



AEU ASSESSMENT, REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN SCHOOLS POLICY

1.

WHAT THE AEU SUPPORTS

2.

MASS STANDARDISED TESTING

3.

DATA COLLECTION

4.

EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

5.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY
FOR THE PROVISION OF RESOURCES

FOREWORD

Assessment, Reporting and Accountability practices have always been essential components of teaching and learning. However, expectations placed on teachers, support staff and schools by governments, education jurisdictions, media and society have in many cases exceeded what is practical and reasonable for formal student reports and accountability measures.

Assessment of student achievement and progress occurs continuously. Ongoing dialogue between the student, parent and teacher is important to reflect the continuous nature of learning. Although a variety of measures contribute to the overall assessment of a student's learning, there should be nothing more valued than the professional judgment from the student's teacher.

A summary of student learning needs to be formally reported to students and parents every school year. This ought to be reasonably achieved during work hours and should not occupy an inordinate amount of personal and family time of teachers.

As outlined in this policy, accountability of schools, education systems and governments is supported by the AEU. School communities need to be adequately resourced and supported to make positive and genuine change for the purposes of improvement, and not publicly degraded in any form.

This Policy outlines the AEU's position on these important elements of teaching and learning in schools. With appreciation I acknowledge the consultation of the Curriculum and Professional Development Management Committee in the formation of this policy. I commend it to you.

Marcus Knill
AEU Vice President | SA Branch

PREAMBLE

The assessment of student learning is an integral aspect of the process of teaching and learning.

The assessment and reporting of student learning and achievement is vital as it provides:

- Feedback to students to create greater awareness of personal skills, abilities and knowledge
- Information to parents/carers to help guide their child's learning
- Scope and focus for future student learning
- Cause to recognise and celebrate student strengths, achievements and growth
- Information to teachers to analyse curriculum effectiveness and future staff training and development needs
- A means to demonstrate accountability for the allocation and use of public resources.

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GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The AEU believes that assessment and reporting are integral components of the curriculum process. As such, these must be undertaken by professional educators.

Assessment and reporting practices need to:

- Be based on authentic and demonstrated student learning
- Be relevant to the learning needs of all students
- Be based on teacher professional judgment
- Be based on individual student performance
- Be both formative and summative
- Be inclusive of the diversity of learner characteristics and recognise the full range of abilities, socio-economic status, cultural backgrounds and gender amongst learners
- Be composed of a range of teaching and learning methodologies
- Support further student learning
- Inform teachers to enable professional reflection and curriculum evaluation which leads to developmental and future learning program planning
- Recognise local context
- Be supported by credible research
- Be an interactive dialogue between the student, teacher and parent/carer
- Use “common language” so as to be easily understood by student and parent/carer.

Assessment and reporting practices must not be used for the construction of competitive “league tables”. Appropriate use of data should be limited to the provision of disaggregated data to enable targeting of additional resources to redress disadvantage.

1. WHAT THE AEU SUPPORTS

The AEU supports those assessment and reporting practices which enable students to undertake successful developmental learning and personal growth as learners. Student improvement is the focus of the assessment and reporting process.

Assessment may include a range of methods appropriate to students' development such as running records, descriptive assessment, work samples, conferencing and attainment against consistent understandings of student outcomes in learning areas.

The workload of teachers needs to be carefully monitored through industrial agreements and OHS&W requirements. The Personnel Advisory Committee (PAC) also has a responsibility to monitor staff workload. It is unreasonable to expect teachers to consume excessive personal and family time in order to fulfill assessment and reporting requirements.

Methods of assessment need to take into account the following developmental characteristics of learners.

Early Years: R - 2

Children in the early years are fast developing knowledge about themselves as learners. They are in the formative years of gaining confidence to take risks with their learning in school environments. Their personal identity and esteem is largely shaped by those around them, particularly by their parents/caregivers and teachers. Teaching and learning in the early years should be centred on play and inquiry based curriculum. Integrated assessment rather than learning area based is more appropriate.

Lower Primary Years 3-5

Through observation and a much greater sense of self-awareness, most students are aware of their development in relation to their peers. Students in the lower primary years become particularly sensitive to assessment and reporting comparisons which can reduce their ability to take risks in their learning. Assessment and reporting practices should provide students with clear information about their strengths and areas to develop. Learning becomes a greater challenge if basic literacy/numeracy concepts have not been mastered in the early years.

Middle Years 6-9

Children entering the adolescent years continue to develop their identity as learners. Adolescents think more broadly about themselves and begin learning how they fit into the world. They need to increase their involvement in assessment and reporting and take responsibility for their learning.

