Position Paper: Online Diagnostic Tools

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AGPPA Position

AGPPA is in broad agreement with quality diagnostic educational tools for teachers to inform teaching and assessment for learning. We do not support the use of professional diagnostic tools by parents and students.

Background

The Gillard government in its pre-election campaign outlined plans for diagnostic tools for parents and teachers.
It asserted that this initiative would provide a digital platform linked to the national curriculum and national assessment programs, to provide those assessments for students, parents and teachers.

AGPPA Position - Supporting Statements

Principals and teachers would value diagnostic tools linked to the Australian Curriculum. Integrity and consistency can only be ensured if the tools are used by professionals i.e. teachers trained in the use and interpretation of the assessment tools.

AGPPA can see that there is a risk of increased anxiety and mental health issues with children, in allowing open parental access to the testing and diagnostic tools, as evidenced in our NAPLAN experience.

Test elements need to reflect the broad Australian Curriculum, not be limited to NAPLAN test items.
Diagnostic tools are used by educators to inform their planning and teaching to maximize student outcomes.

Such tools should be simple in their application and provide immediate feedback for teachers. Student results from online diagnostic testing can be effectively harvested for school leaders and system managers to gauge the progress of cohorts of students. These statistical educational assessment processes, pioneered in jurisdictions such as New Zealand, allow real time analysis of students learning progress at multiple points during a typical school year and facilitate comparative longitudinal assessments. This data is valuable to school team leaders, principals, system administrators and politicians.

Strategies required for implementation

AGPPA believes that equity of access to these diagnostic tools can only be achieved in schools if:
- the National Broadband rollout is complete
- adequate hardware is resourced
- technical support is funded
- professional learning for teachers is provided to interpret data

Curriculum materials need to be developed and linked to all elements of the diagnostic tool to support teaching and learning.