

# National assessment program

## Secondary newsletter



This newsletter has been written to provide all NSW public secondary schools with important information about the 2008 National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy. A second newsletter will be sent to schools in February, 2008.

More information can be found at [www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/nap/index.htm](http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/nap/index.htm)  
Questions about the National Assessment Program can be emailed to [naplansw@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:naplansw@det.nsw.edu.au)

### GENERAL INFORMATION

#### Purpose

The purpose of the National Assessment Program (NAPLAN) is to assess the literacy and numeracy learning of students in all Australian schools at Years 3, 5, 7 and 9.

The results of these tests will provide useful information for teachers and parents. In particular, they will help to inform teachers in their ongoing efforts to address the literacy and numeracy needs of their students across all subjects.

In NSW the NAPLAN tests will replace the Basic Skills Test (BST), English Language and Literacy Assessment (ELLA) and Secondary Numeracy Assessment Program (SNAP). The national literacy and numeracy assessment is designed to provide information on student performance across a number of levels of achievement.

#### 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 - Numeracywith a make-up day on Friday 16 May for students who missed a section or were absent on a particular test day.
- Administration manuals will be sent to schools by March 2008
- Sample practice items will be made available to schools, via the website, from December 2007.

#### Marking the NAP writing tests

- Marking of the writing component of the test will be conducted by qualified teachers under the supervision of the Department's Educational Measurement and School Accountability Directorate.
- Information about opportunities for teachers to be involved in marking the tests will be distributed to schools by February 2008.

#### Candidacy

All students enrolled in Years 7 and 9, or their equivalent, in all government and non-government schools will be tested. However, parents do have the right to withdraw their children from testing.

#### Exemptions

All Year 7 and 9 students are candidates for the NAPLAN. However, as for the 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.

### Special provisions

In line with arrangements for existing state-based tests, special provisions will be provided to students with disabilities or special needs.

- Special provisions include access to large print, black on white copy for the use of coloured overlays, Braille, assistive technology, oral sign support, separate supervision, extra time including rest breaks, scribe and reader.
- Special provisions may be accessed by a student for all or part of the tests and more than one special provision may be accessed in any one test.
- Special provisions should reflect the type of support the student(s) accesses on a regular basis in the classroom.
- Parents/carers should be involved in the decision about their child's special provisions and participation in NAPLAN.

Further information about special provisions will be provided to schools at the beginning of 2008.

### Students in multi-age classes

Students in multi-age classes should be assigned to a grade according to the census data provided by the school and undertake the test appropriate for that grade.

### Reporting to students, parents and the community

- Information will be reported to schools, students and parents in a way similar to that used for current BST, ELLA and SNAP tests. While the final format of the reports is not yet available, it is anticipated that information will be provided on student achievement across a common reporting scale with performance bands in reading, writing, language conventions and numeracy.
- The report format will be available in early 2008.
- The School Measurement, Assessment and Reporting Toolkit (SMART) will be updated to accommodate the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy. It will be provided to all NSW government schools to assist them to analyse the test results and tracking student performance over time.

### NSW sample testing

- NSW will conduct light sample testing in 2008 using existing state-based tests (BST, ELLA and SNAP). The sample testing will occur in March, May and August 2008. It will involve a sample of government primary students in Year 3 and Year 5 for BST and a sample of government secondary students in Year 7 for ELLA and SNAP.
- Sample testing will safeguard the highly regarded school and system-level information currently in place for NSW students regarding their achievements.
- The sample testing program will enable direct comparisons to be made between data from the state-based and national tests, and assist with the alignment of the standards. This will enable principals and

teachers to compare student results from previous NSW tests with the new national tests.

### Preparing students – advice to principals and teachers

NSW schools have assisted students to prepare for the SNAP and ELLA tests for many years now. A similar approach is recommended for the NAPLAN tests. This may involve:

- using previous SNAP and ELLA papers and test items in the context of teaching and learning programs
- ensuring that the aspects of literacy and numeracy assessed by the NAPLAN tests (see tables on following pages) are included in the context of teaching and learning programs
- discussing the practice test items provided with the test materials
- developing problem solving strategies for answering different types of test items, including free response and multiple choice answers, and items from across the full range of difficulty levels.

