

From:  
Ms Norma John

As a Defence spouse (and a teacher), I travelled to the USA and UK. In the USA, defence and DFAT families can justify the Australian Government sponsoring their children to attend private schools based upon league tables and school ratings. It was assumed that lower scoring schools were less able to give our students a good education. This is incorrect and misleading. School achievement based on one annual test is based upon equity (everyone gets to sit) and a cross-sectional portion of society. What is important is the quality of teaching, the across-the-board quality of education and life experiences that the school provides for the children. To gain a high test score requires a focus on test outcomes excluding all other quality educational inclusions such as sport, music, peer support, individual talents. This is not quality education, it is teaching to the test and excluding all else that is good and valuable. Two years ago I was required to prepare my Year 5 students for Naplan, and so I did, including test technique and so on. Some of my at-risk students scored highly, following my strategies. Other higher ability students scored lower than expected due to their personal phobias towards tests. Teachers have a good knowledge about where their students are at. In government schools at least, they should trust teacher insider knowledge based on longer-term assessments. They have no vested interest in score results. Private schools on the other hand, do. To what extent are they being supervised in the conducting of the tests? If their livelihood depends upon high test scores, to what extent would they 'bend' the rules?