

National assessment program

Newsletter

This newsletter has been written to provide NSW public schools with up to date information about the 2009 National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN).

A previous newsletter was sent to schools in March, 2008.

More information about the National Assessment Program can be found at www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/nap/index.htm

An important NAPLAN 2009 update was published in *InPrincipal* – DN/09/00041 and contains important information about the School Online Assessment Registration (SOAR) facility. Phase 1 of SOAR will enable schools to check and amend student details and determine the roll class organisation for delivery of test materials. Phase 2 of SOAR will be live from NAPLAN week to enable student participation details to be recorded online.

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

2009 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 12, 13 and 14.
- 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

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

In NSW the 2008 NAPLAN tests replaced 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 present a picture of student performance in literacy and numeracy across all levels of achievement and assist teachers to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of their students.

Test schedule

- In May 2009 the National Assessment Program will be administered across Australia in the same week for all four Year groups.
- Testing will take place over three days:
 - Tuesday 12 May - Language Conventions (Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation) and Writing
 - Wednesday 13 May - Reading
 - Thursday 14 May - Numeracy.

A catch-up day for students who missed a test paper or were absent on a particular test day has been set for Friday 15 May.

- The *Principals handbook*, which includes the SOAR Phase 1 manual will be sent to schools during the first week of March 2009. The *Principals handbook* can be downloaded from https://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/directorates/schoimpro/EMD/naplan_publications.htm.
- The *Test administration guidelines* will be delivered to schools with the test materials by 1 May 2009.

Previous newsletters

Newsletters distributed to support the introduction of NAPLAN were sent to all schools in December, 2007 and March, 2008.

The newsletters addressed a range of topics including:

- Purpose of the National Assessment Program
- 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

The 2008 test materials, including stimulus material and test books can be downloaded from the NAPLAN website, the DET Intranet or Internet.

As stated in the previous newsletters, 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
- discussing the sample questions which are available on the *NAPLAN* website at www.naplan.edu.au.
- developing problem solving strategies for answering different types of test items, including free response and multiple choice answers, and items across the full range of difficulty levels



- 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. Details about special provisions are provided in Section 4 of the Principals Handbook.
- 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 and ensuring that appropriate special print test materials have been ordered for these students.

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 12 May. The third section, Reading, will take place on Wednesday 13 May.

The Language Conventions and Writing test will be combined in a flip style book. There will be a separate test book for Reading, a separate Reading stimulus magazine and a separate Writing stimulus page. The scheduled times for each test are provided on the NAPLAN website. Schools should determine what additional time and/or rest breaks particular students will need and schedule these into the time allotted for each test.

The 2009 writing task for all years will be narrative, as in 2008. Student writing

will be assessed against the marking guide developed for NAPLAN, available at

www.naplan.edu.au/verve/_resources/napmarkguide08.pdf.

Teachers should become familiar with the elements of the marking guide, and incorporate these criteria when teaching narrative writing. Students should also become familiar with these criteria to help them evaluate and improve their own writing.

The national literacy tests assess literacy across all KLAs. As in 2008, the 2009 reading stimulus papers for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 will include texts drawn from a variety of KLAs.

The NAPLAN literacy assessment data will provide information about student literacy skills and understandings, relevant to all teachers of all subjects across primary and high schools. NAPLAN will test the full range of student ability and will include some more challenging items.

Numeracy tests

The NAPLAN numeracy tests will provide information on performance across all levels of achievement.

Numeracy incorporates Number, Algebra, function and pattern, space, measurement, chance and data. The numeracy section of NAPLAN, will take place on Thursday 14 May.

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.

In Years 3 and 5, there will be one numeracy test which does not permit the use of a calculator.

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.

The Calculator Allowed and Non-Calculator tests for Years 7 and 9 will be combined into a flip-style book.

Additional resources for schools.

The Principals Handbook 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 *Principals handbook* 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 <naplan.nsw@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.

Student results will be available in School Measurement, Assessment and Reporting Toolkit (SMART), to provide student, class group, school and system level analysis for the 2009 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 and/or functional disabilities

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 *Principals Handbook*, which can be found by following the 'schools' link at <www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/nap/index.htm>.

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 for each criterion. 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.

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.

The test items are referenced to the *National Statements of Learning* for English and Mathematics.

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>. and the 2008 and the Numeracy Calculator-Allowed Year 7 test paper at <http://www.naplan.edu.au/naplan_2008_tests/naplan_2008_year_7/naplan_2008_year_7_tests.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. Students may sit the NAPLAN as a visiting student at any school within NSW or any other state.