

NAPLAN Online Threatens the Best Interests of Our Children

P&C Federation is calling on the Minister for Education to clarify the purpose of NAPLAN testing and delay the roll out of NAPLAN Online until all concerns over equity, capacity, capability and student wellbeing have been adequately addressed.

P&C Federation's President Susie Boyd commented, "NAPLAN is increasingly stressing our children while at the same time failing to address its original purpose of informing teaching and learning. We have children in Year 5 suffering from NAPLAN anxiety and linking year nine student's NAPLAN results to the minimum HSC standard has seen a substantial increase in student stress levels. From an education standpoint, how will testing of literacy and numeracy proficiency benefit our students when it only segregates them into two categories, pass or fail?"

Adding to these concerns is a recommendation from the Federal Government to require all Year 1 students to undergo literacy and numeracy checks, which would include implementing a synthetic phonics test.

After initial confusion that this was a supplement to the Best Start program, we have looked deeper and believe this will not provide the promised outcomes. NSW parents suggest this idea is taken back to the drawing board.

"There is a real concern this could become a NAPLAN test for six-year-olds", said Ms Boyd. "We don't need to subject children to more stress from even younger ages, particularly if it is to be in the production of yet more ranking tables to the detriment of true education."

Moreover, with the introduction of NAPLAN Online, computer based marking will be used to assess writing tasks and numeracy. Although computer marking has its place for assessing basic skills such as multiple choice questions, the capability is simply not there to assess higher level skills such as creative writing.

Parents across NSW have raised their concerns with challenges related to technology. ACARA needs to consider the widely varying access to differing technologies and students' ability to utilise technology before pushing NAPLAN Online. Outside metropolitan areas, many schools suffer from unreliable mobile and internet coverage. The Government needs to rethink the equity implications before replacing the paper based testing system.

Ms Boyd commented, "It is disturbing that despite many concerns raised by parents over equity and the technical capacity of schools, ACARA continues to push forward with on-line testing. We need to move NAPLAN away from being driven by cost savings, commercial interests and fast results delivery, and make it part of an educational framework that fosters creative inquiry and intellectual rigour."

It is also necessary to ask what is the ultimate point of the NAPLAN assessment. P&C Federation believes it should be diagnostic educational tool that provide snapshots of a student's achievements assessed against the point in the curriculum that their school is currently teaching. The use of NAPLAN results to create league tables has been detrimental to many schools creating significant migration of students away from what are seen as underperforming schools.

Ms Boyd added, "We want to ensure that private businesses do not disadvantage our education system and our children's future and wellbeing. We implore the Minister Stokes to urgently address our concerns and reduce the load our children are carrying."

Sydney, NSW, 22 September 2017

Authorised By: President Susie Boyd

Media Contact:

Communications Officer Hetaal Badiyani 1300 885 982 media@pandc.org.au

FEDERATION OF PARENTS AND CITIZENS ASSOCIATIONS OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Locked Bag 5114, PARRAMATTA NSW 2124

Telephone: 1300 885 982 Fax: 1800 655 866

Website: www.pandc.org.au ABN: 37 439 975 796