

It's Time to Abandon NAPLAN

P&C Federation is heartened that our top education officials are listening to the objections from school communities about the NAPLAN regime. First, the latest Gonski report called for the industrial model of education to be replaced by individualised learning. Then the New South Wales Minister of Education, Rob Stokes called for NAPLAN to be replaced.

Now, the Secretary of the New South Wales Department of Education, Mark Scott has favoured a shift to individualised learning, which he says will make NAPLAN “obsolete”.

P&C Federation President Susie Boyd commented “We always stress that the ultimate point of education is to give each individual student the tools to become contributing members of society. That means cultivating their ability to think and learn on their own, since those are skills they'll need long after they leave school.”

“While parents do want an understanding of where their children are in their learning, we can do better than NAPLAN.”

“NAPLAN has led to a league table culture, where schools increasingly teach to the test as they compete for placement on the My School website. In many cases, passing NAPLAN tests has become an end in itself – the tests are no longer diagnostic tools to help assess and improve individual student learning. There are even times where schools discourage lower-performing students from sitting NAPLAN for fear that it will bring their school ranking down.”

Ms Boyd added “All the time, energy and resources that go into these tests would be far better directed to teaching and learning.”

For that reason, we cautiously welcome Mr Scott's call for more personalised testing and tracking of students' progress, including feedback to and from each student. This would shift the focus of education back to where it always should be: on individual students.

Ms Boyd said “The devil will always be in the details, and so we will closely monitor how the Department intends to implement personalised learning. But there is no doubt that any step away from the culture of teaching to the test is a positive sign that education officials are listening to school communities' concerns about NAPLAN.”

“The time has come to replace the current NAPLAN regime with a system that truly measures students' skills and abilities, and that gives them the education they deserve.”

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