

Before I begin, I wish to state emphatically that these are my personal views. I have several points to make about NAPLAN and they are as follow:

1. It is NOT a quality assessment of students skills. Some of the items in fact require students to respond correctly by choosing from a field where ALL choices are INCORRECT. The texts chosen for the Year 9 test seem more appropriate to 50-something baby boomers than to contemporary 14 year olds. Questions are not consistently logically sequenced or structured. I am referring to the Literacy testing components as that is my area of expertise.
2. To expect schools to make quality educational decisions based on "the data" from this very flawed test is absurd and an insult to our commitment to quality teaching and learning practices.
3. To then use NAPLAN results as part of a process for ranking schools is an equally absurd practice. It is mystifying how schools are actually ranked because NOT ONE of the apparently "LIKE" schools for my school is anything "LIKE" my school.
4. I have taught in both Queensland and New South Wales and a stand-out comparison for me is how much NSW teaches to standardised tests (Queensland did not previously but it seems that now we have to because our Premier thinks we are so BAD at teaching because NAPLAN says so, apparently). Could this be why they supposedly outperform other States? What an achievement that is: to be the best at passing tests.
5. I find it interesting that not many conversations around "the data" acknowledge that there is no significant difference between Queensland students (apparently the worst performers) and apparently TOP performing NSW and other States by Year 9. Why would that be?
6. If I am expected to take seriously NAPLAN and the uses to which it is put, then I expect that it should be a QUALITY assessment, give us useful data to plan for teaching our students and be used for educational purposes alone NOT to serve political agendas.
7. The current practices surrounding publicising of "the data" is counter-productive in promoting parent and student confidence in their schools, advancing quality education and enhancing the professionalism of teaching. It also distracts from what is a burning issue for every educator in this country: inadequate resourcing of classrooms and students. Buildings are all very well, tests (if they are high quality) are all very well but the things that really make a difference are: connectedness to the school community for students and families (established by having the time and resources to build relationships), low student-teacher ratios (to allow for the personalised, trusting relationship approach), students and families feeling that they are valued (relationships again), that their teachers believe that students can learn (relationships again) and time devoted to planning quality teaching learning experiences.
8. NAPLAN in its current incarnation does not provide any of the things that I have just mentioned. IF it were to be a high quality test and were used by schools PURELY to inform teaching practices, then great, I would be a supporter.
9. I could note that NSW had, previously, Literacy and Numeracy tests that were for the purposes of schools receiving useful data to inform practice and NOT to create League Tables and other noxious practices. These were the ELLA and SNAP tests. I worked on marking the SNAP test twice so I believe I can offer an informed comment. They were quality tests but probably cost too much to develop and then mark which wouldn't do at all, would it? It would not be in the least politically expedient.

I hope that your Senate inquiry is actually going to result in something worthwhile. The "My School" website is on a par with such websites as "Rate Your Teacher", in my opinion. Please give us something that will make a positive difference in people's lives.