

## ASSESSMENT

**Assessment in education plays a crucial role in supporting teaching and learning. Assessments provide data that informs both student individual growth and broader educational outcomes and are designed to align with the Australian Curriculum. Classroom assessment provides information about student progress and achievement, helping teachers plan and refine instruction to meet diverse learning needs.**

What and how we measure, however, can be an enabler or a constraint. APPA is concerned that the current assessment paradigm contributes to creating fragile learners. Professor Clare Wood notes that a child's belief in themselves as a learner is highest when they first start school; the more they are evaluated or assessed, the more conscious they become of what they **cannot** do.

### THE PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT

There are three aspects of classroom assessment.

- » Assessment **for** learning (sometimes referred to as '**formative** assessment') whereby teachers use evidence about a student's knowledge, skills and abilities to tailor their instruction.
- » Assessment **as** learning whereby students monitor their own learning to determine what they know and can do.
- » Assessment **of** learning (sometimes referred to as '**summative** assessment') whereby teachers use evidence to assess achievement against outcomes and standards.

The information gathered during assessment has two major purposes.

- » An **educational** purpose: educators learn about the student's strengths and weaknesses so that the teacher can adjust, fine-tune, and improve teaching strategies in the classroom and enable students and classes to achieve educational outcomes.
- » An **administrative** purpose: assessment is used to report the progress of a student to other stakeholders, especially parents; to determine the student's next step in their educational path; and, to monitor the quality of an education system or institution.

Unfortunately, the administrative purpose is often over emphasised resulting in over assessment. Teachers are under pressure to produce a continuous 'report card' and the greater the number of 'measurements' the teacher has taken, the more accurate that assessment presumably is. In the primary years, summative assessments, useful for grading and accountability should not exceed 20% of assessment practices.

### THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

Teachers are key agents in the assessment process. They have the professional knowledge and expertise to design assessments that reflect their students' needs. Teachers understand the specific context of their students, communities, and schools, thus allowing a more personalised approach to learning. Daily, teachers triangulate data from the variety of assessments and observations to inform their teaching, to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching and learning activities, and to provide effective feedback to students for next steps.

Continuous professional development is crucial for strengthening assessment practices, equipping teachers with the skills to interpret data effectively, and using those insights to enhance student learning.

### CHANGING THE METRICS

Over the last few years, social and emotional skills, which are important for success and social functioning, have been rising on the education policy agenda. The OECD's Survey of Social and Emotional Skills (SSES) is one of the first international efforts to collect data from students, parents, and teachers on the social and emotional skills of students at ages 10 and 15. It sheds light on ways to help education leaders monitor and foster these skills.<sup>1</sup>

In Australian primary education, new metrics assessments are emerging as innovative tools to measure student growth and success beyond traditional academic subjects. The new metrics emphasise a broader view of student development, aiming to measure skills that better reflect a student's preparation for future challenges. This comprehensive approach informs educators and parents about a child's strengths and areas for development, enabling teachers to create personalised learning experiences that support each child's overall development.

- » **Wellbeing and social-emotional skills:** crucial for mental health and social adaptability, supporting lifelong success beyond academic settings.
- » **Critical thinking and problem-solving:** essential for navigating complex modern challenges; often assessed through project-based learning and performance tasks. ►

- » **Student agency and engagement:** measures a student's capacity to take ownership of their own learning; improves intrinsic motivation and helps students learn more effectively.
- » **Global and digital competencies:** includes digital literacy, cross-cultural competencies, and the ethical use of technology.
- » **Active citizenship:** involves engagement in community and civic activities and includes an understanding of rights and responsibilities as a member of society.
- » **Acting ethically:** comprises understanding and practising ethical behaviour in various contexts and making decisions that reflect moral and ethical considerations.

These assessments often utilise digital platforms, real-world applications and continuous feedback, supporting personalised learning and reflecting 21st century capabilities aligned with the Australian Curriculum. A more holistic view of student progress is achieved with this broader approach to assessment.

## STANDARDISED ASSESSMENTS

The Alice Springs (**Mparntwe**) Education Declaration (2019) has two goals.

