

Grapevine

MY SCHOOL...

Hats off to Paul Kidson, principal of St Paul's Grammar School in Penrith, Sydney, who wrote in the *Sydney Morning Herald* before the new, improved My School website was delayed in December, about the inadequacies and averaging tendencies of the revised Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA). Why, he asked, shouldn't we include other statistical items that affect student achievement? 'Perhaps it could include a breakfast consumption factor, a public transport access factor that acknowledges some rural students spend more than 90 minutes in daily travel, an internet access equity factor or even a sports and recreational involvement factor, given what we know about the value to learning of such pursuits,' he suggested. Maybe the ICSEA should even include school staffing demographics. 'Why should we not include the age and experience of the teaching staff, the gender mix, the number of part-time and shared-class arrangements, numbers of teachers with postgraduate qualifications, turnover rate, or the numbers of staff teaching outside their training disciplines in secondary schooling?' he wrote. Kidson's point, of course, was that 'accountability and transparency...should not lead to overly simplistic reductionist data such as averages' and that 'thousands of diverse learning communities around our nation achieve so much that can never be captured by My School.'

...AND MORE ON MY SCHOOL...

The Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee tabled its report following its inquiry into the administration and reporting of National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing and the My School website managed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). According to the Liberal majority, 'The problems (with My School)...are wide ranging and a cause for serious concern. They point to a substantial and justified lack of confidence in the website among the parent, teacher and wider community.' Probably

the biggest bone of contention is the ICSEA. To address that, 'The committee majority recommends that ACARA prioritises the improvement of the method used to develop like-school comparisons and commits to the introduction of a method based on student-level socioeconomic status data for all schools prior to the reporting of 2011 NAPLAN test results.' Surprisingly, the government senators – in the minority on the committee – want the ICSEA to include financial details of all school assets. 'In the interests of providing more information, government senators believe that there should be full disclosure of financial assets including assets, foundations and investments,' the government senators observed. They recommended that My School provide full disclosure of financial assets, adding that, 'Those schools who do not agree to this requirement should not receive public funding.' The new version of My School is expected to include 2009 recurrent income, disaggregated in terms of Commonwealth government and state or territory government funding; school fees, charges and voluntary contributions; and other sources.

It's also expected to include 2009 capital expenditure broken down by source of funding – when the site is finally up and running.

...AND STILL MORE ON MY SCHOOL...

Apparently on the basis that more is better, the Liberal majority on the committee also recommended that NAPLAN be expanded into annual testing for all students from Years 3 to 10 in order to more accurately track student performance. NAPLAN currently tests students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9.

...AND YET MORE ON MY SCHOOL

Supposed to be launched in December, the rejigged My School website has been delayed as ACARA irons out its method for reporting the financial resources information of schools. Numerous schools went public with concerns about the potential damage of disclosing wrong, incorrect or botched financial data on the website described variously in the media as a shambles, mess and mire.

The Grapevine is written by Steve Holden, Editor of Teacher.

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Anthony (Tony) Mackay, Chair of AITSL and Deputy Chair of ACARA

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