



# BRIEFINGS

**Independent Schools Queensland**

## Standardised Testing: Getting it Right for Educational Improvement

*What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that the community must want for all of its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely. Acted upon, it destroys our democracy (Dewey, 1968).*

In a recent article, education consultant, Kevin Donnelly outlined his reasons for changing his mind on the benefits of NAPLAN testing (Donnelly, 2010). Donnelly quoted publications in the US and UK which suggested that standardised tests had not only failed to raise standards, but were now seen as counter-productive (Ravitch, 2010; Rose, 2009). Based on the overseas research and on the Australian experience with NAPLAN testing, Donnelly makes the following criticisms of standardised testing:

- It narrows the curriculum and puts the focus on basic skills instead of higher order thinking. Subjects like music, art, physical education and history fall by the wayside as teachers and schools focus on drilling for literacy and numeracy tests.
- Schools and teachers adopt suspicious ways to get better results - poor students are excluded from tests, weak students are told to stay at home, teachers cheat by helping students in the classroom.
- Test experts agree that standardised tests like NAPLAN are unreliable, invalid and cannot be trusted.
- Attempts to measure student improvement over time, such as value-add, are flawed, unreliable and unsuitable for high-risk accountability.
- The developers of the test have a vested interest in making money out of measurement and testing and, therefore, influence the agenda.
- Government schools are held accountable, while denied the autonomy to get rid of poor quality teachers.

- In Australia, the argument for testing - that a student's socioeconomic background determines whether they do well or not - assumes that socioeconomic background is the main factor in educational success.
- The Australian government is spending billions on disadvantaged schools to raise standards, following a path that has been going on for years in the US and England where standards have flat lined.
- The very things needed for a real education revolution are denied - giving schools greater freedom, having an academic and effective curriculum and better rewarding successful teachers - because emphasis is on the test and on 'failing' schools.

The experience in New York is instructive in reinforcing Donnelly's criticism of NAPLAN testing. Writing in the *City Journal*, Sol Stern points to the highly inflated test scores in New York which bear little resemblance to student achievement on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the 'gold standard in student assessment'. Stern argues that 'when school districts...offer teachers and administrators substantial incentives to raise students' test scores, the teachers and administrators will be tempted to find extraordinary means - but not always ethical ones - to get test scores up'.

His criticism of the New York experience is scathing. In reference to the 2009 test results, Stern writes, 'the education department released more wildly implausible results...on the state's 2009 math test, for example, 87 percent of the seventh-graders achieved proficiency, up from 55 percent in just three years. In many districts, the number of students in all grades scoring above the proficiency bar was nearly 100 percent'. In fact, according to several researchers an analysis of the 2009 tests found that 'the standards dropped

precipitously and arbitrarily'. One researcher found, for example, that 'in some grades it was possible for a student to attain the 'basic' level by guessing on every multiple-choice question, even while totally disregarding the section of the test that required longer written answers'. This appearance of strong improvement in student outcomes on the test appears, according to Stern, to be the result of 'a steady reduction in the percentage of raw points needed to reach 'basic' status. Thus the percentage of raw points that six-graders needed to reach 'basic' in reading dropped from 41 percent in 2006 to 17.9 percent in 2009'.

The push to artificially inflate grades seems to have been further exacerbated by the offering to principals in 2005, and teachers a few years later, of a variety of inducements, including cash payments for lifting test scores. Principals received cash bonuses of up to \$25,000 for each year that scores went up substantially and thousands of teachers got school wide bonuses. Sanctions, including closing of schools, also applied where test scores did not improve.

Stern notes that the test designers, a private education publisher, now provide a program to help teachers get their scores up: 'the "Predictive Assessment", essentially a test-prepping device disguised as a mini-test that students take once a year and that closely reflects the blueprint and structure of the state tests'.

None of this is to suggest that the Australian experience is similar to the New York one, although there appears to be some evidence of the cheating found in the US on the Australian 2010 NAPLAN test. The concern is that many of the reforms to Australian education in recent times seem to be based on the New York model, a model which according to Stern and others, is seriously flawed.

