgrounds. In keeping with MCEECDYA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010-2014, test developers must ensure that NAPLAN tests are not culturally biased against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.'

Given the diversity of the student population across Australia, it is expected that contexts presented in test questions should be relevant and accessible, but need not be restricted to those experienced personally by students.

ACARA will continue to ensure that NAPLAN tests are developed in a way that takes account of the relevance and appropriateness of all test items to all students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Despite the challenges and difficulties, competency in Australian English is essential for Indigenous students to allow them to participate fully in Australian society.

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Inquiry into The Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy

DEEWR Question No. 9

Senator Wright provided in writing.

Question

Most public schools have no ability to select enrolments. They cannot control the demographics or backgrounds of students that attend. Is it then appropriate to compare schools 'market'-style via the *My School* website, even though schooling is not a market situation?

Answer

My School allows meaningful comparisons between schools that serve similar student populations. It does this through the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) which is a measure of the influence of family background on student results. The ICSEA was developed by ACARA for use on *My School* to enable users of the website to get a sense of the levels of educational advantage or disadvantage that students bring to their academic studies based on factors that are outside of a school's control. A school's ICSEA value is used to select a group of up to 60 schools serving students from statistically similar backgrounds. These schools can be located across Australia but, based on ICSEA, their students have similar levels of educational advantage. These are the only direct school comparisons on *My School*.

The *My School* website was specifically designed to minimise the construction of crude league tables which make unfair and indefensible comparisons of Australian schools.

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Inquiry into The Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy

DEEWR Question No. 10

Senator Wright provided in writing.

Question

Schools with small cohorts have found the result of one student can drastically impact the school's overall figures. Is there value in raising the minimum reporting cohort to remove potential distortion of outliers?

Answer

In the interests of transparency and accountability, all schools should have NAPLAN results reported unless there is a serious risk to privacy or the results are grossly unreliable. There is a need to balance the goals of transparency with privacy and data reliability.

On the NAPLAN results pages of *My School* the confidence intervals are clearly displayed, with lines above and below the average scores showing the margin of error at the 90 per cent level of confidence.

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Inquiry into The Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy

DEEWR Question No. 11

Senator Wright provided in writing.

Question

Regarding the *My School* site, does the Department agree that there are other measures of what makes a suitable school for a child beyond literacy and numeracy performance? If so, what are these?

Answer

NAPLAN is part of an ongoing National Assessment Program that monitors progress on achieving the objectives in the *Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians 2008*. They monitor the extent to which schooling promotes equity and excellence; and the progress of young Australians towards becoming successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens.

Literacy and numeracy are the building blocks of education, and competency in these skills allows students to access and fully participate in the range of curriculum areas to ensure a well-rounded education that prepares them for life beyond school.

My School displays other indicators and information about schools in addition to the NAPLAN data, and further indicators are planned to be added as data becomes available. The indicators that the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood has agreed should be made available include:

- teacher levels of expertise;
- student outcomes such as post-school destinations into work or further education;
- Year 12 attainment rates; and
- numbers of students with disability.

On each school's profile page there is also a description of the key programs, values, achievements and philosophies provided by the school. This information affords parents and the community the opportunity to determine the suitability of a school.

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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into The Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy

DEEWR Question No. 12

Senator Wright provided in writing.

Question

The NAPLAN website says: “NAPLAN tests the sorts of skills that are essential for every child to progress through school and life”. Does the Department recognise that other areas of the curriculum – including science, the arts, physical education – are equally important to child development, well-being and achievement?

Answer

The Australian Curriculum includes seven capabilities of which literacy and numeracy are only two. Literacy and numeracy skills are fundamental to the education outcomes and life opportunities of students and to the social and economic development of the community.

These general capabilities encompass the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that, together with the curriculum content in each learning area, will assist students to live and work successfully in the twenty-first century.

While the Department recognises that knowledge and understandings of subject-based content areas of the curriculum are important in school education, competence in literacy and numeracy is integral to effective learning in all other subject areas. These literacy and numeracy skills enable students to fully participate in other areas of the curriculum, such as the arts, music and science.

