

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

Parents have expressed concerns about the conflicting opinions regarding the development of the 'League Tables' from the information which is released on student/ school results in the NAPLAN testing. Below are some questions which have been asked by parents. These are not all the questions that parents have and we welcome any others that parents may have. There is a blog on this page so feel free to contribute to it with your comments and opinions.

### **1. I want transparency with information about my child's achievement at school.**

This type of information is already available through school reports, parent teacher interviews and ad hoc parent meetings. There is information sent out regarding a child's performance in the NAPLAN testing and other testing options in which a child may participate including University English, Science, Geography, History and Computing.

For parents of students enrolled in special education facilities or whose child currently receives funding support, there are annual review meetings. These meetings are intended as an opportunity for parents and staff to discuss a child's achievements and to identify strategies to assist with their progress over the next 12 month period.

### **2. How can I determine my child's performance against other student's within the school and across the state?**

This type of information should be provided in the documents received from the NAPLAN testing and also from in-school assessments.

There is a place within a school report to provide not only data on student results within the subject but also to comment on other aspects of a child's progress within the subject such as their interactions with other students in the class, their attitude to the subject and the level of understanding of concepts being taught.

### **3. How can I find any information about the performance of the school that my child attends?**

Schools provide a number of mechanisms by which a parent can obtain information about the performance of the school. Each year, there are School Reports which are a snapshot of the various aspects of the schools achievements. Most schools now have their own websites which provides a range of information on current important dates but also recognition of student and school achievements.

The school promotes events or functions such as Presentation nights, school assemblies and creative arts performance evenings which provide a showcase of both the student and the school, allowing family and community to celebrate. Open Days during Education week, and

at other times as determined by the school, offer parents and the community the chance to visit schools to gain first-hand knowledge of the daily operations of the classroom.

In some areas, the local media provide a way of promoting schools through media releases and other promotional material.

#### **4. How do I choose a school for my child?**

Parents make a number of decisions in relation to their child with one of the most important being the decision about what school will provide the formal learning experiences. Parents do not choose their child's school based on information provided on a website. Most parents take into consideration such factors as the feel of the school, the historic links of the family to the school, the community in which they live and the affect this will have on their feelings of safety for their child to walk to school and to interact with other students in the community.

“League tables give an inaccurate and misleading picture of school performance.

“Schools in disadvantaged areas will be publicly branded as failing schools. That unfair branding has a damaging impact on students, teachers, parents and makes addressing disadvantage even harder.

“League tables damage education by narrowing the curriculum and deepening inequality in schooling.

“We don’t need league tables to work out which schools need extra resources. Governments already have that information.

“Parents don’t want league tables and support laws that would prevent them being created.”

1. Should **not** be published as it would discriminate and stigmatise schools and students.
2. Teachers may only teach to the exam.
3. Information that is currently available to parents, needs to be promoted and made available however not through the media.
4. I mentioned they one of the major concerns of parents is the school culture bullying and this is something as a parent I would want to know how prevalent it is in the school and what is the school policy.
5. Information should be more comprehensive to include, school culture, Parent / Principle relationships, Bully Factor, community participation, parent participation, how individual students are improving on a class by by class. Eg one students averaging 40% now have an average of 50% therefore improvement index over 1 term is 25% for below average students and so on. This is something the teacher and the school could be rewarded for.
6. Teachers should be accountable and rewarded for results, I noted that if a teacher continually under performs the most one can hope for is to have them transferred. They should be accountable like the rest of us are in any other job, even the wharfies are now accountable.
7. I support transparency in schools.
8. School Fees/ Voluntary contributions should not be pushed in Public schools to the point that parents feel obliged or even in some cases ostracised if they do not pay fees. Public Education is free.
9. I mentioned how I believe in affluent areas some teachers can become fearful of parents as parents tend to be more inclined to address issues directly with teachers. This may result in teachers being concerned or reluctant to communicate or be transparent and in some instances lie. Having said that the majority of schools and teachers in NSW are very good.

