

Transparent Reporting Of Schools: Update

By Lauren Djakovac

The start of the 2010 school year sees the launch of the controversial myschool.edu.au website.

Last April, the Federal Government announced its plan of transparent reporting of school results and characteristics - allowing comparison with statistically similar schools across the country. The My School website will profile almost 10,000 Australian schools that can be searched by the school's location, sector, or name.

The data was collated and published online by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). From January 28th 2010, school profiles will include information on the following:

- A short description of the school
- Number of students
- Attendance rates
- Senior secondary school outcomes
- School-level data about student backgrounds
- School NAPLAN results compared with the national average and the average results of statistically similar schools
- School Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value
- A link to the school's website and, where appropriate, a link to the school's governing body
- A list of up to 20 schools located nearest to the school selected.

Not all of the information planned for publication will be accessible in the first year. Extra data will be added as it becomes available. Education ministers agree that school income information is to be published in the next website update. Refined indicators will be developed relating to Year 12 attainment, TER scores, and the reporting on percentages of students with disabilities and students with a language background other than English.

The website's main section, comparing results attained from the NAPLAN tests, has sparked the most debate - with teachers and principals concerned the profiles will unfairly pin student achievement solely on academic results. Some sections of the education fraternity claim the Rudd Government's new transparency measures will create simplistic league tables and unfairly shame schools.

and dark green for significantly above average. Despite this, no overall colour score will be given to a school.

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Recent media reports reveal that cohorts of underperforming students will be 'flagged' red in a colour-coded scheme on the My School website. Dark red will signify results considerably below average, light red for below, white for average, light green for above average

Transparency will identify and target the needs of poor performing schools. Problems within schools cannot be fixed, if they are hidden. Transparent reporting of school results is long-awaited; all parents make decisions on where to send their children, and these decisions should be based on fact, not gossip or rumour. ■

The screenshot shows the 'My School' website interface. At the top right is the ACARA logo. Below it is a navigation bar with 'Find a school', 'Glossary', and 'About'. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column has a 'Welcome' section with a brief description of the service and a link to 'More about My School'. Below this is a photograph of four diverse children. The right column is titled 'Find a school' and contains two search sections: 'Quick search' with a text input field and a 'GO' button, and 'Or search by suburb' with a text input field for 'Suburb, town or postcode', radio buttons for 'Sector' (Government and Non-Government), and checkboxes for 'School type' (Primary, Secondary, and Combined school (Primary & Secondary)). A 'SEARCH' button is at the bottom of the search section.