



Sir Joseph Banks High School

Turvey Street, Revesby NSW 2212 tel: 9773 6054 fax: 9792 3863

Email: sirjosephb-h.School@det.nsw.edu.au Website: www.sirjosephb-h.schools.nsw.edu.au

Principal: B. Mitchell B.A. Dip. Ed

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Committee Secretary
Senate Education

Submission to Senate Inquiry into the Administration and Reporting Of NAPLAN Testing Submission by Sir Joseph Banks High School

Dear Sir/Madam

a) Issues regarding publication of data

A crude league table was published by the Sydney Morning Herald, placing Sir Joseph Banks High School (SJBHS), at around 510 of 550 high schools in NSW. This was an inaccurate representation of the school, giving little indication of education progression, disciplines other than English and mathematics and cultural and sporting activities.

Even on the MySchool website, the sole reporting of NAPLAN results presents such a limited view of the school's character and activity, that a wholly misleading impression is unavoidable.

b) Safeguards / Protocols

Notwithstanding point a) above, one important detail of the school needs a safeguard. This is the issue of incorporating 'Special Education' students' results in the mainstream cohort data reporting.

SJBHS has a large Special Education Unit, catering from Year 7 to Year 12. While exemption forms are issued to parents of mildly intellectually impaired students, around one third (1/3) of these parents do not return the forms. This is largely due to the NESB/LSEC demographic of the school.

As a result, around 10% of the students in the Year 7 (approximately 70 students) and Year 9 (also around 70) NAPLAN cohorts, are Special Education students whose parents did not return the exemption forms. Coupled with the error of reporting (around 8%), as stated on the MySchool website for such cohorts, this combines to present a statistically invalid indicator of the school's results and progress.

A protocol should exist, in the event of retention of this aspect of the MySchool website, for the vetting of such Special Education student results from the mainstream cohort prior to reporting. With this safeguard, parents of such students could still receive the mailed individual NAPLAN reports and the school itself would also get the results, but the distorting effect would be reduced.

c) Impact

For SJBHS, the half yearly reports and following annual Parent/Teacher night, remains the most significant point of interaction between the school academic reporting process and the community. The yearly reports have a similar role.

Indeed, parents made almost no contact with the school regarding the MySchool publication of data this year.

It is the view of many teachers that the use of NAPLAN data is over-represented in determination of additional funding, such as Priority Schools and other programmes. Consultation and qualitative data collection remain important tools to understand the needs of disadvantaged students.

d) Comparisons

As previously stated at point a), the reporting of NAPLAN results in league table format, and to a lesser extent, the MySchool website, creates an unfair and misleading representation and comparison of SJBHS to other educational institutions.

While sports people enter competitions under such an understanding of comparison, ranking and ‘winning’ and ‘losing’ education at SJBHS and similar schools, is based on values of cooperation for the development of social wealth as well as individual development. Teachers, students, parents and school leaders enter the process of education on such a cooperative basis – notwithstanding the odd knockout sporting event!

Comparison of schools is misleading, as the circumstances and priorities of even geographically adjacent schools can be very different, let alone schools removed by greater distances or constituencies.

e) Other matters

The SJBHS website demonstrates academic, sporting and cultural aspects, as well as the welfare policy and actions undertaken at SJBHS, presenting a much broader picture of the school than just Year 7 and Year 9 NAPLAN results.

MySchool and resultant league tables undermine the school website and bulletins, being the first sources of information as to the characteristics and progress of the school.

Rather than empowering the school to development relations with the community under its own agency, the MySchool website and resultant publication of data by the media, is an external pressure of distortion, deflecting the ongoing aims of the school.

Brad Mitchell, Principal

John Morris, NSW Teachers Federation Representative