## DATE REMINDERS 2010

**19 - 20 August**  
**OFFICE PROFESSIONALS  
CONFERENCE**  
Royal on the Park  
Brisbane

**30 August**  
**ISCA NATIONAL FORUM**  
Canberra

**31 August**  
**CELI MASTER CLASSES**  
Victoria Park

**12 October**  
**ICT MANAGERS FORUM**  
ISQ, Spring  
Hill

**20 October**  
**CELI BREAKFASTS**  
Victoria Park

**21 - 22 October**  
**STAFF & STUDENT  
WELLBEING FORUM**  
Brisbane

**26 October**  
**ISQ GENERAL MEETING**  
ISQ, Spring Hill

For information regarding any of the events above, please contact Carole Williamson on 07 3228 1515 or email: [cwilliamson@aisq.qld.edu.au](mailto:cwilliamson@aisq.qld.edu.au)

## Standardised Testing: Getting it Right for Educational Improvement

In a 2008 address at the UBS dinner for Joel Stein, the architect of the New York education reforms, Australia Minister for Education, Julia Gillard said:

*"No one who has witnessed Joel's marshalling of evidence about the systemic improvements he's made in New York schools could be in any doubt about the effectiveness of his approach. His message is morally compelling and intellectually convincing. The question is – as he put it: can we summon the political will to make necessary transformational change happen? To borrow a very contemporary American expression – the answer is, yes we can."*

*"The reforms we are putting in place, through the National Education Agreement and the new National Partnerships being discussed at COAG this weekend and through the Schools Assistance Bill we are currently putting through Parliament are vitally important steps forward."*

If the New York experience is the basis for believing that standardised testing lifts education outcomes, then what is happening in New York may warrant considerably more scrutiny in Australia than it has to date.

Stern and Donnelly are not alone in their criticism of standardised testing. In fact, there is a long line of research pointing to the dangers of standardised tests, particularly if their major purposes are related to accountability. Darling-Hammond, 2003, describes such tests as 'detached from policies that might address the quality of teaching, the allocation of resources, or the nature of schooling' and Daniel Korezi, refers to 'the illusion of progress' that emerges. Korezi refers here to the inflation of test scores that are markedly greater than the improvement in performance of students. Past experience indicates that in the first few years of a testing program test scores will increase (Linn et al, 1991) without real improvement in broader achievement. One major reason for this is that over time repeated testing distorts instruction so that 'teaching to the test' over-inflates perceived student improvement on a narrow measure.

Teachers and administrators, faced with the demand that they must meet a particular standard or show a particular level of improvement have a very strong incentive to focus on the test at the expense of other more important aspects of the curriculum. In addition, resources may be re-allocated to tests measuring only a small part of what students know and can do. Teachers may coach their students to 'formulas' that require very little creativity on the part of the students and do not really improve achievement. Where testing has been for accountability, there are reports of much higher rates of students being excluded from participation compared with assessment for

other purposes (Linn et al, 1991; Shepard, 1990). The overseas experience has also seen increasing incidences of cheating and an increase in the proportion of students who leave school early.

In addition, 'errors in standard tests (in the USA) are enormous' (Bolon, 2000). The US Education Testing Service has estimated that, on average, individual differences of less than 70 points for its SAT Verbal scores and 80 for its SAT Maths score are not significant (Owen & Doerr, 1999). In fact, random errors of testing are so great that scores can be used at most to classify students in a few levels. In a 1999 test in Massachusetts where students were classified into four levels, it was estimated that the level of misclassification ranged from 8 to 46 per cent.

Standardised tests also often have bias errors. For example, changing the format of a test from multiple-choice to essay favours girls, while multiple-choice questions favour boys and those of European background (Sacks, 1999). In a study of Standard Aptitude Test results, the group with high multiple-choice results and low essay scores, received a sixty point higher average than the group with low-multiple choice and high essay scores (ibid).

Perhaps the major concern for educators is that standardised testing does not, generally, enhance learning improvement. This is because there is a tendency for teachers to use the external tests as models for their own assessment (Black & William, 1998). This narrows the curriculum focus, devalues the more complex tasks which require higher order thinking and reduces the opportunity for learning improvement. In addition, tests tend to sacrifice validity for reliability (ibid). That is, test constructors are more concerned with 'the precisions of scores than with the intellectual value of the challenge' (ibid, p.331) and as such the tests they construct 'do not tell us what we need to know' (Wiggins, 1993, in Pitman et al, 1999, p. 331).