The National Assessment Program, of which NAPLAN is one part, is the measure through which governments, education authorities and schools can determine whether or not young Australians are meeting important educational outcomes. An important purpose of NAPLAN tests is to identify whether students have the literacy and numeracy skills and knowledge which provide the critical foundation for other learning. NAPLAN is not designed to test the full range of the curriculum. NAPLAN results are only part of the student and school performance picture, and complement teachers' class and school-based assessments across the broader curriculum.

Another part of the National Assessment Program, the sample population tests, measure and report on student skills and understanding in Science Literacy, Civics and Citizenship, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Literacy.

Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into The Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy

DEEWR Question No. 13

Senator Wright provided in writing.

Question

The Department's submission to this Inquiry says "The transparency of NAPLAN results means that it has had a positive effect on lifting student performance as the data have encouraged parents, schools and teachers to use this to change the performance of students to lift standards." Can you provide some specific evidence and examples to corroborate this statement?

Answer

The Department provided several examples in its submission to the Committee (pages 12-13), as did the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority's submission (pages 31-32). The Department has included further examples below where the provision of NAPLAN has had positive effects for parents, schools and teachers.

South Australia

Staff at Murraylands Christian College, Murray Bridge took a systematic look at all literacy results including a thorough analysis of NAPLAN and other data as the first step in the improvement process. They were able to identify any specific areas in the NAPLAN in which students may have been underachieving. These areas became a major focus for improvement in their strategic plan. This phase was strengthened by further professional development and drawing on Association of Independent Schools South Australia advice and expertise where necessary.

Tasmania

Whole-school ownership of school improvement plans and student performance is becoming increasingly evident as school data is used more effectively and is integral to school improvement planning processes. The Department of Education in Tasmania is supporting the capacity of teachers and principals to effectively interpret and use data, at the classroom, school and system level with a range of reports around NAPLAN data, links to inform teaching and learning strategies and the NAPLAN Toolkit. This increased use of data to inform planning is a sustainable feature across all departmental schools.

The NAPLAN Toolkit is an easy to navigate and readily accessible secure web-based resource available in all Tasmanian government schools. It is designed to assist in the identification of individual, group and class needs. The Toolkit supports teachers to strengthen the link between student data analysis and curriculum strategies that will lead to improved student performance.

Teachers in schools use the Toolkit to support student learning in a variety of ways to:

- foster evidence-based teaching;
- develop strategies to improve student understandings of concepts where test performance was low;

- inform new staff of students' individual strengths and needs through analysis of current and historical data;
- identify trends within classes, across year levels and across the school;
- develop a whole-school approach to identifying individual, small group and class learning needs and improving literacy and numeracy across all learning areas; and
- determine which children will benefit from participation in targeted remedial and extended literacy and numeracy programs.

Victoria

School leaders were assisted with long term strategic planning, devising and implementing annual action plans, analysing data and developing effective teaching and learning plans.

Principals were supported to use data to inform their planning and decision making, including NAPLAN and other formative assessment data, enrolments, student and staff attendance and retention rates and the LEAD (Listen, Evaluate, Act and Deliver) surveys and report. Principal advisors assisted principals to use this data to take a long-term position in developing individual school strategic and action plans to improve teaching and learning.

ACT

In the ACT, schools refined their monitoring and data collection processes. All schools have data collection and tracking mechanisms, and use them along with NAPLAN results to analyse student performance to inform teaching practices and allocation of resources.

After working with an expert, schools developed data walls using a range of data sources. A large number started with reading benchmark levels to provide a snapshot in time. Data walls have been used to stimulate professional discussions among staff around questions of student performance. The visual nature of data walls provoke questions about a student's position relative to their peers and cohort performance as an aspect of the whole-school performance and compared to system data.

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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into The Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy

DEEWR Question No. 14

Senator Wright provided in writing.