### In planning for 2008, principals need to ensure that:

- teachers are informed about the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
- teaching and learning programs address the aspects of literacy and numeracy that are to be assessed
- excursions or other school events do not occur on the dates of the NAPLAN tests
- they identify students who are likely to require special provisions so that arrangements can be made to meet these needs
- students who are blind or have vision impairment have access to an appropriate calculator and sufficient time to become proficient in its use.



There will be three sections in the Year 7 and 9 national literacy tests.

Language Conventions (Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation) and Writing will occur on Tuesday 13 May; Reading will occur on Wednesday 14 May. In NSW ELLA testing, the writing, reading and language tests were held on the same day.

Separate test booklets will be provided for each section, including Language Conventions, Reading and Writing. A separate Reading stimulus magazine and a separate Writing stimulus page will also be provided.

Unlike some other states, previous NSW testing has not assessed literacy in Year 9, so there is no NSW equivalent to the Year 9 NAPLAN literacy test. 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 test to be a more challenging version of the Year 7 NAPLAN literacy test.

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

The Year 7 and 9 national literacy tests assess literacy across all secondary KLAs. Note that the stimulus texts used in the reading test will be drawn from different KLAs.

The NAPLAN literacy assessment data will provide information about student literacy skills and understandings. This information will

be relevant to teachers of all subjects to ensure student achievement of syllabus standards. This expectation is consistent with the NSW Department of Education and Training Literacy K-12 Policy, which states:

*1.2.6 Teachers K-12, across all key learning areas, are responsible for the teaching and learning of literacy skills, knowledge and understandings.*

*1.3.1 Teachers K-12 will use school-based and state-wide literacy assessment information to inform teaching and to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of teaching programs.*

Schools should be aware of additional time and/or rest breaks that some students may seek and factor these into how the school will manage the assessment program.

The following tables provide information about the tests with comments and advice on preparation for the tests.

## Tuesday 13 May 2008

### Language conventions (covering spelling, punctuation and grammar)

	Year 7	Year 9	Comments and advice on preparation
Number of items	50 in total	50 in total	ELLA contains the same number of items.
Item types	Multiple choice (spelling, grammar and punctuation) and constructed response (spelling only)	Multiple choice (spelling, grammar and punctuation) and constructed response (spelling only)	A constructed response will involve students writing a response rather than choosing from a range of possible answers.
Coverage	50% spelling 35% grammar 15% punctuation	50% spelling 35% grammar 15% punctuation	This test will assess knowledge and use of spelling, punctuation and grammar, commensurate with syllabus expectations. It is expected that students will be able to demonstrate their knowledge and use of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>punctuation markers such as capital letters, full stops, quotation marks and commas</li> <li>grammatical features such as nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs.</li> </ul> Spelling will be assessed using a combination of multiple choice and constructed response items.
Test time	45 mins	45 mins	The NAPLAN tests gives significant attention to spelling which has resulted in this component of the tests being slightly longer than the equivalent NSW tests.

**Writing**

	Year 7	Year 9	Comments and advice on preparation
Number of writing tasks	1	1	The NAPLAN will have only one writing task, rather than the two that have been used in ELLA.
Writing stimulus prompt	1 page full colour	1 page full colour	All Year 3, 5, 7 and 9 students will respond to the same writing stimulus and question.
Item types	Narrative: all students Years 3-9 to respond to the same prompt	Narrative: all students Years 3-9 to respond to the same prompt	In 2008 the NAPLAN writing task will require students to compose a narrative text.  The marking criteria will be similar to those used in ELLA.
Number of test booklet pages for writing	4 pages	4 pages	A cover page plus three pages for written response.
Test time	40 mins, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 mins planning time</li> <li>• 30 mins writing time</li> <li>• 5 mins editing time</li> </ul>	40 mins, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 mins planning time</li> <li>• 30 mins writing time</li> <li>• 5 mins editing time</li> </ul>	With only one task there is less time required for this component of the NAPLAN compared to ELLA.

