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https://www.education.act.gov.au/naplan-reporting-review-2019

NAPLAN Reporting Review

Issues Paper

February 2019

## Introduction

The National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) was introduced in 2008, replacing a series of separate state and territory assessments. Since 2010, NAPLAN has been the responsibility of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

In January 2010 ACARA launched the My School website, containing school-by-school summaries of 2008 and 2009 NAPLAN data in reading, writing, spelling, grammar and punctuation and numeracy at Years 3, 5 7 and 9. The My School website initially provided comparisons with statistically similar schools and local schools, with measures of achievement gain added in 2011. The initial version of My School also provided a range of school demographic information, augmented by Information on school finance and capital expenditure in 2011.

Since then, Australia has had a decade of experience with NAPLAN and the My School Website. There have been a number of technical reviews of My School; large- and-small scale surveys of parents’, teachers’ and students’ opinions about NAPLAN; and commissioned reports on NAPLAN.

The Education Council of the Council of Australian Governments has commissioned a review of the current approach to the presentation of NAPLAN data including information published on the My School website.

The review is being undertaken by Emeritus Professor Bill Louden AM. Professor Louden welcomes written submissions from those involved in schooling in Australia and other parties interested in contributing to the review including parents, school communities, researchers and the broader public.

Specifically, the review is seeking feedback on four issues:

1. Perceptions of NAPLAN and My School data, including the potential for misinterpretation or misuse of data;
2. How My School and NAPLAN reporting contribute to understanding of student progress and achievement;
3. How schools use achievement data, including NAPLAN, to inform teaching; and
4. How My School and NAPLAN data are reported to students and parents.

Submissions should address as many of the questions identified in the following sections of this Issues Paper as considered significant to the individual or group making a submission.

Written submissions (attached as a Word file or PDF) should be sent to NAPLANreview2019@act.gov.au. Please mark your submission “confidential” if you do not want it to be published. Submissions will be accepted until midnight, **Thursday 14 March 2019**.

## OVERVIEW

The My School website was designed in the context of the 2008 Melbourne Declaration on Education Goals for Young Australians, in which State, Territory and Federal Ministers with responsibility for school education committed to public reporting on the performance of individual schools.

In 2009 the Ministers agreed on a set of principles and protocols for reporting on schooling. Four general principles were articulated in the agreement:

Principle 1: Reporting should be in the broad public interest.

Principle 2: Reporting on the outcomes of schooling should use data that is valid, reliable and contextualised.

Principle 3: Reporting should be sufficiently comprehensive to enable proper interpretation and understanding of the information.

Principle 4: Reporting should involve balancing the community’s right to know with the need to avoid the misinterpretation or misuse of the information.

In addition to these four general principles, the Ministers agreed on a further four principles reflecting the specific interests of schools, parents and families, the community, and school systems and governments.

Principle 5: Schools require reliable, rich data on the performance of their students because they have the primary accountability for student outcomes.

Principle 6: Parents and families need information about schooling, including data on the performance of their child, schools and systems, to help them to develop informed judgements, make choices and engage with their children’s education and the school community.

Principle 7: The community should have access to information that enables them to understand the performance of schools and the context in which they perform and to evaluate the decisions taken by governments. This ensures schools are accountable for the results they achieve with the public funding they receive, and governments are accountable for the decisions they take.

The provision of school information to the community should be done in such a way as to enhance community engagement and understanding of the educational enterprise.

Principle 8: School systems and governments need sound information on school performance to support ongoing improvement for students and schools. They also need to monitor and evaluate the impacts of the use and release of this information to improve its application over time, and to assess and address the outcomes for schools and their students resulting from the public release of this data.

Ten years on, these principles underpin the issues to be considered in this review of the current approach to the presentation of NAPLAN data including information published on the My School website.

## **1. Perceptions of NAPLAN reporting and My School data**

The purpose of the principles and protocols established in 2009 has been to ensure that an appropriate balance is struck between the right to high quality information about the outcomes of schooling and the possibility of misinterpretation or misuse.

Principles 1, 2 and 3 concern the quality of information, affirming that reporting should be in the public interest; reliable and valid; and sufficiently comprehensive to enable proper interpretation.

Principle 4 calls for a balance between the right to high quality information and the possibility of misinterpretation or misuse of the information.

Principle 7 concerns the right to know, affirming the community’s right to information that enables them to understand the performance of schools.

The My School website currently provides a range of school-level analyses of achievement. These include:

* Number: average achievement for each assessment domain, over time;
* Bands: the percentage of students in each achievement band;
* Graphs: average scores for each assessment domain, over time;
* Student gain: average change in results for students who have taken successive NAPLAN tests in the same school; and
* Similar schools: average scores for each assessment domain and each calendar year in schools with a similar Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value to the selected school.