Question

The Department says “the purpose of NAPLAN is to measure and report on student achievement in literacy and numeracy. The results guide improvements in educational outcomes for students across all schools, which in turn support the national goals in the *Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians 2008*.” However, the Australian Literacy Educators' Association says “the 21st century agenda around higher order learning and creativity as articulated in the Melbourne Declaration will not be met by tests that are only able to measure the most basic of skills”. How can a standardised test of basic skills demonstrate higher order learning and creativity?

Answer

NAPLAN tests the sorts of skills that are essential for every child to progress through school and life, such as reading, writing, spelling, grammar and numeracy. NAPLAN is not a test of content of knowledge; instead, it tests skills in literacy and numeracy that are developed over time through the school curriculum. The inadequate attention to fundamental capabilities of literacy and numeracy can undermine a student’s ability to participate effectively in other important areas of learning such as those needed in order to participate in collaborative problem solving and ICT digital literacy, two key skills that students need to possess for them to successfully operate in the 21st century workplace. Further, the skills and understandings tested in NAPLAN are not solely used in the areas of English and mathematics, but are also relevant to the Arts, history, geography and science as well as other areas of the curriculum.

Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into The Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy

DEEWR Question No. 15

Senator Wright provided in writing.

Question

Your submission states "NAPLAN has had a positive effect on lifting student performance as the data have encouraged parents, schools and teachers to use the extra information available to lift the performance of students. The tests allow jurisdictions to track improvement over time and to identify strengths and areas for improvement." What evidence do you have to support that statement?

Answer

Parents, schools and systems have relied on NAPLAN test results to help shape policy and practice. The available range of information of NAPLAN enables rigorous analysis by jurisdictions of schools' strengths and areas for improvement. Results from NAPLAN tests complement other class and school based assessments, which also inform the learning needs of students.

A common scale from year 3 to 9 in each domain allows student achievement to be monitored as students progress through school.

The Department provided a number of examples in its submission to the Committee (pages 12-13), as did the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority's submission (pages 31-32). Further examples are included below of where the provision of NAPLAN data has encouraged jurisdictions to track improvement. The following examples are from other submissions to the Inquiry into the effectiveness of NAPLAN:

- The ACT Government states "Linking NAPLAN data to the Australian Early Development Index or other early years assessment data could potentially be used to identify at-risk children on entry to the schooling system. The ACT public system uses the Performance Indicators in Primary Schools assessment tool to assess students in their entry year, and has already commenced analysis to understand student ability on commencement, progress and the impact of interventions." (Submission number 77, page 5)
- Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment: "NAPLAN has provided a consistent summary view of students' literacy and numeracy performance at jurisdiction levels. This has had a major impact on reinvigorating discussions about priorities for schooling across the country but it has also encouraged a focus on maximising student performance in literacy and numeracy testing." (Submission number 80, page.2)

Please also refer to the response to DEEWR Question 13.

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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into The Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy

DEEWR Question No. 16

Senator Wright provided in writing.

Question

Regarding the issue of league tables being created from data on the *MySchool* site, I understand the data on the site is protected by copyright to prevent the creation of damaging and misleading league tables.

- a) Why does the Department believe that league tables are harmful?
- b) How many times has the government taken action against breaches?
- c) If this has occurred, please give information about the action taken.
- d) If none, why is this the case?
- e) The Australian newspaper published a series of league tables at the beginning of June 2013. What action has the Department taken or is contemplating taking?

Answer

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations has transferred this question to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority for response.

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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into the Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy

DEEWR Question No. 17

Senator Wright provided in writing.

Question

Some submitters have argued it is quite harmful at early stages for students to feel they are “failures” or “dumb” and this could have long-ranging consequences for their future learning and self-worth. What is the Department’s view as to whether it is beneficial to students, particularly in the early years, to know how they rank against other students?

Answer

NAPLAN is one measure through which governments, education authorities, schools, teachers and parents can determine whether or not young Australians are meeting important educational outcomes in literacy and numeracy.