**Reading**

	Year 7	Year 9	Comments and advice on preparation
Number of stimulus texts	7-8 stimulus texts	7-8 stimulus texts	The NAPLAN stimulus material contains fewer stimulus texts than ELLA.
Number of items	45-50	45-50	The NAPLAN test includes a similar number of test items to ELLA.
Item types	imaginative 30-40% informational 30-40% argumentative 20-30%	imaginative 30-40% informational 30-40% argumentative 20- 30%	The NAPLAN literacy framework categorises the different types of texts into three distinct classifications. A balance of both literary and factual text types is proposed which is comparable to ELLA.
Item spread	90-100% multiple choice 0-10% constructed response	90-100% multiple choice 0-10% constructed response	ELLA includes a similar spread of items.
Skill area coverage	Contextual understandings 20-30%  Text location and interpretation skills 60-70%  Text and language knowledge 10-20%	Contextual understandings 20-30%  Text location and interpretation skills 60-70%  Text and language knowledge 10-20%	The reading test will assess understanding of a range of written texts that are commonly used in the Key Learning Areas of the secondary curriculum. These texts will include both literary and factual texts. Questions may include reference to visual components of texts.
Test time	65 mins	65 mins	The time allocated to the NAPLAN reading test exceeds the current time allocation for ELLA by 15 minutes. However, it is expected that a large majority of the students will complete the test well within the published test time.



The Year 7 and 9 national numeracy tests are designed to provide information on performance across a number of levels of achievement. 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.

Two 12 page booklets will be used, one for the non-calculator component and one for the calculator section.

### Use of calculators

The NAPLAN introduces a numeracy assessment involving calculator use in Year 7 and Year 9.

Students will be permitted to bring into the test the calculator that they currently use at school and with

which they are most familiar. The *NSW Mathematics Years 7-10 Syllabus* states that to achieve the outcomes for Stages 4 and 5, the use of a calculator that incorporates the features generally associated with 'scientific calculators' is mandatory. Consequently, the calculator requirements will align with those permitted in the School Certificate Examination and further information is available on the Board of Studies website

[http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/manuals/calculators\\_hsc\\_gen\\_maths.html](http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/manuals/calculators_hsc_gen_maths.html).

Schools will be responsible for checking that the calculators comply with the Board's School Certificate Examination requirements and that no information that might advantage a student has been stored on the calculator. Similar processes to those used with the School Certificate Examination can be used for backup provision of calculators.

### Preparing students for use of calculators

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.

Calculators are commonly used for solving problems involving measurements and quantities not easily handled by written or mental techniques and often include fractions, decimals and percentages. In particular, the topic of operations with rational numbers from the *Mathematics Years 7-10 Syllabus* (NS4.3) includes helping students to learn to *interpret a calculator display in formulating a solution to a problem by appropriately rounding a decimal*. This area of the syllabus builds on applying the four operations to money in real-life situations (NS3.4) and it would be helpful in familiarising students with the use of calculators to review or introduce these topics with calculator use early in Year 7. Several examples of questions related to calculator use are available from the Curriculum Directorate website:

[http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/secondary/mathematics/years7\\_10/teaching/using\\_cal.htm](http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/secondary/mathematics/years7_10/teaching/using_cal.htm).

School should be aware of additional time and/or rest breaks that some students may seek and factor these into how the school will manage the assessment program.

**Numeracy (covering number, patterns and algebra, space and geometry, measurement, chance and data)**

	Year 7	Year 9	Comments and advice on preparation
Number of test sessions	2 (1 calculator + 1 non-calculator)	2 (1 calculator + 1 non-calculator)	The Year 7 calculator section may necessitate changes to Mathematics program sequencing.
Number of items	32 items calculator 32 items non-calculator	32 items calculator 32 items non-calculator	The NAP numeracy assessment includes fewer items for the Year 7 assessment than SNAP and no extended tasks.
Item types	75% of the items will be multiple choice with the remainder constructed or free response	75% of the items will be multiple choice with the remainder constructed or free response	These are common item types used in external assessments such as SNAP.
Coverage	20-30% number 20-30% measurement, chance and data 20-30% space and geometry 20-30% patterns and algebra	20-30% number 20-30% measurement, chance and data 20-30% space and geometry 20-30% patterns and algebra	While number patterns will be included in the numeracy assessments for Year 7, symbolic algebra will not be assessed before Year 9. Some review of Stage 4 content may be beneficial to support students with these items.  In assessing the measurement strand, students will not have access to an instrument sheet. Rulers and protractors will not be necessary to answer measurement questions.
Test time	40 min: calculator 40 min: non-calculator	40 min: calculator 40 min: non-calculator	With no extended task, there is less time required for the NAPLAN numeracy test compared to SNAP.