



**NATIONAL LITERACY AND NUMERACY ASSESSMENTS MAY 2009**  
**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

**TEST DESIGN AND PURPOSE**

**How were the NAPLAN tests developed?**

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) was developed collaboratively by the states and territories, the Australian Government and the non-government school sectors. It operates under the auspices of education ministers and is overseen by a steering group comprising senior executives from states, territories and the Australian Government as well as representatives from the Catholic and independent school sectors.

NAPLAN test development in 2008 and 2009 was managed on behalf of education ministers by Curriculum Corporation in consultation with the NAPLAN Project Reference Group (PRG). The PRG comprises senior test managers from each state and territory as well as representatives of the Catholic and independent school sectors. The steering group was also advised by an Expert Advisory Group comprising five eminent assessment and educational measurement experts.

**At what time of the year do students sit NAPLAN tests?**

Students participate in NAPLAN tests in May of each year.

**Who sits the tests?**

Every year, all students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 across the country in government and non-government schools sit the NAPLAN tests.

**Are any students exempted from sitting NAPLAN tests?**

Students with severe intellectual or functional disabilities or students from a non-English speaking background who have been learning English in Australia for less than one year are eligible for exemption. However, this is not automatic and parents may choose for their child to participate.

**What is tested?**

Students in the same year level across Australia complete a writing task and are tested on items in Reading, Language Conventions (Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation) and Numeracy.

**How do students benefit from these tests?**

NAPLAN tests provide information for parents, teachers and schools on individual student performance. Teachers and schools use this information, in conjunction with other information, to determine how well their students are performing and to identify any areas of need requiring assistance.



## **NATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM**

### Literacy and Numeracy

National testing also enables consistency, comparability and transferability of results across jurisdictions.

#### **Instead of testing every student in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, why aren't tests conducted on sample student populations in these years?**

Literacy and numeracy are critical elements of learning and it is important to understand how a student is progressing in establishing these foundations. The tests provide valuable diagnostic information about each student, and support the ability to focus teaching on areas of need. The tests also help parents see how their child is progressing against national standards.

#### **Isn't the curriculum different in each state and territory and doesn't that mean students learn different things?**

State and territory curricula have more commonalities than differences. The tests have been developed using the nationally agreed Statements of Learning that reflect the core elements of the curriculum documents used in the different states and territories.

#### **What are the advantages of NAPLAN tests?**

NAPLAN tests provide rich data on student performance across the range of student achievement, not just at the minimum levels of literacy and numeracy achievement.

The tests provide an accurate picture of how students are performing, as all students in each year level sit the same tests.

Another important aspect of the NAPLAN test design is the single scale of achievement across ten bands from Years 3 to 9. Each band for each domain has a summary of skills assessed at each year level. The introduction of the ten achievement bands from Year 3 to Year 9 means that as a student advances through schooling, it is possible to see how much progress in literacy and numeracy he or she has made.

## **TEST RESULTS**

#### **What NAPLAN results are published?**

Parents of students taking the tests receive an individual report for their child. The student report shows how the student performed against the national average and, in some states and territories, the school average.

A national report is published by the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA). The report shows results at national and state and territory levels by achievement levels and/or mean scores as well as by sex, Indigenous status, language background other than English status, parental occupation, parental education, and geolocation (metropolitan, provincial, remote and very remote) at each year level and for each domain of the test.



## **NATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM**

### Literacy and Numeracy

Data from the national tests underpins strong national reporting. Analysis of the data enables the development of reporting measures to better inform parents, teachers, schools, governments and the Australian public of students' literacy and numeracy performance.

#### **When are NAPLAN results released to the general public?**

The results are released to the public in two stages. The first stage is the National Summary Report, released in mid September 2009, showing results at each year level and domain by state and territory and nationally. The second stage is the full National Report that includes detailed results by sex, Indigenous status, language background other than English status, parental occupation, parental education, and geolocation (metropolitan, provincial, remote and very remote) and is released at the end of the year of testing.

#### **Why are the national results released in two stages?**

The first stage National Summary Report is released around the same time as the distribution of reports to parents and provides key national information in numerical and graphical forms. The full National Report, which relies on more detailed analysis, is provided at the end of the year.

## **STUDENT REPORTS**

#### **When are the results released to schools?**

Schools receive detailed student results either before or at the same time that student reports are provided to parents. Student reports are distributed from mid September 2009, depending on the timing of school holidays in each jurisdiction.