The Department takes these comments seriously. While some submissions have made statements about these issues, there is no robust evidence to suggest that NAPLAN testing has caused long-ranging consequences for young students’ learning and self-worth.

NAPLAN tests are designed to provide sufficient diagnostic information to judge the effectiveness of teaching and learning and to improve students’ educational outcomes. The tests help identify whether all students have the literacy and numeracy skills and knowledge which provide the critical foundation for other learning, and for their productive and rewarding participation in the workforce and broader community. An assessment through national testing in the early years enables school leaders and teachers to identify those students who may be having or may be at-risk of having difficulties in learning to read.

It is important to recognise that NAPLAN tests are not pass or fail tests. While these provide valuable information, there are no consequences for individual students for poor or good performance. NAPLAN testing is one part of the overall student assessment picture and complements formal testing of student knowledge and learning that takes place in schools.

School leaders have an important role in framing appropriate attitudes and practices to NAPLAN and other testing in schools. Teachers, in supporting their students to understand and participate in testing, also have a role in allaying feelings of stress or anxiety. This includes, for example, not putting too much pressure on students through focusing their curriculum and teaching practices around NAPLAN tests. NAPLAN tests are only one aspect of a school’s assessment and reporting process and do not replace the extensive ongoing assessments made by teachers about students’ performance. The tests are intended to complement the existing range of school based assessments.

Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into The Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy

DEEWR Question No. 18

Senator McKenzie provided in writing.

Question

Please provide an update on the government's implementation of the recommendations made by the Senate References Committee in the 2010 Inquiry into the administration and reporting of NAPLAN testing, noting that the initial Government Response was tabled in the Senate on 13 October 2011.

Answer

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations has transferred this question to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority for response.

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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into The Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy

DEEWR Question No. (ACARA) 6 (transferred from ACARA)

Senator Wright provided in writing.

Question

ACARA says “The measure of NAPLAN’s success will always be the uses to which the resulting data are put to improve teaching and learning.” However, only one third of teachers who responded to the Independent Education Union’s survey said they believed the test results were useful.

- a) Does that indicate that NAPLAN has not been a success?
- b) How could the data be better presented to enhance usefulness to teachers?

Answer

The Independent Education Union (IEU) 2013 survey findings were based on an opt-in survey of IEU members (teachers and principals). The survey was completed by 3.5 per cent of members (2,545 from a membership of 72,000). The opt-in nature of the survey means that responses can not be considered representative of the membership, and are more likely to come from teachers with strong views on NAPLAN.

Following each NAPLAN test, the Test Administration Authorities provide comprehensive data on NAPLAN results to schools which can be used to inform teaching and learning programs. There are also programs and tools which have been developed for data analysis to support teachers in interpreting and using data to improve student outcomes.

Further information on the provision of NAPLAN results and availability of data programs and tools would need to be obtained from Test Administration Authorities. Contact details are available at <http://www.nap.edu.au/contacts/contact-test-administration-authorities.html>

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Inquiry into The Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy

DEEWR Question No. T1

Senator McKenzie asked on 21 June 2013, Hansard page 45

Question

ACTING CHAIR: "Can you provide the number of staff who are employed to administer the *My School* website ... and the amount of money that is spent ... both within ACARA and the department?"

Answer

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority will provide a response.

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Inquiry into The Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy

DEEWR Question No. T2

Senator McKenzie asked on 21 June 2013, Hansard page 46

Question

ACTING CHAIR: (a) We also heard this morning about NAPLAN being used in the new education funding model in the Schooling Resource Standard... [Dr Day:] the National Education Reform Agreement sets out and explains the calculation. I can provide that to you now, if you would like. ... [ACTING CHAIR - Senator McKenzie:] On notice will be fine.

