

## FEDERATION OF PARENTS AND CITIZENS ASSOCIATIONS OF NEW SOUTH WALES

### **POSITION PAPER - MINIMUM HIGH SCHOOL CERTIFICATE NUMERACY & LITERACY STANDARD**

P&C Federation supports the concept of minimum numeracy and literacy standards for the HSC, as this will strengthen the HSC as a credential and will help give our children essential skills they will need for the future.

However, P&C Federation does have concerns in relation to how the Department of Education will fund and provide the necessary resources to implement the changes to minimise undue stress and stigmatisation of students and conduct testing in a fair and equitable manner.

Specifically, P&C Federation has the following concerns:

- **Support & Resourcing:** Although the vast majority of students should meet the numeracy and literacy standards before sitting the HSC, there will be a percentage of students that will find it difficult to achieve without support. Gonski funding is essential to ensure that these students can get the support and resources they need.
- **Undue Stress and stigmatisation:** Unless managed appropriately, students may experience unnecessary stress or stigmatisation in trying to meet the standards. Testing needs to be seamlessly integrated as part of the normal teaching and assessment process with minimal or ideally no emphasis on NAPLAN. Steps also need to be taken to ensure that high schools do not start “teaching to the test” in order to raise their NAPLAN profile.
- **Equity:** Students who don’t meet band 8 in year 9 NAPLAN will likely be assessed using on-line computer-based testing in the following years. P&C Federation has concerns in relation to equity, availability, and access to electronic assessment across NSW. The necessary resources and infrastructure must be provided to all schools to ensure every student can be tested fairly and equitably before any testing commences.
- **Early Intervention:** To ensure that students do not fall behind in numeracy and or literacy it is essential that these students are identified and supported as early as possible. This needs to work effectively across primary and secondary schools.
- **Poor Communication:** Although first announced on 19 July 2016, there has been no indication from the Department of Education as to how the minimum standard will be supported or resourced within the public school system. This is creating uncertainty in the minds of both parents and students. The Department of Education needs to announce how it will be implementing the requirements to ease concerns of parents and students.

### **Background to HSC Reforms**

- The minimum numeracy and literacy standard announced in June 2016 results from a continued outcry over many years by parents, employers, and tertiary institutions in response to falling standards in these areas.
- It should be noted that the minimum standard is only part of substantive changes to the HSC which also includes new syllabuses for English, Maths and Science.
- The minimum standard is based upon the ACSF (Australian Core Skills Framework), not NAPLAN. The ACSF is a national framework providing a consistent approach to identifying and developing core skills in three main areas

- o Personal and community
  - o Workplace and employment
  - o Education and training
- The minimum standard for the HSC is set at level 3 of the ACSF. This represents the **MINIMUM** skills in numeracy and literacy that students completing high school in **year 12** should have. The emphasis is on year 12. The standard is not onerous.
  - The minimum standard will come into effect for all students sitting their HSC in 2020. This means that students sitting the year 9 NAPLAN in 2017 will be the first to be compared against the minimum standard.

### Testing for the Minimum Standard

Year 9 NAPLAN is simply the first time that students can be compared against the HSC standard. There are no changes to NAPLAN because of the introduction of the minimum HSC standard. NAPLAN is a national testing regime administered by ACARA (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority) whereas the HSC standard is based in NSW only and administered by NESA (NSW Education Standards authority) formerly known as BOSTES. As NSW conducts NAPLAN testing on behalf of ACARA in NSW, NAPLAN was seen as an opportunity to use an already existing national measure for student achievement in numeracy and literacy.

Students that achieve band 8 or higher in NAPLAN in either reading, writing or numeracy will be considered to have demonstrated they meet the HSC minimum standard in that particular skill. Obtaining a band 8 or higher means that a student has met a year 12 standard nearly four years ahead of time. It is estimated that around half of year 9 children will meet the band 8 level in one or more skills. Around 25% will meet all three.

Students who don't meet the standard in year 9 NAPLAN have not "failed" the HSC. These students will have multiple opportunities up until the HSC to demonstrate that they have achieved the standard by sitting NESA approved reading, writing and numeracy tests.

Students that meet the standard in a particular domain (reading, writing or numeracy) do not need to sit any further tests in that area. This means that a student that gets a band 8 or higher in year 9 NAPLAN numeracy but only achieves a band 6 in reading and writing would only need to sit the reading and writing tests until such time as they pass.

If a student still fails to meet the standard at the time of their HSC they will receive a RoSA (Record of School Achievement) and will have a further five years beyond this to meet to qualify for an HSC.

Some students including those in life skills courses will be exempt from the minimum standard.

Students that plan to leave school before completing the HSC do not have to meet the minimum standards but can choose to do so to help with further study or work.

### Support for Students identified by NESA

- Resources will be developed to help in the early identification of students in primary and high school at risk of not meeting the standard.
- Work is underway to better prepare graduating primary and secondary teachers to teach numeracy and literacy.
- There are new syllabuses in English and mathematics that more closely align with the ACSF that will help

students to meet the standards and teachers to help support and monitor their progress.

[P&C Federation submission to Next Generation HSC Position Paper](#)