Each of these analyses allows users to make comparisons between schools with similar students or all Australian students. Statistical similarity of schools is calculated using an index constructed for the purpose, the ICSEA. In addition, the student gain page allows comparisons between the selected school and students with the same starting scores.

The My School website provides colour-coding of NAPLAN results for average scores substantially above, above, close to, below or substantially below schools with similar students or all Australian schools. Statistical confidence intervals are also provided, where appropriate, to limit the possibility of over-interpretation of small differences in the data.

Beyond these statistical issues, there is a risk that data made public through the My School website may be used in ways that some regard as inappropriate, such as third-party websites and league tables.

Considering the current approach to the presentation of NAPLAN data including information published on the My School website, comments are sought on the following:

*Does the NAPLAN data currently available on the My School website provide an appropriate balance between the right to high quality information and the possibility of misinterpretation or misuse?*

*Is there anything you find difficult to understand or is there any different NAPLAN information you would like to see included on My School?*

*Is the explanatory material on My School around “statistically similar schools” sufficiently explained, easy to understand and does this support fair comparisons for schools?*

*What consideration should be given to comparisons over time and between schools while schools progressively transition to NAPLAN online?*

## **2. How My School and NAPLAN contribute to understanding of student progress and achievement**

Principle 8 affirms that school systems and governments need sound information on school performance to support school improvement.

NAPLAN is the only source of whole-population data on student progress and achievement in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. Although NAPLAN is limited to achievement in literacy and numeracy, it provides common assessments across jurisdictions and includes all schools and school systems. These common assessments provide an evidence base for school improvement in the years and domains assessed in NAPLAN.

The NAPLAN data on the My School website offer five kinds of representations of school progress and achievement: average achievement in each school; the spread of achievement in bands; trends in achievement over time; gain in achievement between assessments; and comparisons with similar schools.

Some school systems use these analyses – or others available to them through their data analytics systems – to identify schools where students make greater than expected progress and have higher levels of achievement. This in turn, may inform the allocation of resources or adoption of successful approaches to teaching, learning and assessment.

Schools may take the opportunity to reflect on student progress and achievement compared with statistically similar schools, and to consider these results in school planning, resource allocation and target-setting.

Considering the current approach to the presentation of NAPLAN data including information published on the My School website, comments are sought on the following:

*To what extent do schools and school systems use NAPLAN student progress and achievement data, including comparisons with statistically similar schools, to inform their school improvement strategies?*

*To what extent is whole-population assessment data necessary to meet school systems’ and governments’ need for sound information to support school improvement?*

## **3. How schools use achievement data, including NAPLAN, to inform teaching**

Principle 5 affirms that schools require reliable, rich data on the performance of their students because they have the primary accountability for student outcomes.

NAPLAN is the only source of whole-population data on student achievement in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. Schools do, however, have access to other sources of high-quality standardised achievement data from independent testing agencies.

Although My School provides the only authoritative school-by-school analysis of NAPLAN available to the general public, schools have access to other analyses of NAPLAN data. Most often these are provided by school systems through their data analytics software, such as SCOUT in NSW and the ACT or OneSchool in Queensland.

School data analytics typically offer the capacity to link NAPLAN data to other school-level data, such as attendance and letter grades, as well as tracking achievement and growth over time and making similar-school comparisons.

Since NAPLAN was introduced in 2008, information technology has opened up new possibilities in assessment, including online and on-demand assessment. Online assessment – gradually being introduced in NAPLAN – and on-demand assessment available from commercial suppliers provide new opportunities for timely and targeted assessment of students.

In considering the current approach to the presentation of NAPLAN data including information published on the My School website, comments are sought on the following:

*To what extent are NAPLAN data and the My School website used to inform teaching?*

*Which assessment tools, approaches and data analytics services do schools and school systems use to inform teaching?*

*What opportunities are there to improve the timeliness of NAPLAN reporting?*

## **4. How My School and NAPLAN data are reported to students and parents**

Principle 6 affirms that parents and families need information about schooling to develop informed judgements, make choices and engage with their children’s education. Information that they need for these purposes includes data on the performance of their child, schools and systems.

Individual students’ NAPLAN results are provided to every family. In addition, schools have the option of providing school-level student gain, achievement or similar-schools data to families through newsletters and social media. They may also use NAPLAN results or My School data displays in sharing their school’s teaching and learning priorities with school boards and councils, or with families more generally.

The information on the My School website provides parents and families with information that they may use to to make judgements about schools, make choices and engage with schools.

None of the information on the My School website appears to be targeted towards students, and communication with them about NAPLAN was not anticipated in the 2009 principles and protocols.

In considering the current approach to the presentation of NAPLAN data including information published on the My School website, comments are sought on the following:

*To what extent do schools communicate individual, whole school and comparative NAPLAN data to students, parents and families?*

*To what extent do parents and families use NAPLAN data on My School to make informed judgements, make choices and engage with their children’s education?*

*What NAPLAN reporting information do students need in order to contribute to their own education?*