



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

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Submitting as a: Other (Retired Teacher of disadvantaged students and An Even Start Tutor)
State: Qld

Summary

Adult Functional Literacy & Numeracy in the workforce has been identified by the Productivity Commission, The National Quality Council, National Skills Councils and COAG as a major factor affecting our national productivity and international competitiveness, so much so that all Trainers and Assessors must gain qualifications in Addressing Adult Literacy and Numeracy and it is now a core unit within their qualification.

The An Even Start resources and assessment tools developed by the Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) for this program were of the very highest standard and are still in use in the NT, WA, by private tutors and also internationally. The Assessment and Tutor Resource kits were distributed to every school in Australia and are gathering dust in many schools. An independent evaluation of literacy and numeracy assessment tools and intervention strategies found that the freely available An Even Start program was equal to or better than many expensive programs used by schools.

As a nation we can't afford to allow the petty political blame game over literacy & numeracy or the misuse of NAPLAN data to get in the way of effective interventions for individual students; students and parents have a right to ask teachers and schools "What are you doing and what can I do about the literacy and numeracy barriers of my child" To read in the media that the very students who are in greatest need are encouraged (by some schools) to stay away on NAPLAN day is a national disgrace. Early identification and targeted intervention is the key to addressing literacy and numeracy concerns for our students.

Re-activate the An Even Start Program to enable our most vulnerable students to achieve educational excellence.

Main submission

NAPLAN results are out and the old debates are raging yet again but what always seems to be missing from the passionate discussion is the potential value to individual students, their parents and the teachers of identifying specific aspects of literacy and numeracy where students are struggling. Access to learning is built on the foundation of competence in the basic tools of literacy and numeracy and the earlier we identify and address any areas of concern the greater the chance students have of experiencing success in all areas of learning.

2014 will be the first year that students in year 9 will sit the NAPLAN who first sat it in 2008 and sadly across Australia there will be students who did not meet the National Minimum Standards (NMS) in 2008 in aspects of literacy and or numeracy in grade 3 and subsequently in grades 5 and 7 because their concerns were not addressed. The NAPLAN is simply an early intervention diagnostic tool that identifies where an individual student can't make sense of an aspect of literacy or numeracy. The arguments, fear and misuse of the collective data distract us from the value to the individual of identifying and addressing areas of significant concern.

In 2008 the An Even Start Tutoring program was rolled out across Australia by DEEWR this valuable program was offered to all students who did not meet the National Minimum Standards in Literacy or Numeracy as identified by NAPLAN, skilled and accredited tutors were able to offer 12 hours of 1:1 tutoring to address the specific areas of concern. This targeted tutoring took place outside the classroom, often in homes, without peer presence, pressure or shame enabling students to grasp concepts that had eluded them in the crowded classroom. This was an initiative of the Howard government and sadly it was discontinued by the Rudd government without an evaluation of it's efficacy.

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For many years Jobseekers with literacy numeracy barriers to their gaining employment have been able to access the Language Literacy and Numeracy Program (LLNP) now the Seeking Education & Employment program (SEE) run by TAFE's and Job Service Agencies (JSA) clients are able to access up to 200 hours of training in the core skill of; Learning, Reading, Writing, Oral Communication, Numeracy and Jobsearch skills in small groups. This program uses its own toolkit comprising The Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) together with valid assessment tools to identify deficits in the core skills of Jobseekers which are then addressed by targeted training.

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