(b) [Dr Day] So the schooling standard includes the base per student funding amount and additional funding called 'loadings', which you have heard about at previous Senate estimates inquiries. Loadings are applied to low SES status students, students with limited English ability and proficiency and students with disability and also Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Further details on how NAPLAN was used in that instance are in the final report of the Review of Funding for Schooling. ... [ACTING CHAIR - Senator McKenzie:] Was that an appropriate use of NAPLAN? ... was it designed to be used as a measure of performance and to determine funding?

Answer

NAPLAN results, while only a partial measure of schooling outcomes, provide important information on key aspects of school and student performance and are the only consistent national data currently available for all schools relating to schooling outcomes. For this reason, NAPLAN results were used by the Review of Funding for Schooling panel to identify schools with minimal educational disadvantage achieving consistently high learning outcomes at a lower than average cost.

These schools were called 'reference schools' and analysis of these schools was undertaken to determine the base 'per student funding amount' in the new Schooling Resource Standard. The National Education Reform Agreement explains the calculation:

This is calculated on a standard of school effectiveness and efficiency based on schools that meet a demanding student outcome benchmark at a lower than average cost. Reference schools are those where at least 80 per cent of the students exceed the national minimum standard in reading and numeracy under NAPLAN across three years ...

The Schooling Resource Standard includes the base 'per student funding amount' and additional funding called 'loadings' to support students and schools facing educational disadvantage. Loadings are applied to low socio-economic status students, students with limited English language proficiency, students with disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Loadings also apply to schools outside of metropolitan areas and small schools.

Under the *Australian Education Act 2013*, an individual school's NAPLAN results will not be used to determine the Commonwealth's funding to that school.

Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into The Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy

DEEWR Question No. T3

Senator McKenzie asked on 21 June 2013, Hansard page 46

Question

SENATOR WRIGHT: I understand that in response to the Acting Chair's question you said that NAPLAN results have been used to identify reference schools, potentially. Is provision being made, or is there a possibility, that NAPLAN results going on into the future will also be linked to other funding that may occur under the schools improvement plan or other funding regimes?

Answer

Under the *Australian Education Act 2013*, an individual school's NAPLAN results will not be used to determine the Commonwealth's funding to that school.

NAPLAN results, while only a partial measure of schooling outcomes, provide important information on key aspects of school and student performance and are the only consistent national data currently available for all schools relating to schooling outcomes. For this reason, NAPLAN results were used by the Review of Funding for Schooling panel to identify schools with minimal educational disadvantage achieving consistently high learning outcomes at a lower than average cost.

With new, needs-based funding arrangements and increased devolution of responsibility to the school level, a greater focus on individual school improvement and how new reforms and investment are translating into improved outcomes for students has been a priority for the Australian Government.

The National Education Reform Agreement provides the basis for working toward the national goals that Australia will be ranked, by 2025, as one of the top five highest performing countries based on the performance of Australian school students in reading, mathematics and science, and based on the quality and equity of Australian schooling – as set out in the Australian Government's Better Schools Plan.

The evidence-based reforms in the Better Schools Plan are focused on quality teaching, quality learning, transparency and accountability, meeting student need and empowering school leadership. Through implementation of needs-based funding models, states and territories will be able to tailor their models to best address local needs.

The reform directions will be implemented over the period from 2014-2019, as agreed between the Commonwealth and the states and territories. The Australian Government is currently seeking a commitment to a set of shared and transparent arrangements for all education authorities to increase the profile of school improvement activity.

While all schools are required to have a school improvement plan under the *Australian Education Act 2013*, there is no link between the content or outcomes of these plans and a school's funding.

Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into The Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy

DEEWR Question No. T4

Senator Wright asked on 21 June 2013, Hansard page 46

Question

ACTING CHAIR: (a) Has the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) advised government of the unintended consequences of the *My School* website?

(b) Has the government sought advice from DEEWR on the consequences of publishing the NAPLAN results in the manner they have?

Answer

(a) No.

(b) The Government has not sought advice from DEEWR on the unintended consequences of the *My School* website. The Committee may wish to note that, as outlined in the Department's submission (page 15), the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood has now been provided with a paper prepared by ACARA that has focussed on this matter.