

## **BACKGROUND**

This position paper is developed in response to the Government document *Quality Schools, Quality Outcomes (May 2016)* which identified areas for 'future focus' and policy direction. Literacy, numeracy and STEM performance was targeted with the Year 1 Check seen as a necessary step in boosting performance in these first two areas. The Commonwealth Government also commissioned a select panel to produce a report on the need for a literacy and numeracy check.

In the first instance, APPA supports measures that help teachers address the learning needs of students. All schools should, for example, have in place early identification and screening assessments that clearly identify those students who struggle with reading, including phonics, and numeracy. The proposed administration of a nation-wide 'Check' in Year 1 is, simply, an unnecessary duplication.

## **ISSUES**

APPA has long held concerns over the collection, storage and use of student-based data that has the potential to compare or rank primary schools.

Individual student assessment in literacy and numeracy should be about identifying and / or addressing need. Jurisdiction and school-based assessment is:

- For the use of the individual school; and,
- Used only for the identification of student need and to assess what interventions and resources are required to meet those needs.

## **POSITION**

APPA supports assessment tools that are practical and effective, connected to the curriculum, embedded in the Learning Progressions and responsive to student need. Schools and jurisdictions should always have these assessments in place in the early years of school.

APPA does not believe the country needs a national standardised Year 1 literacy and numeracy 'check'. The best driver for improving student achievement in literacy would be a focus on ensuring all teachers can effectively teach reading and develop a student's broad literacy skills.

Schools regularly undertake assessments as part of well-structured literacy and numeracy programs. Teachers are assessing students from day one. They look at what is being achieved and identify specific learning gaps. Good teachers quickly put in place proven intervention strategies.

APPA cannot support the notion teachers wait until the end of Term 3 in Year 1 to see if a student or students need some type of intervention. Schools are constantly monitoring student progress and, with an informed primary teaching workforce, teachers know which students need intervention and support well before the end of that first formal year.

APPA would see that a national 'one size fits all approach' is not going to benefit students or teachers across Australia.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

APPA recommends that:

- The proposed mandatory National Year 1 Check be rejected by jurisdictions. Rather than undertaking an expensive and unnecessary test, these funds could be directed towards supporting the learning needs of students as they progress through their primary years, leading to success in secondary years and later life.
- The Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments undertake genuine consultation with Australia's school leaders about critical resourcing and support for primary school students.
- Schools have the authority to select the tools necessary that support the teaching of literacy and numeracy.
- A review of teacher training be undertaken to ensure graduates are trained in conducting screening and other assessments, and have the knowledge to teach reading.

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