1. The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity, which aligns well with NAPLAN.
2. All young Australians become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community, which does NOT align well with NAPLAN.<sup>2</sup>

As stated in the 2020 federal review, the purposes of NAPLAN include 'monitoring progress towards national goals, school system accountability and performance, school improvement, individual student learning achievement and growth, and information for parents/carers on school and student performance.'<sup>3</sup> While they provide useful benchmarks, standardised tests are just one component of a broader evaluative framework.

- » NAPLAN results tend to reflect broader inequalities showing how family income and access to resources can shape educational outcomes.
- » Teachers and schools need the results in a more timely manner to allow more immediate impact for students.
- » The My School website has allowed for inter-school comparisons and could be seen as a factor in exacerbating competition between schools and sectors.

In their 2019 submission to the Education Council of Australian Governments, the Gonski Institute for Education argued that it is impossible for a single student assessment such as NAPLAN to be accurate. It asserted that NAPLAN was trying to do too many things and that its sole purpose should be to monitor education systems against the purpose of education.<sup>4</sup>

## ADDRESSING THESE ISSUES

APPA advocates for:

- » strengthening **the role of the teacher** in the assessment process including targeted professional development
- » continuing to **reimagine the metrics of assessment** by moving beyond traditional academics and recognising social and emotional development
- » focussing on ongoing, flexible, low stakes, **formative assessment** that fosters growth and guides learning
- » **a review of the role and purpose of NAPLAN**, including testing a representative sample of students, rather than the entire cohort, and removing the publication of NAPLAN performance from the My School website.

## SUMMARY

Assessment in the Australian primary context must be designed to be a dynamic and integral part of the educational experience, supporting both teaching and learning in meaningful ways. **APPA calls for assessment practices that**

- » value the whole child and goes beyond traditional academic measures to recognise and support all aspects of a child's development.
- » **balance formative and summative approaches, promote fairness, encourage student engagement, and account for cultural and linguistic diversity.** Effective assessment is differentiated, providing students with more than one way of showing their understanding, provides feedback which gives students the opportunity to improve their performance, and includes student self-assessment.

1 'Beyond academic learning.' OECD, Accessed 10/02/2025, [https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/beyond-academic-learning\\_92a11084-en.html](https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/beyond-academic-learning_92a11084-en.html)

2 'COVID-19 offers opportunities to consider "NAPLAN 2.0".' LENS, Accessed 11/02/2025, <https://lens.monash.edu/@education/2020/04/29/1380135/covid-19-offers-opportunities-to-consider-naplan-20>

3 'NAPLAN Review Final Report.' Accessed 10/02/2025, [https://naplanreview.com.au/pdfs/2020\\_NAPLAN\\_review\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://naplanreview.com.au/pdfs/2020_NAPLAN_review_final_report.pdf)

4 'Gonski Institute for Education: Submission to the Education Council of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) NAPLAN Reporting Review 2019.' Accessed 10/02/2025, [https://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/documents/NAPLAN\\_submission\\_21\\_March.pdf](https://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/documents/NAPLAN_submission_21_March.pdf)

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# ADVOCACY FOR PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION

## FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

**The Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) advocates for the implementation of professional supervision and support systems for school leaders. This approach addresses the growing challenges facing principals, including high stress levels, exposure to traumatic events, and the increasing complexity of their roles. Supporting school leaders' mental health and wellbeing is not just a matter of care but a strategic imperative that directly impacts staff wellbeing and, consequently, student outcomes.**

Evidence demonstrates that proactive, preventative, and responsive programs tailored to the unique needs of school leaders can significantly improve their effectiveness, resilience, and overall job satisfaction. APPA calls for systemic investment in professional supervision frameworks, integrated support teams, and tailored initiatives for high-risk cohorts to ensure principals are well-equipped to lead thriving school communities.

### THE CASE FOR ACTION

#### Mental Health and Wellbeing of School Leaders

Research consistently indicates a significant relationship between school staff well-being and student outcomes. To ensure principals lead effectively, their mental health must be prioritised through preventative, early intervention, and responsive programs. A strong narrative from the top, emphasising care and mental health, underscores the importance of accessible and quality-assured support services that deliver measurable outcomes.

#### Unique Challenges of the Principal Role

The principal role is marked by high exposure to challenging interactions, including conflicts, critical incidents, and community crises. Despite these challenges, principals currently lack access to professional supervision—a widely adopted framework in allied health professions. Reflective supervision, coaching, and integrated support systems are necessary to maintain their health and wellbeing while enabling them to navigate the complexities of their roles effectively.

