

Assessment and reporting

Improving student performance



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Introduction

Improving the educational performance of Australia's children and young people is critical for the nation's future social and economic prosperity. A quality education gives students the skills they need to participate as productive, creative and responsible members of society.

In December 2008, Australian education ministers agreed to the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, a policy document that sets the direction for Australian schooling over the next 10 years.

To help achieve the objectives set out in the *Declaration*, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) was established in May 2009.

ACARA is responsible for developing Australia's first national curriculum, implementing key assessment programs, and national reporting on school performance.

More information about ACARA is available at www.acara.edu.au.

Through the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, education ministers committed to:

- support quality teaching and school leadership;
- promote world-class curriculum and assessment; and
- improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged young Australians.

More information is available at www.mceecdya.edu.au.

Assessment of student performance

The heart of a good education is quality teaching. Every day, teachers use their training and professional judgment to assess how students are performing and what needs to be done to support them in achieving their full potential.

The Australian Curriculum will describe the content students will be taught. It will also include descriptions of the achievement that will be expected in each year of schooling.

The Curriculum will influence the way national assessments are designed to measure student achievement on national scales.

Having access to assessment data helps in a number of important ways, including:

- assisting teachers and parents to understand progress in student learning;
- allowing teachers to monitor the gain in student performance against achievement standards set in the curriculum;
- providing information to evaluate whether current programs are working; and
- providing an evidence base that schools can share with parents and their school communities to ensure a common understanding about what action is needed to support student learning and improvement.

The Australian Curriculum

ACARA is responsible for the development of the Australian Curriculum from Kindergarten to Year 12. The national curriculum will be accessible to all young Australians, regardless of their social or economic background or the school they attend.

The first phase of development of the Australian Curriculum focused on English, mathematics, science and history. The second phase of work will develop the Australian Curriculum for languages, geography and the arts. The third phase of Australian Curriculum development will include the remaining learning areas and subjects outlined in the 2008 Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians.

ACARA works collaboratively with a wide range of stakeholders including teachers, principals, government, State and Territory education authorities, professional education associations, business and industry, community groups and the broader public.

National Assessment Program (NAP)

The National Assessment Program (NAP) is an ongoing program of assessments that monitors progress towards the outcomes of the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*. It encompasses all tests endorsed by the Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA). These include:

- national literacy and numeracy tests;
- sample assessments in science literacy, civics and citizenship, information and communication technology literacy; and
- Australia's participation in international assessments.

Sample assessments

Sample population tests are conducted on a rolling three year cycle to assess students' skills and understandings in three learning areas. The year levels tested are shown below:

Learning area	Year level/s tested
Science literacy	Year 6 (science is assessed at senior levels by international assessments)
Civic and citizenship	Years 6 and 10
Information and communication technology literacy	Years 6 and 10



For each assessment, a representative sample of students from all States and Territories, all school sectors and a range of backgrounds participate in the testing.

The sample assessments help monitor national and jurisdictional progress.

A national report is published for each assessment, providing results at state, territory and national levels, and by categories of student background.

Participating schools also receive details of their own students' results and the school's results.

More information on NAP sample assessments is available at www.nap.edu.au.

International assessments

In 2008, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed that performance in international testing would be used to measure progress towards the agreed outcome for schooling that:

‘Australian students excel by international standards’.

International assessment information helps guide education policy development and review, both in Australia and overseas. The assessments test student knowledge and gather contextual information on their background and the resources available to their schools. This allows governments and educators to analyse the achievement of different groups of students and direct resources to help students improve their performance in the future.

Australia currently participates in four international student assessments:

- Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA);
- Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS);
- Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS); and
- International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS)—commencing in 2013.

More information on each of the international assessments is available from the following organisations:

- the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (visit www.iea.nl);
- the TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center (visit <http://timssandpirls.bc.edu>); and
- the Australian Council for Educational Research (visit www.acer.edu.au).



National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)

NAPLAN is the annual assessment of all students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 across Australia in literacy and numeracy. It enables a comparison over time and is intended to monitor students' performance throughout their schooling.

NAPLAN utilises national scales to measure achievement in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in the domains of Reading, Writing, Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation, and Numeracy.

The scales enable monitoring of progress at a range of levels and allow assessment and reporting of the full range of student achievement, not just the minimum standard.

The scales are divided into 10 achievement bands with six bands for reporting at each year level.

