

On behalf of the staff at Chatswood Hills State School in Springwood Queensland I wish to make submission to the Senate NAPLAN Inquiry regarding the damaging impact of NAPLAN and the misuse of NAPLAN data on our students, staff, school community and wider community.

We are opposed to our NAPLAN data being compared to "like schools" when we believe that the like schools concept is an invalid premise. Each school is unique.

Our unique characteristics make comparisons to other so called 'like schools' untenable:

We are a stage based school with a multi-age philosophy in a low socioeconomic area south of Brisbane;

We are experiencing the effects of continuous and rapid change:

- three changes of principal in three years and two of deputy- this causes great instability.
- increasing student numbers prompting the addition of 10 new classrooms - some classes are still oversized (all prep classes have 26 students).
- establishment of a Special Education Program and teacher-
- fourteen students verified with impairments and seven awaiting verification- we are enrolling students from a wider catchment.
- increasing numbers of students with learning difficulties and disabilities - ninety four of our six hundred and forty students access Learning Support Programs,
- increasing numbers of families suffering economic hardship,
- increasing numbers of students with behaviour problems,
- increasing numbers of single parent families,
- increasing numbers of students in care,
- increasing numbers of students attending both before and after school care,
- increasing numbers of transient families,
- decreasing community human and material resources.

We are strongly opposed to being represented by a rating system that does not recognise distance travelled.

Students and teachers at Chatswood Hills State School need to work harder against disadvantages (see above) to achieve the results that come easily to other students and other schools.

NAPLAN data gives only a "snap shot" of the school's performance. On publication, the snapshot becomes the public image of the school.

reading age by twelve months in a two month period, and that Jane in year six, verified as Intellectually Impaired, has finally succeeded in doing simple addition. These students have travelled a great distance in their learning but their achievements are ignored in the NAPLAN "snapshot".

The public and the media will only be interested in who is at the top and who is at the bottom of the table.

We are angry and disappointed that you our employer would publish NAPLAN data which could be misused and therefore subject us your employees, to possible negative public opinion.

Our hard earned and excellent reputation is at risk. We are proud of our record on catering for learners with diverse needs and object to our academic snapshot being used to label our performance. This has repercussions which can affect the self esteem of the whole school community and has negative implications for the wider community.

We object to pressure to use NAPLAN data to direct planning.

This creates a "teach to the test" mentality. NAPLAN is "teabag" data. It provides the narrowest of perspectives.

Internal, diagnostic data is the only valid data for planning and teaching.

The multiple choice structure of NAPLAN encourages guessing which distorts results and makes them unreliable. Many students simply guess and have been seen to guess the whole test after becoming discouraged at the first question. I have seen students pass Reading and Viewing without reading a single item!

NAPLAN has a negative impact on teaching practice.

Practicing and doing the NAPLAN takes precious time from an already overcrowded curriculum. Some schools suspend other areas of the curriculum in order to spend extra time training their students up for the test. This may happen to an increasing degree as NAPLAN results become more and more the accepted measure of performance and schools feel pressure to adopt these practices.

Teaching for the test is not sound educational practice!

NAPLAN causes intolerable and unacceptable levels of disruption and stress for students and teachers.

The build-up to the test and the three days of the test cause highly unacceptable levels of stress for students, teachers, school administration and parents. As a multi-age school, there are mixed grades in each classroom. The programs of all students, not just years three, five and seven, are thrown into chaos as alternate timetables, teaching spaces, supervision, break times and duty rosters etc. need to be reorganized.

The whole NAPLAN experience takes more than one school week, without the weeks of compulsory practice beforehand.

NAPLAN is not a helpful tool in improving teaching practice; we are yet to see how it helps to improve pedagogy and outcomes.

It might show which particular items were most commonly failed in the problem solving area of the Numeracy Test for example, or that year three students overuse the apostrophe, but we already knew that!

As a Support Teacher Literacy and Numeracy supervising students with learning difficulties and disabilities for NAPLAN, I find this test cruel, damaging and unnecessary. Part of a teacher's role (especially mine) is to support, encourage and build these children's resilience. Making them do this test flies in the face of all that we believe about teaching. Some children cry, some become angry and frustrated and refuse to do the test, some finish very quickly because they colour bubbles randomly and some battle away and take the extra time allowed but still fail.

The long term impact of this on a child's self esteem and sense of self should not be dismissed. The Inquiry needs to see this first hand to fully appreciate the distress it can cause.

The suggestion that schools that perform poorly in NAPLAN will be punished by funding cuts and other measures is appalling. Poorly performing schools need support not punishment. What is needed is collaboration and support and a willingness to listen and value what teachers have to say...