“Assessment and reporting practices should provide students with clear information about their strengths and areas to develop.”

Senior Secondary Years 10-13

Students in the senior years of schooling need to build a solid foundation from which to launch themselves into post school involvement in further education, work and the community. Assessment and reporting should be meaningful, enabling, portable and drawn from a range of sources. It should include a portfolio of assessment methods from a range of various sources including school, other education/training providers, work and community involvement.

Special Education

The AEU supports the implementation of Negotiated Education Plans for all students with disabilities. Intrinsic in this support is the adequate resourcing by governments for all aspects of individualised curriculum, including modifications to assessment and reporting. Assessment and reporting practices must adhere to the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 .

2. MASS STANDARDISED TESTING

There is an emerging body of evidence that demonstrates testing of a representative sample of learners provides the most appropriate and reliable information to support system-wide planning and resource allocation. Disaggregated data enables federal and state governments and their education agencies to provide adequate funding for programs in identified areas of need.

Information for school improvement and accountability is best derived from teachers’ professional judgment. Assessment methods, such as standardised testing, have both limited use and the potential for misleading conclusions to be made about the performance of individuals, schools, and state systems.

AEU rejects national mass standardised testing as a means of providing information about student learning, as high-stakes testing contravenes credible academic research which shows little benefit to students, schools and educational systems.

3. DATA COLLECTION

The AEU supports :

- Adherence to agreed data protocols between DECS and the AEU
- Analysis and interpretation of data which is accurate and meaningful, based on professional teacher judgment, and supports teaching, learning and school improvement
- The profession being genuinely consulted and involved in the collection, interpretation and application of data and related results
- Recognition of and respect for all learners regardless of ability, disability, gender, learning and career aspirations and pathways, socio-economic status and cultural background.

4. EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability measures must be fair and equitable and must emphasise that:

- Teachers welcome accountability when it is fair and equitable
- Teachers are in the best position to assess, evaluate, and report on authentic student learning achievement
- Teacher assessment of students should be valued over the results of external narrowly based assessments
- Teachers need allocated time during the school day to assess, record and report on student learning and to evaluate student learning programs
- Teachers need access to high quality professional development programs on assessment, evaluation and reporting of student achievement
- Teachers need additional release time to allow them to collaboratively analyse and moderate student performance in a meaningful way and to engage in professional dialogue about data collected
- Appropriate resources are required to allow sites to perform additional administrative tasks related to new accountability measures such as gathering summative information and providing this to DECS.

“Teachers are in the best position to assess, evaluate, and report on authentic student learning achievement”

5. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE PROVISION OF RESOURCES

Just as teachers accept the professional responsibility to be accountable for their students' learning progress, governments must accept accountability for the variables that impact on that progress.

The Federal government, in partnership with all state and territory governments, must establish a National Standard for the Provision of High Quality Teaching and Learning Environments. Both levels of government should report annually against this standard for all Australian schools.

The National Standard variables against which governments should be held accountable should identify, but not be limited to:

Infrastructure

- Numbers of reported student accidents
- Numbers of schools that are environmentally sustainable
- Numbers of reported breakdown maintenance incidents
- Amount spent on infrastructure upgrades and maintenance per student and school
- Numbers of schools which reach the benchmark infrastructure standard and the budget to rectify that
- Audit school facilities used by the community at no cost.

Resourcing

- Education expenditure as a proportion of GDP/Gross State Product
- Proportion of annual education budget spent on research, training and curriculum development in paid work time
- Income from all sources (gifts, fees, government funding, rental income, investment income and fundraising) per student by school.

Teaching and learning support

- Class size maxima (students face to face with a teacher in a classroom rather than teacher/student ratio) by year level and class type
- Numbers of additional teachers and funds committed to special needs students (including ATSI, NAP and students with disabilities) to meet the minimum NAPLaN Band for their cohort/year level
- Number of classes by year level and subject taught by teachers unqualified in the specific learning area
- Number of classes without a teacher qualified for the appropriate year level and subject at the start of each year
- ICT hardware, software and ICT support per student and age of hardware.

Human resource

- Workload measures including release time for all school employment categories, hours worked per day, days worked per year, meeting attendance requirements, unpaid overtime etc
- SSO/AEW/ECW teacher employment ratios
- Numbers of workplace injuries (physical and psychological) suffered by staff and by school.

Detailed data should be made public for public scrutiny and analysis of levels of support from all sources received by Australian schools. Appropriately targeted government funding should be then allocated to raise the standard of education for all Australian students.



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