Evidence from contemporary cognitive psychology indicates that learning is not in fact, acquired via a building-blocks approach, but it proceeds in many directions at once and at an uneven pace. Learners must think and actively construct evolving mental models. They must be able to interpret the information they receive and relate it to knowledge they already have (Dietel et al, 1991). Furthermore, they must be able to transfer that information to a new context.

In this situation the presence or absence of discrete bits of information (as required in the traditional test) is of far less importance than whether students can organise, structure, and use information in context to solve complex problems. This requires that students acquire concepts rather than knowledge, (although it does not, of course, suggest that content is not important) and that concept-building is not



## USEFUL LINKS

Just for fun: a humorous look at standardised testing:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WFSN5AttIGk&feature=related>

something to be delayed until a particular age or until all the basic facts have been mastered. More importantly delaying the teaching of concepts to teach isolated facts and skills actually does students a major disservice. Students need to learn meaningful ways to organise information and make it easy to remember. They need also to apply what has been learned to solve real-world problems so that understanding is complete.

Recent brain research highlights the importance of affective and metacognitive skills in learning. It suggests that poor thinkers and problem solvers differ from good ones not so much in the particular skills they possess as in their failure to use them in certain tasks. Acquisition of knowledge is not sufficient to make one into a competent thinker or problem solver. Most educators can point to students they have taught who were able to regularly gain 100% on tests which required rote-learning skills. The same students, however, had more and more difficulty as they moved through the school with many 'reaching their limits' in senior secondary. The research says that this occurred not because the student didn't 'know' the work but because he/she had not acquired the disposition to use the skills and strategies, as well as the knowledge of when and how to apply them. This is a very important finding for pedagogy, assessment and testing. If the assessment/test tasks presented to students show they have acquired 'the facts' but do not show that they have acquired understanding or transferability until late in the students schooling, there is a strong possibility that these students will never have the opportunity to develop or exhibit higher-order thinking skills.

In effective assessment, students use remembered information in order to produce an original product, participate in a performance, or complete a process. Students are assessed according to specific criteria that are known to them in advance. They do not simply recall information or circle isolated vowel sounds in words; they apply what they know to new tasks. For example, consider the difference between asking students to identify all the metaphors in a story and asking them to discuss why the author used particular metaphors and what effect they had on the story. In the latter case, students must put

their knowledge and skills to work just as they might do naturally in or out of school (Valencia, 1997); in the former they are undertaking a lower-order thinking task typical of those included in standardised tests.

A review of the literature reveals general agreement on the limitations of standardised testing, whether based on standards or generic skills, for the purposes of both accountability and learning improvement. Some of the cited concerns are:

- the possibility that these types of assessments fail to capture the kinds of complex knowledge and skills required by students to be successful in the information-based economy of the 21st century (Committee on the Foundations of Assessment, 2001);
- the implications of testing a relatively narrow range of knowledge and skills so that improvement may be a result of 'teaching to the test' rather than any real improvement in student learning (ibid);
- the problem that gains in test scores may detract from the acquisition of other aspects of knowledge and skills more useful to students;
- when high-stakes tests operate, past exams come to define the curriculum, placing curriculum development as a field of study and practice, and educators as curriculum developers, at risk;
- when tests are determiners of future education choices or future life choices, society tends to treat test results as the goal of schooling, rather than an indicator of achievement (Sergiovanni, 2000);
- where the state sets mandated standards, responsibility for what is taught and learned moves from educators, parents and local communities to legislators and politicians (ibid);
- the concerns relating to fairness and equity and the problem that if these types of tests are used where the stakes for students are high, it is not fair if assessment is not aligned with what students have been taught, or if 'at risk' students are disproportionately disadvantaged by the outcomes. One unexpected by-product of this problem in the USA has been an increase in litigation where tests have been imposed without attention to educational inequalities (Darling-Hammond, 2003);
- an incentive to push low-scoring students into special education, hold them back a grade or encourage them to drop-out of school altogether, where standards-testing is accompanied by systems that reward or sanction (ibid);
- the loss of qualified teachers from schools where students do not meet the 'standard';
- the dropping of performance tasks, such as those using portfolios, which have been shown to support improved instruction, for narrow 'teaching to the test' instruction.

