



AEU Parliamentary Brief

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LEAGUE TABLES – GREATER INEQUALITY AND SEGREGATION

In the week commencing May 11 2009 students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 sat the NAPLAN tests—national tests created before a national curriculum and in the absence of a common school starting age across the country.

As announced at the meeting of education ministers on April 17, “...from 2009 the new Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority will be responsible for publishing relevant, nationally comparable information on all schools. This will include publication of the 2008 NAPLAN data and associated contextual information. The information will enable comparisons of each school with other schools serving similar student populations around the nation and with the best-performing school in each cohort of ‘like schools’.”

Later that day, Minister Julia Gillard declared that “education ministers have always said there’s no point in reporting on

raw scores or having simplistic league tables”.

While continuing to express rejection of simplistic league tables, the ministers have failed to say how they intend to take to stop their creation and publication.

The publication of league tables in the Hobart Mercury on Wednesday, 6 May 2009 did not only expose the hollowness of the statements by Ministers in opposition to league tables, it validated our concerns and the profession’s calls for a legislative response to prohibit their creation.

Similarly, the report outlining the intention of the NSW Government to amend its legislation and related regulations introduced in 1997 preventing the publication of school league tables has also legitimised and validated the call for a legislative response.

The answer to school improvement does not lie in the approach outlined in the “national transparency agenda”. It lies in proactive policies aimed at properly resourcing and supporting schools, and establishing a culture of evaluation, progressive refinement

and improvement of teaching and learning in all schools. To do otherwise accepts a deficit model of thinking, a culture of blame shifting rather than a culture where everyone, teachers, parents and governments accept and fulfil their responsibility.

On March 19, 15 peak professional associations wrote to all education ministers urging them to take legislative action prohibiting the creation and publication of league tables flowing from the collection and release of student and school performance data. (A copy of the letter can be found at:

www.aefederal.org.au/Debates/Ltablesletter.pdf)

The ministers have failed to listen to the profession.

The damage to curriculum provision, students and entire school communities caused by league tables is well-documented in international research and evidence. Research also shows that league tables create greater inequality and increased segregation as a result of shifts in student enrolment patterns.

It is now beyond dispute. Unless appropriate action is taken by governments the creation and publication of league tables in all state and territories is inevitable.

AEU MEDIA RELEASE- PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO CELEBRATE NATIONAL PUBLIC EDUCATION DAY

On Thursday, May 21 public schools across the country celebrated National Public Education Day.

“Public schools are a foundation of our society. They are places of learning, of inspiration and opportunity where every Australian child can get the education they deserve,” AEU Federal President, Angelo Gavrielatos said.

“National Public Education Day provides an opportunity for school communities to showcase their wonderful achievements and to celebrate the values and traditions of public education in Australia.

“Nothing is more important for our future than strong public schools. We owe the success of our nation to the work of public schools, which through history, have provided every child with an equal opportunity to succeed regardless of their background.

“Australia’s public education system is underpinned by the values of tolerance, acceptance, and the celebration of diversity and the pursuit of excellence for all.

“The 2009 school year began with the great news of a dramatic boost in funding for public schools by the Rudd Government.

“The Government has also announced a review of schools funding which will commence in 2010. The outcome of this review must deliver a fairer funding system that reflects governments’ primary obligation to properly and adequately fund public schools.

“In addition to emphasising the importance of high standards of achievement, reforms to education must also aim to achieve the building and maintenance of a socially cohesive, prosperous and democratic society.

“The role of public education in achieving this must be acknowledged and fostered by government,” Mr Gavrielatos said.

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