



Stop Seeing Year 12 As Competition

The education system must stop pitting students in competition with each other if they are to thrive later in life, the head of the SACE Board says.

Prof Martin Westwell says it is time to move away from the “competitive assessment” of Year 12 exams and set a new standard around harnessing skills and knowledge for life beyond school, or “what they can do with what they know”.

Prof Westwell says latest Stanford University research shows when students see education as a competition, less able ones lose confidence and the brightest, who see they are ahead of their classmates, reduce their efforts and start “coasting”.

“That sets them up for future mediocrity,” he says. “This competitive mentality is not good for individual students and it is not good for South Australia.”

[Read the story](#)

This week's stories from the media

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Ecstasy Use By School Students Doubles In Three Years

The proportion of high school students using ecstasy has more than doubled in three years.

Paul Dillon, the founder of Drug and Alcohol Research and Training Australia, said the latest Australian Secondary School Students' Alcohol and Other Drug study revealed an “alarming” increase in the consumption of ecstasy by students.

The survey of almost 20,000 high school students around Australia found 16% of 17-year-old boys had tried ecstasy in 2017 compared to 9.2% three years earlier.

The proportion of 17-year-old girls who had consumed the party drug increased from 4.7% in 2014 to 9% in 2017.

Overall, the study found ecstasy use among students aged between 12 and 17 had increased from 2% in 2011 to 5% in 2017.

However, Mr Dillon said the research was conducted over a year ago and “to be quite honest it's going to be even higher than that now I think”.

Cocaine use by 16 and 17 year olds increased from 3% to 5% between 2014 and 2017, but the use of other illicit substances appeared stable and consumption of alcohol and tobacco declined.

The study found high levels of students using multiple substances such as alcohol and cannabis (58%) or cannabis and ecstasy (43%) at the same time.

It also found much higher rates of substance use by high school students with a mental health diagnosis.

Mr Dillon said ecstasy was readily available through friendship networks and could be purchased by students for as little as \$10.

[More](#)



“...The proportion of 17-year-old girls who had consumed the party drug increased from 4.7% in 2014 to 9% in 2017....”

Five Things We Wouldn't Know With NAPLAN

Ten years on, the role of NAPLAN is under question. Some argue it should be dropped entirely. Here's why it's a vital navigation tool for policymakers and researchers.

1. Achievement gaps for Indigenous students
2. Progress gaps for students in disadvantaged schools
3. Comparison among states
4. Changes over time
5. Identifying high-growth schools

NAPLAN is an imperfect navigation tool. It certainly doesn't have GPS-like levels of precision. But giving up on NAPLAN would be like 19th-century sailors dumping sextants and chronometers in favour of returning to using the stars, wind and currents to navigate.

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Schools Go Reward Free

For many schools, the annual sports day simply would not be the same without ribbons and trophy presentations.

But at St James' Parish School near the Victorian town of Ballarat, there is no memorabilia.

Instead of competing against each other, students compete against themselves - attempting to better the times and distances they recorded at the start of the year.

Co-principal Peter Fahey said he was initially nervous about changing such a traditional event but said the reception had been nothing short of brilliant.

He said students were especially grateful because they were able to let go of their anxieties about not coming first, or about coming last.

[Full Story](#)

Are Digital Devices Actually Being Used In Schools

Many public secondary schools employ a BYOD program, where parents are expected to buy their child an iPad or laptop.

But when the student comes to a class with their device, it is up to the teacher to figure out if, when and how they will use the student's device.

English, humanities and social sciences teacher can use a device in their subject area. Devices can be used to take notes, complete and submit assignments, inquire and search online, and present work professionally.

Other subject areas find it more challenging – many of the mathematical symbols used in senior maths require a mathematics calculator. Students can't complete the exercises on their devices.

A device being used does not mean good teaching and learning are occurring. Research shows occasions when students were being quiet and focused on their device's screen, but were obviously not doing anything along the lines of learning. But their devices were being used.

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Ventilation In Classrooms

We focus on what we eat and drink but much less attention is paid to the quality of the air we breathe.

Now, RMIT researchers are working with schools and aged care facilities to boost quality of life and resilience of students and residents through improved air quality.

“The quality of the air we breathe can have considerable impacts on health, wellbeing, productivity and the economy.”

Improved ventilation can improve students' attention span and concentration, contributing to enhanced educational outcomes, while older adults could see improvements to their health and wellbeing.

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Striking Students Show Skills

By seeking to understand a global issue such as climate change, students are demonstrating the skills, values and attitudes the curriculum states should constitute the aim of education. These are also the attributes employers look for.

The second goal of the Declaration on Goals for Young Australians, signed in 2008 by all ministers is to graduate students who are “successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens”.

To achieve this, the Australian curriculum includes a civics and citizenship strand - encouraging an inquiry-based approach, presenting students with multiple perspectives and empowering them to reach their own conclusions.

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