Darling-Hammond (2006) talks about the problem of 'reliance on testing as the reform, rather than a component of a comprehensive improvement agenda...particularly where assessments are often unaligned with standards'. She argues that education systems which top the world on international tests tend to focus 'more on big ideas and delve more deeply into them. For example, in Japan's national curriculum, teachers are asked to tackle only four or five major concepts in a school year and to do so with great intensity. The concepts – fundamental notions such as ratio and proportion or estimation – are the lynchpins of mathematical thinking. By contrast, in US classrooms, teachers may be asked to cover 30 chapters of a textbook, spending only a week on any given topic, making solid learning unlikely for many students'. This results in many topics needing to be re-taught year after year because they are never properly taught or deeply learned – and it means that the weaknesses of the curriculum make true improvement and accountability impossible.

*"True accountability occurs only when policy makers and educators can act on the information provided by accountability systems in ways that create better opportunities and outcomes for both individual students and groups of students." (ibid)*

While assessment is important in improving educational outcomes, the key factors from the research evidence that matter most for student learning include: well-prepared teachers, well-designed and coherent curriculum, skilful instruction that is adapted to students' needs and personalised learning

## Standardised Testing: Getting it Right for Educational Improvement

environments in which students are well-known by their teachers (Darling-Hammond 1996). Often these factors, through no fault of teachers, are not present in our schools.

A 2006 survey of teacher supply undertaken by the Australian Secondary Teachers Association reveals alarming figures about the number of teachers teaching outside of their areas of expertise. The report estimated that on any particular day approximately 300,000 student lessons were taught by untrained teachers in the subject area. This has huge significance for student outcomes. Wenglinsky (2000), for example, found that achievement gains in science and maths were greater where teachers had qualifications in the subject taught, they had professional development in teaching for higher-order thinking and they were trained to work with students with special needs and second language learners. Similarly, Hawk et al (1985) found gains in mathematics were significantly larger (by 60%) for students taught by mathematics teachers with a university major or minor in maths as compared with teachers with no formal maths training.

An analysis carried out by Darling-Hammond in 2000, found that most of the differences among states in their reading and mathematics scores between 1990 and 1996 were accounted for by measures of teacher quality. In fact, the strongest predictor of student achievement was the state's proportion of teachers who had full certification and a university major or minor in their teaching fields. In addition she found no relationship between high-stakes testing and student achievement. In states achieving the best results on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, testing systems were performance-oriented assessments used to inform improvements in curriculum and teaching. By contrast, most of the poorer performing states had high-stakes testing systems with primarily multiple choice tests that they used to determine grade retention and graduation, merit pay and school intervention.

With respect to curriculum, student achievement is associated with access to a core curriculum that is coherent, subjects are related to one another and topics build on one another. 'Without such coherence, students must by themselves make sense of a fragmented patchwork of instructional activities that seem unrelated to each other or to the real world' (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

There is also evidence that students achieve

at higher levels and are more attached to schools when they learn in settings where they are well known and have the opportunity to build longer-term relationships with fewer adults (Lee, Smith & Croninger, 1995). In schools where there is high teacher turnover, where teachers interact in class with more than 100 students a day, where substitute teachers are common and where schools are larger, student outcomes on standardised tests are likely to be lower irrespective of the competence of the teacher.

Purposeful reform of education is not based on standardised testing; but on a suite of changes to improve education outcomes for all students. What makes a difference is purposeful reform of teaching such as the Connecticut Excellence in Education Act of 1986. The Act raised teachers' salaries to the highest in the United States and raised standards for teachers at the same time. It created scholarships to entice people into areas of subject shortage, required all teachers to complete a major in their field and improved the standard of pre-service training, including requiring all teachers of all subjects to learn to teach reading, second language learners and special education. All new teachers received formal mentoring and intensive professional development was instituted for teachers across the state. In the most disadvantaged regions extra support was provided for preschool education, professional development and curriculum reform. Data from performance-based assessment tests were disaggregated in many ways so that schools could examine what different groups of students were learning and how progress was being made over time in particular skills. Connecticut's approach significantly improved achievement scores for all students to well above the national average.

Not all of the above implies that useful standardised tests cannot be devised. The research suggests there are ways to enhance testing for both accountability (Linn, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2003) and learning improvement (Popham 2003).

If the goal is accountability, the following considerations tend to reduce the negative aspects of tests:

1. All students should be included in accountability calculations to reduce distortions caused by selective exclusion of students.
2. High-stakes testing requires new high-quality assessments each year that equate to those of previous years but avoid the

distortions which occur from 'teaching to the test.'