### PROPOSED INITIATIVES

#### Integrated Team Around the Principal

- » **Streamlined Access to Support:** Reduce the number of steps required to access help, ensuring prompt and efficient resolution of issues.
- » **Trauma-Informed Responses:** Embed trauma-informed practices into principal support systems to address the impact of critical incidents.
- » **Professional and Executive Coaching:** Allocate \$2,200 per school leader annually (CPI adjusted) for professional coaching, supported by high-level system endorsement. Provide this to schools directly and in addition to a leader's professional learning budget.

#### Reflective Supervision Framework

Reflective supervision for school leaders is akin to clinical supervision for psychologists. In both contexts, the focus is on providing a structured, supportive environment for reflective practice, emotional resilience, and professional growth. For principals, this involves:

- » **Dedicated Time for Reflection:** Just as clinical supervision allows psychologists to debrief and reflect on complex cases, principal supervision provides school leaders with opportunities to process challenging interactions and decisions.
- » **Expert Guidance:** Supervision is led by trained professionals who understand the unique demands of school leadership, such as navigating trauma, resolving conflicts, and maintaining community relationships.
- » **Proactive and Restorative Support:** Like clinical supervision, principal supervision helps to prevent burnout, foster resilience, and promote effective leadership practices. ►

## THIS FRAMEWORK IS PARTICULARLY VITAL IN HIGH-RISK COHORTS:

- » **Low SES Communities:** Address the compounded challenges of socio-economic disadvantage.
- » **Rural and Remote Schools:** Provide targeted support for isolated or single leadership roles.
- » **Crisis-Affected Communities:** Offer additional resources for schools recovering from events such as deaths, natural disasters, or significant disruptions.
- » **Data-Driven Targeting:** Use evidence, such as community risk profiles, to prioritise supervision support.

## CONCLUSION

Investing in the mental health and wellbeing of school leaders is a critical step toward building resilient, high-performing educational communities. APPA calls for professional supervision, integrated support systems, and targeted programs that can transform the way school leaders navigate their roles and maintain their wellbeing, ensuring they are equipped to lead with confidence and care.

APPA stands ready to advocate for and support these initiatives, ensuring the sustainability and success of Australian primary school leadership.

## RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE

- » **APPA/ACU Research:** Ongoing research on how offensive behaviours impact school leaders' productivity will provide valuable insights and inform further initiatives.<sup>1</sup>
- » **Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Data:** Leveraging EAP usage data to identify trends, themes, and cohort-specific needs will enhance the design of support programs.<sup>2</sup>

1 'Violence escalates and mental health suffers but principals remain resilient.' ACU News. <https://www.acu.edu.au/about-acu/news/2024/march/violence-escalates-and-mental-health-suffers-but-principals-remain-resilient>

2 'Understanding average EAP utilisation rates: traditional vs. alternative Employee Assistance Programs.' Sonder. <https://sonder.io/eap-hub/average-eap-utilisation-rates/>

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

APPA advocates for the following.

- » **Systemic investment in professional supervision**  
Allocate resources for reflective supervision programs tailored to the unique challenges of school leadership.
- » **Integrated support teams**  
Establish multidisciplinary teams around principals to provide seamless and efficient access to support and reduce administrative burdens.
- » **A national strategy for leadership preparation**  
Develop a unified approach to mental health prevention and support for school leaders, including strategies for personal agency and resilience.
- » **Expanded research and data utilisation**  
Continue to invest in research (including the *Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety, and Wellbeing Survey*) that informs the development of effective support frameworks, ensuring initiatives are evidence-based and impactful.
- » **Adoption of best practices**  
Learn from successful models in other states and countries to create a robust support system for Australian principals.

“Evidence demonstrates that proactive, preventative, and responsive programs tailored to the unique needs of school leaders can significantly improve their effectiveness, resilience, and overall job satisfaction.”

