

As both a teacher and a parent of a child who has undertaken NAPLAN testing, I have grave concerns about the use of NAPLAN data. While I am not against the testing itself, I am extremely concerned at the way that this testing regime has affected the nature of teaching in Australia in the short period of time since schools have been "named and shamed" in the media based on the data from these tests.

My 8 year old son spent a considerable amount of class time prior to taking the NAPLAN tests on learning how to take a test. During this period, his learning time was diminished due to the amount of time spent on exam preparation. As a parent, I object to his learning time being spent on learning how to take a test when it could be spent on learning skills from the curriculum in areas he needs to improve. In the past, teachers were able to use many methods of assessment to gauge a student's understanding of the curriculum and target their teaching according to what needed to be improved. Now, however, the publication of NAPLAN results by the media has made this one form of assessment into the only one which matters. It seems that it doesn't matter how much a child has improved, or how happy they are at school, or how well-rounded an education they receive, all that counts is a single week of testing in a narrow range of curriculum areas, taken every 2 years.

I also object to my son's results and those of his school being compared with those of students attending exclusive private schools. As a teacher, I have heard from teachers at these private schools how they have spent even greater time coaching their students, along with sending home past tests as homework. How is it fair to compare results from these schools, who coach and prepare their students far more extensively for the tests, with those from less affluent public schools like my son's. Here, many parents do not have the literacy skills themselves to coach their children, doing past tests as homework. Also, unlike many private schools, our school takes all children who live in the area, regardless of ability or socioeconomic status.

Another issue is that of staffing in private schools compared to public schools. We have fewer teachers and support staff per child than at the private schools near us, yet our schools' results are being unfairly compared.

Finally, I would like to comment on the misleading and downright inaccurate data published on the My School website. I looked up my children's school's results, then clicked on the link which was supposedly to show me nearby schools which, presumably, is set up so that I can send my children to another school if I am unhappy with their current school's results. Some of the schools it suggested were some 3 hours' drive away from our home, a drive which would have passed by at least 50 other closer schools which were not listed! If this is the kind of rubbish that is published, how can we trust the accuracy of any of the information provided in the interests of "transparency" by this government?