

National assessment program

Newsletter

This newsletter has been written to provide NSW public schools with up to date information about the 2008 National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN).

A previous newsletter was sent to schools in December, 2007.

More information about the National Assessment Program can be found at

www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/nap/index.htm

Questions about the National Assessment Program can be emailed to naplannsw@det.nsw.edu.au

2008 National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)

Key facts

- The NAPLAN tests for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 will be conducted on May 13, 14 and 15.
- Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 teachers should be familiar with the organisation and scope of the tests and should ensure that students are prepared for the tests.
- Year 7 and Year 9 students will need to have access to and be familiar with a calculator for one section of the numeracy tests.
- Arrangements should be made to meet the needs of students who are likely to require special provisions.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Purpose

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) will assess the literacy and numeracy learning of students at Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in all Australian schools.

In NSW the NAPLAN tests will replace the Basic Skills Test (BST), English Language and Literacy Assessment (ELLA) and Secondary Numeracy Assessment Program (SNAP).

As for the BST, SNAP and ELLA tests the results of the NAPLAN tests will provide valuable information for teachers and parents. The results will supply a picture of student performance across all levels of achievement and will help teachers to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of their students.

Test schedule

- In May 2008 the National Assessment Program will be carried out across Australia in the same week for all four Year groups.
 - Testing will take place over three days:
 - Tuesday 13 May - Language Conventions (Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation) and Writing
 - Wednesday 14 May - Reading
 - Thursday 15 May - Numeracy.
- A make-up day for students who missed a test paper or were absent on a particular test day has been set for Friday 16 May.
- Administration manuals will be sent to schools during March 2008.

Previous newsletter

A newsletter was sent to all schools in December, 2007.

That newsletter addressed the following topics:

- Purpose
- Marking the NAP Writing tests
- Candidacy
- Exemptions
- Special provisions
- Students in multi-age classes
- Reporting to students, parents and the community
- NSW sample testing
- Preparing students – advice to principals and teachers
- Specifications for each test
- Use of calculators.

Copies of the previous newsletters can be found at

www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/nap/newsletter/index.htm



Planning for the NAPLAN tests

As stated in the previous newsletter, preparation for the tests should include the following actions:

- Informing teachers about the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy, and of the need for Year 7 and Year 9 students to have familiarity with, and access to, a calculator for the Numeracy – Calculator Allowed test paper.
- Confirming that teaching and learning programs address the aspects of literacy and numeracy that are to be assessed.
- Ensuring that excursions or other school events do not occur on the dates of the NAPLAN tests.
- Identifying students who are likely to require special provisions and making arrangements to meet their needs.
- Ensuring that a student who is blind or has vision impairment has access to an appropriate calculator and sufficient time to become proficient in its use.

Structure and content of the tests

Literacy tests

There will be three sections in the national literacy tests: Language Conventions, Writing and Reading.

Two of these, Language Conventions (Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation) and Writing will take place on Tuesday 13 May. The third section, Reading, will take place on Wednesday 14 May.

Separate test booklets will be provided for each of the three sections. There will be an additional test material item provided for two of these: for the Reading section a separate Reading stimulus magazine will be supplied and for Writing a separate Writing stimulus page will be provided.

This is the first time that the full cohort for Year 9 has been tested

on a statewide scale in NSW. NSW statewide tests (BST, ELLA and SNAP) did not assess literacy (or numeracy) in Year 9, so there was no NSW equivalent to the Year 9 NAPLAN literacy (or numeracy) tests.

The style and format of the NAPLAN tests are very consistent across Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, so teachers can expect the Year 9 NAPLAN literacy tests to be a more challenging version of the Year 7 NAPLAN literacy tests.

Similar to the national sample assessments and international tests undertaken by a number of students e.g. Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the NAPLAN will test the full range of student ability and will include some more challenging items.

Schools should determine what additional time and/or rest breaks particular students will need and schedule these into the time allotted for each test.

Numeracy tests

The NAPLAN numeracy tests will provide information on performance across all levels of achievement. Numeracy comprises number and patterns (and algebra for Year 7 and Year 9), space and geometry, measurement, chance and data.

Similar to the national sample assessments and international tests undertaken by a number of students, the NAPLAN will test the full range of student ability and will include some more challenging items.

NSW statewide tests (BST, ELLA and SNAP) did not assess numeracy (or literacy) in Year 9, so there was no NSW equivalent to the Year 9 NAPLAN numeracy tests.

Preparing students for use of calculators – Year 7 and Year 9

In Years 7 and 9, there will be two discrete tests in numeracy: one that does not permit the use of a calculator

and one in which students are permitted to use a calculator, but need only use it if it helps them to answer the question. The calculator permitted test will immediately follow the non-calculator test.