## WORKPLACE AND RISK

**The complexities of school leadership have reached a critical juncture and, in today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, principals face an increasingly complex web of challenges that extend beyond the classroom. The interconnected nature of workplace risks evidences the deep links between the roles of principals, staff, students and legislation. It is imperative that we address the needs of principals to ensure a thriving educational environment.**

### KEY AREAS OF RISK

#### Multifaceted demands

From managing the multifaceted demands of students, staff, and stakeholders, to navigating the pressures of compliance, workplace health and safety, and reputational risks, the role of a principal has become a high-stakes balancing act. Principals must not only address psychological safety and the vicarious trauma associated with occupational violence but also contend with the blurring lines between the school's educational mission and the escalating expectations of parents and the community.

#### Risk management

Principals are not just administrators; they are pivotal instructional leaders, managing risks to foster effective learning, while navigating numerous pressures arising from compliance and accountability. Unfortunately, risk aversion often leads to the removal of valuable activities that engage students, hindering their growth.

*“ The interconnected nature of workplace risks evidences the deep links between the roles of principals, staff, students and legislation. It is imperative that we address the needs of principals to ensure a thriving educational environment. ”*

#### Politicisation of education

The politicisation of education and increased legislative demands, place undue pressure on principals, often burdening them with unexpected political announcements and media scrutiny.

#### Reputational damage

Principals face reputational damage from social media, compliance pressures, and the psychological toll on staff and students alike. This also impacts a system's reputation.

#### Resource constraints

The complexity of the role of Principal is exacerbated by a lack of resources and support. The ongoing challenges of inclusivity and diversity, without an increase in resource allocation, require immediate attention and strategic planning to ensure equitable educational environments.

#### Financial risk

The current landscape presents significant financial risks. Changes to funding models, delayed budget approvals, or reductions in grants can create financial uncertainty and instability.

#### Rapid technological advance

As technology, including AI, reshapes the educational and societal landscape, principals must adapt swiftly to safeguard their schools while ensuring the learning and well-being of their students and staff. ►

## ADDRESSING THESE ISSUES

APPA advocates for focussed attention in addressing these key issues and implementing targeted solutions. In addressing these issues we empower principals to effectively manage workplace risks, fostering a supportive educational environment that benefits students, staff, and the broader community. By equipping principals with resources for instructional leadership, early intervention programs, adequate resourcing, technological advancements, clear policy frameworks, and professional development, we can alleviate the pressures they face.

» **Provide support for educational leadership**  
Empower principals with the autonomy and resources to lead instructional efforts, including coaching and mentoring, and quality, data informed, professional learning that impacts the principal at the point of career need. Ensure these are peer reviewed and accessible to all.

» **Increase leadership density in primary schools**  
Compared with secondary schools, primary schools have a much smaller leadership team. This is a result of the smaller 'per student' federal funding. In 2025 a child in year 6 attracts \$3588 less than a child in year 7<sup>1</sup>. This has flow on implications for school leadership density, specialist programs and intervention resourcing. Strong staff recruitment and retention strategies create a stable, supportive culture, enabling leaders to focus on strategic priorities rather than ongoing staffing challenges.

» **Implement early intervention programs**  
Implement funded mental health and early intervention initiatives to close gaps evident at the start of school and address student and staff issues before they escalate.

» **Leverage technology**  
Utilise technology to streamline compliance and reporting processes, reducing duplication and improving efficiency.

» **Develop clear policy and procedure frameworks**  
Develop clear, accessible policies that guide principals in navigating compliance and risk management, alleviating burdens on their time. Learn from effective systems that are doing this well. Ensure this occurs across all sectors and in all states.

» **Provide adequate resourcing**  
Ensure financial and personnel resources align with job demands to improve efficiency and reduce stress. When a task is added, determine the HR impact and resource appropriately. What is asked of schools should align with their mission and purpose and be adequately resourced for that purpose.

» **Provide ongoing professional development**  
Offer ongoing professional learning to keep principals and staff updated on legislative requirements and risk management skills. Equip principals with strategies to navigate political announcements and media scrutiny effectively. Ensure coaching and or mentoring is accessible to all leaders.

## SUMMARY

Addressing staffing challenges, clarifying the role and purpose of schools, and providing equitable funding for primary education are crucial steps towards addressing these issues. Engaging with policymakers to co-design and implement these solutions is essential for securing the future of our schools and providing a supportive, well-led educational environment for the benefit of every student.