#### **What is included in the student report to parents?**

Every child receives a report showing his or her results along with common national key information about his or her performance. For each domain and year level, student results are reported against six achievement bands, the national average, the middle 60 per cent of Australian students and the national minimum standards. In some states and territories, the school average is also shown where the minimum cohort size for reporting is met.

#### **Why do the reports have different starting bands for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9?**

NAPLAN tests are on a single scoring scale with ten achievement bands that extend across Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. Each year, however, has a different lowest achievement band. Band 1 is the lowest for Year 3, Band 3 for Year 5, Band 4 for Year 7 and Band 5 for Year 9.

This single scale allows students, teachers and parents to monitor progress across the years and compare results to those in previous years as students advance through school. For example, at the national level, it is possible to gauge the improvement of the highest achieving group of students and, at the same time, to pay attention to the group of students who have yet to reach the minimum standard.



## **NATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM**

Literacy and Numeracy

### **By the time student reports are distributed, is the information still useful for helping students?**

NAPLAN results in 2009 will be available from mid September. This information for parents, schools and teachers can be used to provide support to students within the same year the tests are conducted, and enables schools to plan future learning opportunities for them.

### **Is help available to interpret the NAPLAN tests results?**

Parents with questions about their child's results should speak to the child's teachers to learn more about the child's performance at school. See also the information sheet, *Understanding Your Child's Report*, on this website.

### **Can I compare these results with my child's results from previous years?**

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy was introduced in 2008 and children are tested every second year. If your child sat his or her first NAPLAN test in 2008, you will be able to compare your child's results after he or she sits the next NAPLAN test in 2010.

It is possible to compare national results in 2008 with national results from the 2009 NAPLAN tests and the years beyond.

## **INTEGRITY OF TEST ADMINISTRATION**

### **How is integrity of test administration assured?**

National Protocols for Test Administration have been agreed by all governments so that all students around Australia sit the tests under common conditions. Test Administration Manuals are provided to all schools and teachers supervising the tests.

### **Are there special provisions/accommodations for students with disabilities/special needs when they sit the NAPLAN tests?**

All students are encouraged to participate in the national tests and provisions are made to meet the needs of individual students with special needs. The type of support and assistance usually provided in schools for students with special needs is also provided during the tests.

### **Do NAPLAN tests encourage teaching to the test?**

The national literacy and numeracy tests are based on curricula that all teachers throughout Australia are required to cover and reflect the essential elements that should be taught at the appropriate year levels. Teachers have no access to actual test items and have no way of knowing what particular items will be included in each test. National Protocols for Test Administration have been agreed by all participating authorities who are responsible for ensuring the integrity of the testing process.



### **How can teachers prepare students for the tests?**

The best preparation schools can provide for students is teaching the curriculum as the tests reflect core elements of state and territory curricula. Test practice involves students completing examples of previous tests or sample tests for the purpose of familiarising them with test instructions and common forms of questions. NAPLAN tests from 2008 and 2009 are available on the NAPLAN website [www.naplan.edu.au](http://www.naplan.edu.au). Test preparation increases student understanding of what is being asked and provides strategies to focus on test content. Teachers routinely prepare students for testing including, as appropriate, practice on sample tests. Adequate preparation ensures that students feel comfortable in the testing environment and are able to confidently demonstrate what they know and can do.

## **REPORTING THE RANGE OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

### **How is the full range of student achievement reported?**

Students' results for each part of the test are reported against the ten achievement bands from Year 3 to Year 9, with six bands at each year level. Over time, parents will be able to monitor their child's progress in literacy and numeracy.

### **What does 'national minimum standard' actually mean?**

NAPLAN reports show the minimum standard as a full band on the scale. If your child's result is in this band, then he or she has typically demonstrated only the basic elements of literacy and numeracy for the year level. Students whose results are in the minimum standard band could slip behind and therefore need close monitoring and may need additional support to ensure they have the opportunity to achieve their potential.

For each year level, a minimum standard is defined and located on the common underlying scale. Band 2 is the minimum standard for Year 3; Band 4 is the minimum standard for Year 5; Band 5 is the minimum standard for Year 7; and Band 6 is the minimum standard for Year 9.

### **What does it mean if a student is in the lowest band (below national minimum standard)?**

If your child's results are in the lowest band for the year level, he or she has not achieved the basic elements of literacy and numeracy required for that year level. Your child will need focused intervention and additional support to help him or her achieve the skills required to participate fully in schooling. Parents should discuss this with their child's teacher.