Specific advice on preparing students for use of the calculators was provided in the previous newsletter and examples of answers to questions related to calculator use are available from the Curriculum Directorate website:

www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/secondary/mathematics/years7_10/teaching/using_cal.htm

As the Numeracy assessment will be held in May, it is important that Year 7 students have an opportunity to become familiar with their calculators early in the school year. Students who are blind or have vision impairment will require calculators which support their individual learning needs.

Additional resources for schools.

A manual for schools has been published to provide advice about the test administration process in schools. Specific advice is included and supports schools with:

- Preparation for the tests
- Procedures on and after the day/s of testing and
- Advice about support for students needing special provisions.

An attachments section provides a selection of application forms and the contact details page provides telephone, website and email details.

Find the manual by following the 'schools' link at

www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/nap/index.htm and using the NSW Public Schools link.

Questions from schools

Schools and individual teachers have posed a range of questions about NAPLAN using the email address naplannsw@det.nsw.edu.au

Questions will be answered via email and the questions and answer posted on the website at www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/nap/faqs/index.htm

Following are some of the questions that have been sent through, along with answers.

Q Who will mark the NAPLAN tests and what will be done with the data?

Answer:

Marking of the writing component of the test will be conducted by qualified teachers under the supervision of the NSW Department of Education and Training Educational Measurement and School Accountability Directorate. The writing task will be marked using a rubric (marking key) similar to BST and ELLA.

The NSW Department of Education and Training will be reconfiguring its highly regarded diagnostic software, the School Measurement, Assessment and Reporting Toolkit (SMART), to provide student, class group, school and system level analysis for the 2008 National Assessment Program.

Q Under what circumstances can students be exempted from the NAPLAN tests?

Answer:

All Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 students are candidates for the NAPLAN. However, as for the BST, ELLA and SNAP, consideration for exemption can be given to students:

- newly arrived in Australia (less than a year before the test) and with a language background other than English
- with significant intellectual delay.

Students with confirmed disabilities or difficulties in learning are expected to participate in the testing. However, parents do have the right to withdraw their children from testing. This is classified as a parent withdrawal and not as an exemption.

Further information on exemptions can be found in the *School Manual of Administrative Procedures*, which can be found by following the 'schools' link at

www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/nap/index.htm

Q What will be the format and content of reports provided to parent and schools following the NAPLAN testing?

Answer:

The template for the report to parents has not yet been finalised nationally. However, parents will receive a report that gives information on their child's results as well as National results. Schools will be able to access, through the *School Measurement Assessment and Reporting Toolkit* (SMART), most of the analytical data that was supplied for the statewide tests.

Q Can the NAPLAN Writing rubric be used to identify a level or score point that you would expect for students in Years 3, 5, 7, and 9 respectively?

Answer:

The NAPLAN marking guide has been developed to assess writing produced by students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 and extensive trials have demonstrated that it is possible for students from each Year group to achieve across a

wide range of scores on each criteria. This is a diagnostic rubric for marking writing and it is important to realise that criteria are independent of each other - it is possible for a child to score highly in some of the criteria and not so highly on others. Consequently it is not appropriate to consider that any range of scores can or should be regarded as representative of a particular Year group. It is **very important in applying this rubric properly and fairly** that writing is marked wholly on its merits against the criteria and that NO attempt is made to define the possible score ranges by Year group.

Q For schools in NSW, what mathematics content/outcomes will be assessed for students in Year 7 (Stage 4) and Year 9 (Stage 5)?

Answer:

The national numeracy assessment is designed to assess the mathematics knowledge and skills required by the mathematics curricula of all Australian States and Territories. Information on the content and structure of the tests

can be found in the previous newsletter *National assessment program Secondary newsletter* No. 1.

Given that the tests are being conducted early in the year content from the previous year will be assessed. The Year 7 NAPLAN Numeracy assessment will test, for NSW students, the mathematics content of Stage 3, as did the Secondary Numeracy Assessment Program (SNAP) that it has replaced. Similarly, the Year 9 NAPLAN Numeracy test will assess the Stage 4 mathematics content for NSW students.

Q What calculator skills should Year 7 be able to demonstrate in the Numeracy component of the National Assessment Program?

Answer:

Students will choose whether to use a calculator in one section of the Numeracy assessment. Students should be familiar with the basic operations of a calculator, particularly in relation to decimals. The best general

guide to the skills required is the sample Numeracy Calculator-Allowed Year 7 NAPLAN sample paper at www.naplan.edu.au/test_samples/numeracy/numeracy_year_7.html

Further advice on the use of the calculator in Year 7 and the sequencing of Year 7 topics is available at www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/secondary/mathematics/years7_10/teaching/using_cal.htm

Q If a student is away on holidays during testing time, is it possible for that student to sit the tests at a public school near their holiday destination?

Answer:

Yes that is possible. The student can be deemed a 'visiting student' and there are established protocols for dealing with this. The parents or caregivers need to first contact the local public school – near their holiday destination, to seek permission. The Principal in the local school can then make arrangements to meet the request.