3. Accountability testing should not put all of the weight on a single test but should include multiple indicators. In fact, Darling-Hammond suggests that the use of test scores as single arbiters of decisions about students, teachers or schools should be prohibited.
4. Local, school-based measures should be an important component of all placement and graduation decisions.
5. Assessment data should be used as a trigger for additional support for students who are struggling and for schools in additional need of support.
6. Assessment should be aimed at higher order thinking and performance skills and the results used to continually improve practice.
7. Greater emphasis should be put on comparisons from year to year, rather than from school to school.
8. Both value added and status in the system should be considered. Value added provides schools that start out well below the 'standard' proficiency a reasonable chance to improve; while status guards against 'institutionalising low expectations' (Linn, 2000, p. 16).
9. The degree of uncertainty in reported test results should be recognised, evaluated and reported.
10. Evaluation of both the intended positive effects and the, more likely, unintended negative effects of the system of testing should occur.

If the goal of the test is for learning improvement, Popham argues for five attributes of an instructionally useful test. Such a test, he says has:

1. Significance – that is, it measures attainment of a worthwhile curricular aim such as a high level cognitive skill or a substantial body of important knowledge;
2. Teachability – that is, it measures something teachable as opposed, for example, to innate intelligence.
3. Describability – that is, it is directly based on sufficiently clear descriptions of the skills and knowledge it measures so that teachers can design properly focused instructional activities;
4. Reportability – that is, it yields results at a specific enough level to inform teachers about the effectiveness of the instruction they provide and thus inform instructional change for learning improvement;

5. Non-intrusiveness – that is, it doesn't take too long to administer, so that useful instructional time is intruded upon.

Darling-Hammond (2006) says, 'to develop genuine accountability for students ...we need to develop policies that use assessments to guide educational improvements, rather than to further reduce the amount of quality education students receive...the process of raising standards cannot be separated from issues of teaching, assessment, school organisation, professional development and funding... (but) must address the overall fabric of education'.

She suggests the following principles for the more productive use of assessment:

- 'use standards and authentic assessment of student achievement as indicators of progress to improve teaching and provide needed supports, not as arbiters of rewards and sanctions for students and schools;
- expand performance components that provide 'tests worth teaching to' – assessments that encourage the kinds of higher order thinking and performance skills students will need to use in the world outside of school;
- eliminate artificial testing barriers to students demonstrating what they know to the fullest extent possible (e.g. time limits);
- develop systems that involve multiple measures (including coursework and curriculum-embedded performance assessments);
- require and fund diagnostics for students who are not succeeding;
- create systems that report value-added scores by school and provide data about school conditions;
- provide data to schools in a way that they can learn to use them;
- use accountability to upgrade teaching and provide the kinds of professional development opportunities, curriculum reforms and resource allocations that standards-based reform anticipates'.

Improving education outcomes in our schools is both difficult and easy. Difficult because it is costly and takes time beyond the three year electoral cycle; easy because we know what works. The research is vast and unequivocal. The challenge is to persuade non-educators and decision-makers to read, and to listen to the profession.

## Recommended Reading

**Darling-Hammond, Linda (2006), *Standards, Assessments, and Educational Policy: In Pursuit of Genuine Accountability, The William H Angoff Memorial Lecture Series, Educational Testing Service, <https://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/PICANG8.pdf>***

World-renowned researcher and educator, Linda Darling-Hammond, discusses how standards-based reforms in U.S. education have created demand for increased testing of students and teachers as the basis for a broad range of policy-making decisions. Proponents claim that standards and assessments can enhance learning and render educational systems more accountable for improvements. Opponents claim that inequalities are exacerbated by many current uses of these tools. Unfortunately, such debates often treat both tests and their policy uses as black boxes for improving education. Adding to the controversy are the varying ways that states are using assessments and educational standards in schools. Darling-Hammond argues that to develop genuine accountability for student learning, we need education policies that use assessments to guide improvements in schools, rather than reduce the amount and quality of education students receive.

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## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



### The Federal Election and Education

Australia's new Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, is likely to call a Federal election in the coming months. Constitutional timing issues make the seven Saturdays between 7 August and 18 September the most likely dates, although the Federal Government could extend the date to as far away as April next year by allowing the House of Representatives to run through to its expiry on 11 February 2011, with the latest an election could be held being 16 April 2011.

