

I have some concerns with the My School website and the publishing of league tables. The first is that the NAPLAN tests were never designed to be used to compare schools. How can we have a comparative national testing system before we even have a national school starting age? This does not make mathematical or statistical sense. Numerical comparisons do not and never can take into account all the wonderful things schools do and the great progress that schools make from one year to the next. All schools are not equal at the beginning of a school year and the system of comparisons is fascicle when private schools do not have to divulge the financial contributions in their library trust funds or their building funds etc or even their asset base eg their fully equipped gymnasiums, theatres, swimming pools, watered ovals etc that many, many public schools can only dream about. Public schools do not have hidden funds. Public schools, their teachers and communities work hard with limited resources to bring about excellent outcomes for their students. Undermining this hard work by being publically shamed in your local newspaper is devastating for students, parents and teachers. I have spent most of my 20 years of teaching in disadvantaged western Sydney or rural NSW schools. My heart is broken when I know that the good work that continues in these schools in raising academic outcomes and encouraging regular school attendance and the social welfare support that is given by teachers in these schools, will have their work devalued and degraded by newspapers or politicians after a headline. League tables do not produce better outcomes for students they only allow for the "haves" to boast at the expense of the "have not's". I do not want to live in a society that does not aim for equity and is inclusive and supportive of all Australians no matter where they live or what school they attend. Finally, on a personal note, I grew up in Fairfield in Sydney, an address that few people boast of. I went to a public school my mother had never been to school and I had no aspiration to attend university or become a teacher myself had it not been for the dedicated teachers that taught me. I grew up believing that these doorways were not open to me as either a woman or someone from an economically disadvantaged family. If there had been published league tables when I was at school I would have gone on believing this and would never have gained a degree or be the parent of tertiary educated children.