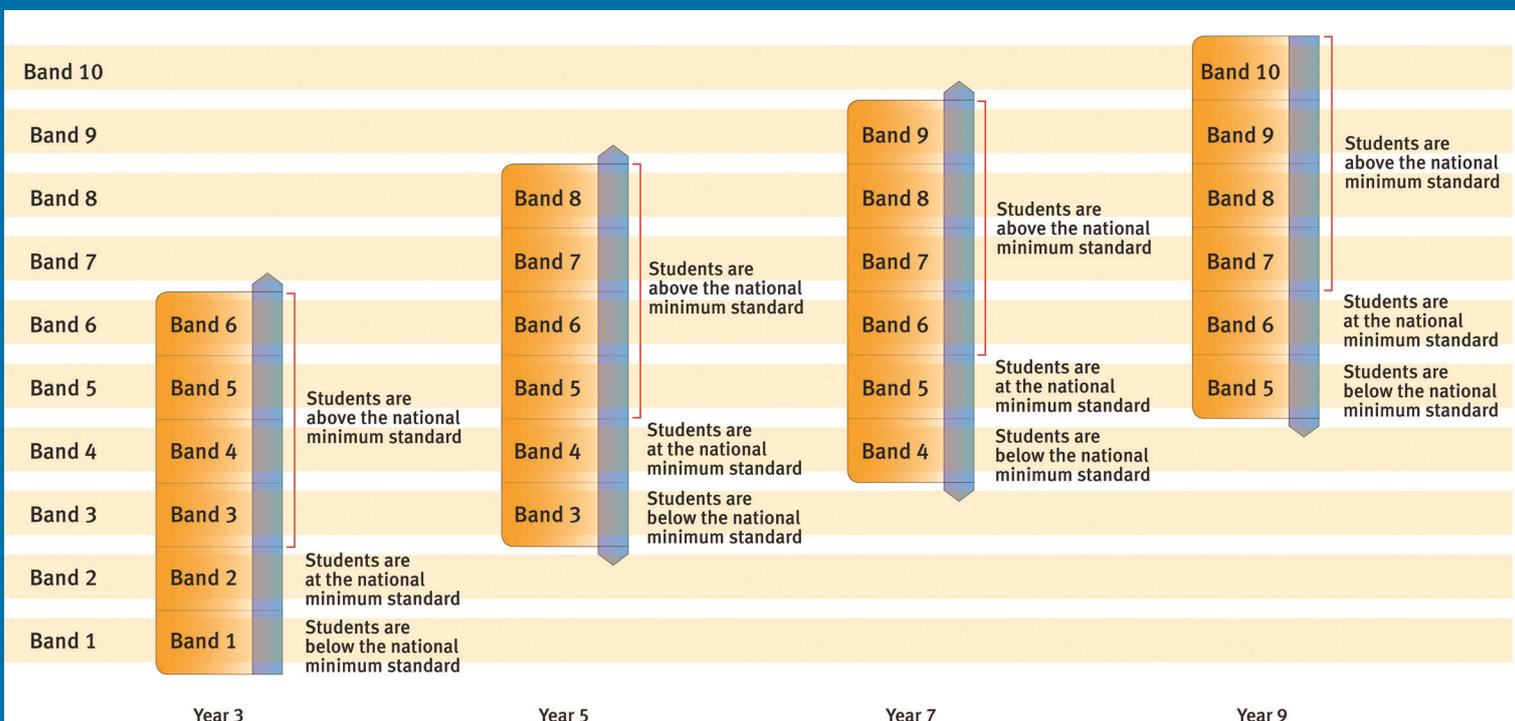
Parents receive individual student reports which show their child's results against the national average, the six achievement bands, national minimum standards and the middle 60 per cent of students in Australia.

Each school receives a comprehensive package of data on its performance, both at the school level, and for each student.

The package includes information on school performance in relation to the State or Territory, how groups of students are performing and how students performed on each test question.

More information on NAPLAN is available at www.nap.edu.au.

NAPLAN National Assessment Scale





The *My School* website

For the first time in Australia, nationally comparable data on schools can be accessed in one location—the *My School* website. This will assist parents, schools, governments and the wider community to better understand the performance of students in schools.

To support greater transparency and guide decision making, all governments have agreed to national reporting on all schools, with regard to the following three elements:

- educational outcomes—including the results of national literacy and numeracy testing and an indication of students' improvement as they progress through school, participation in VET courses and school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, senior secondary outcomes

and, for jurisdictions with relevant data, post-school destinations;

- student population—including the level of socio-educational advantage (SEA) of the school student body, the proportion of students with an Indigenous background, and students with a language background other than English, as well as student attendance rates; and
- capacity or capability—including the type of school, the year range, student and staff numbers, school financial information, and location.

The *My School* website enables schools to be compared to other schools serving students from statistically similar backgrounds, making it possible to identify and learn from schools that are doing better than other schools with similar students and to target resources most effectively.

More information on
My School is available at
www.myschool.edu.au.



For further information, please visit the ACARA website
at www.acara.edu.au or phone 1300 895 563.