Given the Federal Government does not own, operate or manage any schools – this being the responsibility of State/Territory Governments and the non-government schools sector – it is interesting that education continues to play a significant role in Federal politics.

*Newspoll* ([www.newspoll.com.au](http://www.newspoll.com.au)) monitors political and issue trends, one of which is the importance of education in Federal voting intentions. The first poll identifying education as a significant Federal issue was taken in September 1999, where 74% of voters considered education very important, just behind health and Medicare at 75% of voters. Since that time, education has rated very highly as a Federal issue – a peak of 83% in June 2003. As recently as February 2008, 81% of voters rated it very important, compared to 71% for the economy.

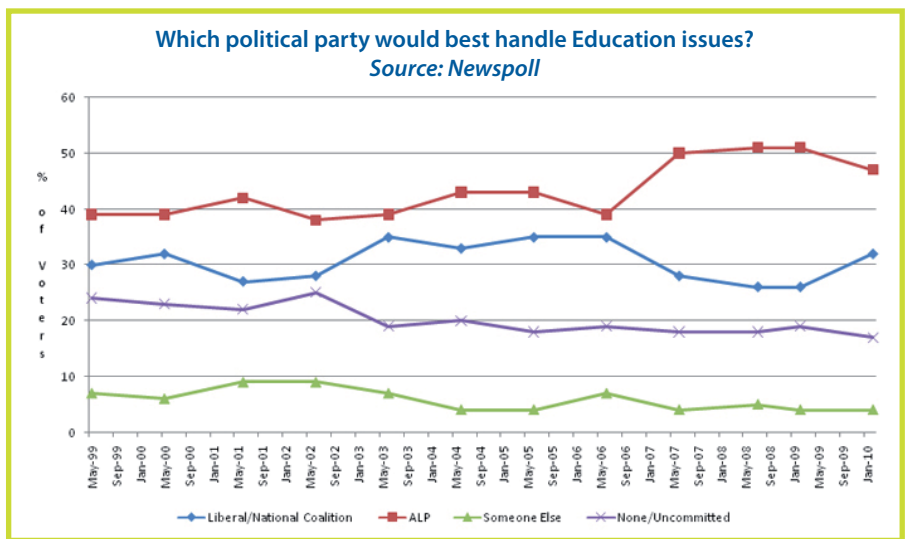
The role of the Federal Government in education is underpinned by its financial powers. In 2010/11, a total of \$1.9 billion for recurrent, capital and targeted programs will be paid by Canberra to Queensland non-state schools. Although the direct funding to the Queensland Government for schooling is of a lesser amount, the reality is that nearly 50% of the Queensland

Government's revenue in 2010/11 is from Commonwealth grants (including GST revenue)<sup>1</sup>. It is this revenue that will allow the Queensland Government to spend \$9.9 billion on education and training in the coming financial year.

Successive Australian Governments have used their financial dominance to drive education policy, reforms and initiatives in terms of national priorities, national consistency and more recently international competitiveness and productivity

between the ALP and the Coalition narrowed considerably. Some political commentators have even suggested that the polling on this issue played a significant role in the change of the ALP leadership in late 2006. However, since 2007, the ALP has in the mind of voters, been the dominant party in terms of which side of politics can best handle the issue of education.

In recent Federal elections, education has played a significant role. Many political commentators refer to the significance of



improvements. The current Rudd/Gillard Government has perhaps been one of the most active in these areas, under the banner of the "Education Revolution".

The disconnect between the Australian Government as an education policy driver and the States/Territories and non-government organisations as the owners and operators of schools, has always provided interesting political dynamics, especially during those times when a number of State/Territory Governments have been of a different political colour to the occupiers of the front benches in Canberra.

*Newspoll* also surveys voters to gauge which political party would best handle the issue of education.

As outlined in the **Graph**, the ALP has consistently been seen by voters as being better able to handle education at the Federal level, although there were periods during the early to mid 2000s where the gap

Mark Latham's schools funding "hit list" in the ALP's loss of the 2004 election. For the 2007 Federal election, the ALP campaigned heavily on the theme of an "Education Revolution".

What might be in store for voters in the 2010 Federal election?

It is well recognised that Queensland will play an important role in the 2010 Federal election. In 2009, there was a redistribution of federal electoral divisions in Queensland, resulting in an additional seat and changes to the boundaries of a majority of divisions – the new seat is named Wright. As a result, 30 House of Representative seats will be contested in Queensland at the 2010 poll.