**APPA calls for policymakers to work with APPA in the co-design of a framework that supports our leaders in navigating these complexities and ensuring every student and school staff member can thrive.** APPA stands ready to collaborate in creating a framework that empowers principals, enhances school leadership, and fosters student success.

<sup>1</sup> In 2025, the federal funding per student in Australia is \$13,977 for primary students and \$17,565 for secondary students. This is part of the School Resource Standard (SRS) funding.

## EFFECTIVE PARENT SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

**At the heart of every primary school is a commitment to fostering the academic and social success of every child. Our mission is clear: schools are dedicated to nurturing well-rounded individuals who thrive both inside and outside the classroom. Education is a shared endeavour, and this mission is best achieved when schools and families work together in harmony, forming strong, respectful partnerships that enhance the learning experience.**

### THE CHALLENGE

The relationship between schools and families is a cornerstone of student success, yet it is not without its complexities. Today's school leaders face an increasingly challenging landscape in managing problematic parent-school relationships. Factors such as heightened stress levels, misinformation, and competing expectations, can sometimes lead to misunderstandings or conflicts. These challenges are compounded by a small minority of interactions that escalate into disrespectful or even aggressive behaviour, impacting the wellbeing of school staff and the broader community.

While most parents and carers are committed partners in their child's education, it is vital to acknowledge and address these issues to ensure schools remain safe, respectful, and supportive environments for all.

*“ Education is a shared endeavour, and this mission is best achieved when schools and families work together in harmony, forming strong, respectful partnerships that enhance the learning experience. ”*

### CREATING EFFECTIVE PARENT-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS

The need for clear communication, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to the wellbeing of children has never been greater. By strengthening these foundational elements, schools and families can overcome challenges and work together in the best interests of every child.

#### Trust

We acknowledge that parents and carers are a child's first teachers and are partners with us in their ongoing education. A successful partnership begins with **trust**. Our teachers and school leaders are dedicated professionals, making thoughtful, child-centred decisions every day, and it is essential for parents to have confidence in this expertise, knowing that the best interests of all children are always at the forefront.

#### Confidentiality

We are committed to respecting the privacy and confidentiality of all students. This means that information about other children—such as their behaviour, learning progress, or personal circumstances—cannot be shared with anyone other than their parents or carers. This ensures a safe, supportive, and respectful environment for all families.

#### Communication

Open lines of **communication** are key. When concerns arise, parents need to be able to trust a clear and supportive process that addresses those concerns constructively. ►

## Partnership

Positive relationships between parents and schools are built on mutual respect, open communication, and **collaboration**. Schools thrive when parents actively engage, supporting learning at home, participating in school events, and volunteering where possible. Proactive involvement of parents in a child's education not only enhances the child's learning experience but also strengthens the school community.

## Transparency

Inevitably, challenges will arise. Mistakes are part of any learning environment, but how we manage them demonstrates the strength of our community. A respectful and **transparent** process for addressing concerns ensures that issues are resolved efficiently and fairly. By adhering to established complaint and feedback mechanisms, parents and educators can work together to find constructive solutions.

## Respect

**Respect** is the foundation of all interactions within the school community. Every conversation, whether between parents, teachers, or students, should be grounded in kindness and a commitment to understanding the perspective of others. Clear guidelines for maintaining respect help create a positive atmosphere on school grounds and beyond.

## Advocacy

Parents and teachers are invested in children having their learning needs met and experiencing a sense of belonging and joy in their school life. Parents can be powerful advocates for school values and key role models of respectful interactions within the community. We encourage parents and carers to join with school staff in ensuring schools are welcoming and safe spaces for everyone.

## SUPPORTING THE PARTNERSHIP

To support these principles, schools have developed accessible:

- 1 Materials for Parents**  
Welcome packs, posters, and template letters, both hard copy and online, help set clear expectations and guidelines for engagement. In addition, APPA recommends the booklet 'Your Child's First Year at School' and the website [raisingchildren.net.au](https://raisingchildren.net.au).
- 2 Clear Complaints Process**  
Detailed guides on handling complaints ensure transparency and fairness in addressing parental concerns.

**APPA calls for clear messaging from systems and jurisdictions to foster positive interactions between families and educators.** With a common language and understanding across the Australian school community, we can strengthen trust and establish clear expectations for everyone involved.

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