10. I also spoke about the equity of funding private and public schools and the expectations of P&Cs to raise money for what the department should be doing.

She also asked me about more principle autonomy, I said its subject to the principle however I would need to give it more thought and discuss it with more experienced parents / P&C executive.

What are your thoughts? I hope my comments do not get lost in translation, I would hate to see a revolt at Double Bay...

At our local school, parents and staff have worked tirelessly over many years to improve the reputation of the school and to encourage new families to attend. Through these efforts, students at our school have access to a number of education programs that other schools do not have as well as an excellent physical education program. While the school does have some outstanding students, with some attending accelerated learning programs and academically gifted classes, the overall school NAPLAN results for each year are not fantastic, owing to there being a tailing of results and despite marked improvement of students between tests. The problem is, non of these aspects of the school will be reflected on the My School website.

In our local community, parents of school age children have a large choice of schools, both public and private, and as parents do not have to send their children to the local school, covert competition occurs. Attracting families to the school in such an environment is difficult enough, however added to this is the fact that the school is located in the middle of a low socio-economic area, which attracts its own issues and prejudices.

I have no doubt that local families that we are trying to attract to the school (and mostly from higher socio-economic backgrounds) will study the My School website, and decide that our school is perhaps not the one they want their child(ren) to attend. I believe that this will result in a self fulfilling prophecy, that there will be a polarising of schools and those schools that are lower down in the "league table" may not survive at all.

"Access to more information about schools and their performance is a valuable tool for parents, but the Government can't simply dump the figures out there and expect everything to be fine."

Senator Hanson-Young says that the Government should also acknowledge the legitimate concerns about the NAPLAN test itself.

"The test is so narrow in what it measures that it doesn't deliver a comprehensive overview of an individual student's performance or a school's performance," the Senator said. "As it stands, there is no way that it can."

The Greens support appropriate information about schools and student performance being provided to parents, teachers and departments to enable fully informed decision-making.

So far, however, there have been no satisfactory guarantees that the information will be presented in a way that does not have a damaging impact on schools, teachers and

children. Senator Hanson-Young says that the Government's determination has to be tempered by the need to protect schools and children from "naming and shaming".

"All the research suggests the creation of simplistic league tables - no matter who is responsible - only results in students and schools being stigmatised," Senator Hanson-Young said.

"Clearly having more information about our schools is a good thing, but without the presence of real, effective guidelines, we cannot be certain that kids' rights are being protected, and that parents are getting accurate information.

"The Greens call on the Government to immediately implement protocols around the way in which performance data is presented, to ensure that we do not see the creation of simplistic league tables with unfair and misleading comparisons of schools."

This is the Education Revolution in progress. Of course part of the Education Revolution is our new transparency measures, making sure we know what is happening in every school around the country, that we are shining a light on excellence and best practice so that it can be shared, and we're shining a light on those schools who need the benefit of our new resources and new reforms to make a difference to drive up the standard of education in those schools.

And this comes with our new resources, above and beyond all of the things we've seen today. We are making resources available; resources available in literacy and numeracy, resources available to improve teacher quality, resources available to bring the best teachers to the classrooms that need them the most, and resources to assist those schools that work in disadvantaged communities.

As I stand here in the electorate of the Coalition's education spokesperson, Mr Pyne, I do need to say it's a pity that lifting education standards for every child in every school isn't a shared national agenda. If we look at this school and the programs we've seen today, every one of them has been opposed by Mr Pyne.

He has opposed Building the Education Revolution, he has opposed and said he would bring to an end our computers in schools program, he has described school transparency as useless, the new My School website as useless. This is on top of a track record in office where the Coalition government, Mr Abbott and Mr Pyne watched education standards in this country decline, watched us fall against the standards of the world and did nothing about it.

As a Government we are committed to making sure we improve education for every child in every school and we're committed to ensuring we deliver our transparency measures on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January and then national testing measures again in May this year because that is vital to ensuring that we are improving standards for every child in every school.

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