Following the 2009 redistribution, the Australian Electoral Commission ([www.aec.gov.au](http://www.aec.gov.au)) rates 16 of the 30 Queensland seats as marginal – these being where a party receives less than 56% of the vote on a two-party preferred basis. As indicated in the

<sup>1</sup> The 2010/11 Queensland Budget figures show that \$18.9 billion will be received in the form of Australian Government grants out of a total Budget income of \$40.7 billion.

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### Marginal Seats - Queensland

Seat	Held By	Margin	No of independent schools in electorate (%)	Participation rate in independent schooling
Bonner	ALP	4.53	6	17.7
Bowman	LP	0	4	23.3
Brisbane	ALP	4.6	8	21.8
Dawson	ALP	2.59	7	10.7
Dickson#	LP	-2.97	6	16.0
Fairfax	LP	2.97	11	22.7
Fisher	LP	3.53	7	19.1
Flynn	ALP	2.24	7	5.7
Forde	ALP	3.36	9	19.2
Herbert#	LP	-.03	7	10.8
Hinkler	NP	1.52	9	12.4
Leichhardt	ALP	4.06	6	7.5
Longman	ALP	1.87	6	10.7
Petrie	ALP	4.21	7	13.6
Ryan	LP	1.21	4	22.8
Wright	LP/NP	3.79	6	15.9

# notional ALP seat following redistribution

Participation rate indicates the number of school aged children living in the electorate that attend independent schools.

**Table**, in some of these marginal seats the participation of students in independent schooling is significant.

Candidates in marginal seats would indeed be brave not to listen to the concerns and needs of voters in relation to education issues.

Foremost on the minds of independent school communities will be the Australian Government funding arrangements for independent schools post 2013. It will be the Australian Government which is elected in 2010 that will be responsible for putting into place those funding arrangements through either, or both, legislation in 2012 or the 2012/13 Budget decisions.

The current Australian Government has announced a review of the funding arrangements for all schools (see [www.deewr.gov.au](http://www.deewr.gov.au) for further details); whilst the Coalition has given an early indication that it would continue the current SES funding arrangements with some modifications if elected.

Independent school communities will be waiting with great interest to see the formal education policies of the political parties as we get closer to the election. In the meantime, the Independent Schools Council of Australia in association with State/Territory Associations of Independent Schools has recently released its key issues for the 2010 election. These are summarised, particularly in relation to funding issues in **Box 1** (for a copy of the full statement visit [www.isca.edu.au](http://www.isca.edu.au)).

Independent Schools Queensland will be asking candidates in the 2010 Federal election to respond to these issues, and I am sure independent schools and the parents of students in independent schools will be taking a keen interest in their responses.

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## Box 1

### How governments can support choice and diversity in Australian schooling

- Government funding arrangements should recognise and encourage the significant financial investment parents make in their children's education at independent schools through the payment of school fees, fundraising and donations.
- All school students should be eligible for a basic grant to support their school education, with additional needs-based funding which recognises the range of educational needs of students.
- Students with disabilities should receive increased funding to ensure their educational needs are met no matter which school they attend.
- Government grants for students in independent schools should be indexed annually to keep pace with the rising costs of schooling.
- All schools should experience stability and predictability in government funding to ensure the ongoing provision of quality schooling.
- No independent school student should be worse off, and no independent school should be disadvantaged if governments change their funding arrangements.
- The Australian Government should acknowledge that grants to independent schools and their students work most efficiently and effectively when there is an ongoing direct funding relationship guaranteed in legislation.

### Government support for independent schools is an equitable and efficient use of taxpayer money

- Independent schools support transparency, accountability and proper reporting of any public monies they receive.
- Independent schools are not-for-profit organisations with a proven track record in effective and efficient management of government programs for schools.
- Independent schools contribute significantly to the cost of educating their students: Government grants to independent schools students are on average less than half the government expenditure on students in government schools; some schools receive less than 20 percent. In independent schools families bridge the funding gap through fees and fundraising.
- Independent schools support quality school education in Australia at great savings to the taxpayer: a significant proportion of independent school income comes from families. Any government support for independent schools, including building grants, is an effective way to stretch the value of available public dollars for schooling.

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## INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS QUEENSLAND

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