

I am a primary teacher in Western Australia and am becoming more and more concerned that NAPLAN is driving education programs rather than it being simply one of a range of tests used in a quality education program.

Teaching to the test in Western Australia is now a reality for all government schools. The Department of Education sets out what is to be taught, week by week, to prepare students for the NAPLAN tests in the lead up to NAPLAN.

Our local District Director (Dept. of Education) in the school review is very critical of the fact that teachers' reports of individual students don't always match NAPLAN results. eg: the number of A's given in teacher reports doesn't match the number of students achieving this level in NAPLAN. As a professional I am appalled that teacher assessment of the students progress, made over months of continuous monitoring, observation, informal and formal assessment is thought to be inferior to the results of a one off test.

Today, 23 June 2010, the Department of Education announced that the gazetted term/holiday dates for 2011 have been altered because of NAPLAN.  
NAPLAN RULES.

Year 3, 5 and 7 teachers are complaining that for the term leading up to the testing the complete focus now is NAPLAN. Many are frustrated and would like to get back to providing a broad, fun, engaging, well rounded education for their charges. They want out of these year levels but few would willingly swap. Year 2, 4 and 6 teachers are constantly being directed to gear their teaching to prepare for NAPLAN.

Students in many schools are being set NAPLAN homework for months/ years.

NAPLAN materials are being marketed to parents.

In one local primary school I know well the tests are photocopied and all the year 2, 4 and 6 students sit the tests when the 3, 5 and 7 students are sitting the test. Many of the children find this very stressful.

NAPLAN is a hugely expensive undertaking. WALNA and subsequently NAPLAN results have to date not told me anything I didn't already know about my students. An enormous expense if the purpose is diagnostic or to inform my teaching. Clearly the purpose is to rank schools.

I think it is shocking that some students, particularly those who are just 7/8 years old, will formally receive, from the Australian Government, an official piece of paper declaring they are poor achievers. (The normal distribution already shows 50% of the population will score below the mean, no matter what standards, levels etc are imposed. Of these so-called poorly performing children, two thirds will be within one standard deviation of the mean. The bottom sixth will always show up.)

Professional Learning time in our schools has also been hijacked by NAPLAN. Our staff meetings have similarly been hijacked by NAPLAN. It is on every agenda.

NAPLAN is now high stakes stuff. The My School website has given it greater prominence and credibility than it deserves.