



## Public submission made to the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools

Submitter: Mathematical Association of NSW Inc  
Submitting as a: Parent or community organisation  
State: NSW

### Summary

There should be more preservice teacher professional practice in undergraduate and post graduate courses with mentor teachers who are exemplary so that preservice teachers observe what excellent teaching looks like in the classroom.

Use NAPLAN properly – it was originally devised to diagnose student performance and measure progress over time. It was a way of informing teachers about what they could do to support their students. Instead, it has become ‘high stakes’ and has placed significant pressure on schools to perform because of the way results are reported – remove My School website! It serves no purpose except to place pressure on students, teachers and schools.

Professional Association need more support to provide PL to the large number of rural and regional schools. Funding should be provided to professional associations to support rural and regional teachers to access professional learning – either coming to metropolitan centres or bringing PL to them. Beginning teachers in regional schools are often in most need as they are often called upon to teach out of field, especially in mathematics. More needs to be done to support these teachers.

### Main submission

Educational success includes, depth of learning, where questioning and investigating is valued rather than breadth of learning, in other words, academic rigour rather than focussing on fluency and memory recall. On leaving schools, students should have developed resilience to deal with difficulties and persistence when faced with challenges. In mathematics and science, educational success looks like students engage in investigations, problem solving, reasoning and communicating, students who value learning, think critically and analytically. Students who observe differences of opinions, and question and challenge the norm.

In addition, students should be literate and numerate, be able to make informed decisions based on evidence, be it about their health, gambling, financial or political

choices. They should value numeracy rather than wear innumeracy as a badge of honour.

Have the students acquired measurable knowledge and skills? What are the skills required – are they academic skills? How is success measured? Is success at school only measured by academic success?

Have the students increased/acquired confidence, positive self-image, resilience and persistence, mental and physical health, respect for others, discipline and self-control, hope for the future?

School quality should be based on the relationships a school has with its pupils, parents and community and how enabling education it is. One could ask if these are measurable? Educational success should be based on value added scores over time, measured on particular academic areas such as financial literacy, communication and collaboration.

There is inequity of educational opportunities for students across Australia. Public schools work extremely hard to use their funding efficiently, however there is not enough. There needs to be more school funding provided particularly in public education and more equitable spread of funding not just used more 'effectively and efficiently'.

Cuts to funding have reduced the number of support teachers available in classrooms, particularly for special needs students in mainstream classrooms. Respondents have noted that limited funding has impacted the number of teachers' aides, councillors, social workers - people who would be able to work with our disadvantaged students. Increase funding to allow schools to deliver more targeted support for the diverse needs of students by providing qualified teaching support in the classroom.

Funding could be used to give teachers more time for lesson preparation and working with colleagues to improve teaching and learning. Reduce the amount of paperwork and reduce the number of face to face hours as a proportion. Provide more funding for ongoing professional development particularly in whole school numeracy and literacy programs. Knowing how to do Mathematics is not the same as teaching it effectively and Numeracy is 'different' to Mathematics.

Having a set of teaching standards is good as they provide teachers an opportunity to reflect on their practice and effectiveness. These should remain. However, they can sometimes be an exercise in 'ticking a box' to satisfy accreditation requirements. In many cases finding quality professional development is difficult. Association such as PETA and MANSW provide professional learning as much as they can, but there are a large number of rural and regional schools and teachers who have difficulty accessing PL. Funding should be provided to professional associations to support rural and regional teachers to access professional learning – either coming to

metropolitan centres or bringing PL to them. Often it is beginning teachers who are sent to rural and regional schools as this is where the need is greatest. Yet, they have reported that they are often called upon to teach out of field, and are ill-equipped to teach, especially in mathematics. More needs to be done to support these teachers. Encourage teachers to share resources more effectively, provide networks that support student and teacher learning. Identify and value quality teaching and learning. Implement an Australian curriculum!

There are many great teachers in schools. These exemplary teachers should be used within schools to 'effectively' mentor other, and/or beginning teachers. Effective mentor training and adequate time for meetings with mentees would support student learning – perhaps mentors could be on a reduced load.

Teachers have always stated that time to spend sharing and collaborating with colleagues such as specific time allocated to mutual planning, sharing of good practice, PD, etc.

#### Barriers to improvements

The greatest barrier is the top down approach from governments and accrediting bodies. Teachers need to be involved in the process of planning, and research based, best-practice. A tendency to want to jump on any bandwagon by schools, plus funding being supplied for this, means that people throw money at it without truly questioning why it would be beneficial.

Keep NAPLAN for its value in informing schools about where their students are at, but stop reporting NAPLAN results on My School website. We cannot compare apples with oranges when we have such diversity in Australia. All it does is place significant pressure on students and teachers in particular regions rather than focussing on relationships, teaching, engagement, students' personal growth and value added learning.

The impact of technology in the classroom needs to be researched - schools and teachers are jumping on the bandwagon without any significant research that shows that students outcomes have improved with the use of technology. However, much of the problem lies in the fact that teachers have not been provided with the skills for effective implementation of technology in the classroom and the current HSC is what drives its use, particularly in high school Mathematics.