

## NAPLAN SUBMISSION

As an educationalist I have always believed my role to be to take an individual and progress them along the continuum of learning. If an individual has greater knowledge or better skills at the end of a period of time then I regard myself as a successful teacher. I also believe that education is the great hope of creating a prosperous and fair society. Australia has developed a culture where individuals can advance themselves. I am an example of this. I believe this culture has been developed through a strong public education system. A system, that sadly has been diminishing in recent times.

I also believe that some teachers and some schools perform better than others, despite having similar circumstances. For many years, in NSW at least, data has been available to educational administrators to evaluate school performance. This has not been publicised widely in the public domain as to simplify it to a degree that interests the general public is not possible.

Yet this is what the myschool website attempts to do. Students in more affluent areas perform better than those from disadvantaged areas. If the general population of Australia does not understand this then obviously our education system of the past has been a total failure.

Measuring school performance on a set of simple criteria will encourage schools to focus on those criteria. Let me provide two examples. I recently received an enrolment application for a student not living in my designated area. He was enrolled in his local school but was not attending. He wanted a fresh start. Morally I felt inclined to provide that chance, however, I had to balance this against the fact that if his attendance is poor at my school this will reflect badly in my Annual School Report.

Currently I have a student in his final year of schooling who is performing at an unsatisfactory level. He is very bright young man but has serious substance abuse issues. I can move to expel the student. I am aware of the likely consequences of such a decision. However I am also aware that his results will reflect badly on my school if I allow him to complete his final year. Sad that we need to think like this isn't it?

If we are going to measure school performance, as we should, then we need to do so on a wide range of criteria. Otherwise schools will concentrate on the areas being measured. The other option is to clearly redefine the role of the school in our society and measure school performance on specific and clear criteria.

Thomas Sleigh  
Principal  
Lake Illawarra High School