

Concerns mount as NAPLAN goes online

The Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) has released its NAPLAN Online position paper following its Board meeting earlier this week. The position paper particularly highlights issues around the Year 3 Writing component, logistical and fairness issues, and whether NAPLAN and My School truly sit with contemporary teaching and learning in the 21st Century. It also endorsed the position that Year 3 Writing is preferred as a pencil and paper test under the current NAPLAN arrangements.

APPA President, Dennis Yarrington said,

“Put succinctly, NAPLAN’s success has been in its ability to focus the community and politicians on the work of our schools and the value of education. That’s a good thing. However, the moment results were published on the My School website and schools compared with red and green boxes, we’ve seen its impact distorted.

“The pendulum has swung to test results rather than teaching and learning, schools are under pressure to achieve in the tested areas and, with the move online, we will see an overemphasis on touch typing and keyboard skills in the early years at the expense of essential teaching and learning, a rich curriculum, and the collaborative and creative skills needed for the modern world.

“The move to take NAPLAN online will also have a real cost and resourcing impact on schools. Is this the best way to invest limited school funds and will that spending actually benefit our primary students?”

Mr Yarrington said that the rollout of NAPLAN Online would see well-resourced schools with good connectivity and onsite technical support positioned for their students to be tested in a reasonably equitable way.

“This cannot be said for other schools where the devices are of varying quality, where the technical support is limited or where connectivity is poor.

“In a situation where schools are compared on My School, this inequity is of great concern and adds to the ‘high stakes’ nature of NAPLAN in general.”

APPA has long expressed concerns about NAPLAN itself and, with reports that many parents have fears that their students’ achievements are not being truly recognised on the My School website, the time has come to revisit exactly what we are trying to achieve. At the moment, we are only succeeding in narrowing primary education to a competitive race where some win and some lose.

APPA’s NAPLAN Online position paper can be found at: www.appa.asn.au.

APPA is the professional association representing over 7,200 Government, Catholic and Independent primary school principals across Australia.

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