

IEU POLICY - ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING

The Independent Education Union of Australia believes that assessment and reporting policies and practices must be developed by education authorities in collaboration with the teaching profession to ensure that such practices are valid, reliable, fair, equitable, and motivate students to further develop their learning.

The current environment in which assessment and reporting changes are occurring is characterised by: policy settings that link compliance with assessment and reporting arrangements to funding; increased focus on reporting on school performance and school improvement data; and misuse of data by the media.

The development and implementation of assessment and reporting policies and practices must respect and involve the expertise of teachers and have their support and full confidence.

The IEUA remains concerned about mass standardised testing of student achievement such as through basic skills tests. The IEUA notes that international and national research shows such practices lead to a lowering of the quality of education and narrowing of the curriculum.

Principles for Assessment

The following principles should guide the development and use of assessment instruments:

Planning - Assessment methods should be planned as an integral part of course developments and be undertaken in a manner which is supportive of the learning process;

Assessment processes must be reliable, fair and equitable - which includes catering for a range of student learning styles and removing cultural bias;

Authenticity – based on an understanding of how students learn and requiring them to apply their relevant skills, knowledge and understanding to real-world challenges. Assessment must involve the examination of the processes as well as the products of learning;

Alignment with the curriculum

Assessment practices are integral to the teaching and learning process and must be matched to the teaching and learning goals.

Assessment items must be representative of the full curriculum.

Relevance - the assessment ensures that tasks are realistic, meaningful and worthwhile.

Diversity – effective assessment practices involve a range of measures and provide students with opportunities to display their knowledge, skills, understandings and attitudes.

Standardised Testing

IEUA expresses major concerns about mass standardised testing of student achievement such as through basic skills tests. In the light of international and national research, IEUA remains opposed to such practices because they lead to a lowering of the quality of education and the overall level of student achievement; and because of the dubious educational validity of the instruments of testing.

Our union's specific concerns in relation to standardised testing include:

- (i) Reliance on external testing as a measure of school performance of efficiency negates the principle of accountability to parents and to the local community;

- (ii) In turn, this is likely to produce a narrowing of the curriculum with less emphasis on curriculum content; and less consideration of such functions as creativity, problem-solving, personal development and social development which are socially and individually beneficial;
 - (iii) A focus on minimum levels of competency tends to lead to a neglect of efforts to achieve the highest possible standard of achievement;
 - (iv) An emphasis on externally-based testing can deskill teachers by downgrading the need for, and the value of, professional judgements;
 - (v) The public availability of a bank of test results creates the possibility of invidious and inaccurate comparisons between schools, sectors, regions, states/territories and different socio-economic groups;
 - (vi) The funding of standardised testing is a questionable use of resources;
 - (vii) Test results do not measure the overall effectiveness of schooling.
- of educational resources;
 - (iv) to facilitate effective use of educational resources for monitoring participation of different groups of students, by specific groupings;
 - (v) to develop educational targets and priorities;
 - (vi) for other purposes related to system accountability;
 - (vii) to monitor the post school destinations of students;
 - (viii) to establish longitudinal data of student participation and outcomes.
- Notwithstanding the various purposes stated above, the collection of students' individual, class and school performance data must:
- (i) normally be based on sample and not on census if used for state and national monitoring purposes;
 - (ii) not use any instrument that is not demonstrably equitable, fair, reliable and valid;
 - (iii) not put undue stress on students through time or pressure;
 - (iv) not be overly intrusive into classroom teaching time or the school curriculum;
 - (v) require minimum impact on teacher workload. Any increase in workload must be compensated for by additional teacher release time and other support;
 - (vi) not be released to others without permission of parents;
 - (vii) be confidential. There must be no publication of results in ways which allow comparison of individuals or schools in league tables or other inappropriate, misleading and

The collection and reporting of general student performance data

The principal objective in collecting data on student performance must be to improve information and knowledge available in order to enhance the teaching and learning of students and the allocation of resources to achieve equitable outcomes in education.

Educational data is collected for a range of purposes, including:

- (i) for diagnostic purposes within a class or school;
- (ii) for reporting to students and parents;
- (iii) for monitoring the distribution

- invalid ways;
- (viii) not be used in isolation for school monitoring;
- (ix) not be used for teacher evaluation nor performance payment;
- (x) not be used to reward those schools which scored highly or to direct punitive measures against those which do poorly;
- (xi) be agreed to by the relevant education unions, schools and teachers generally.

New approaches in planning, assessment and reporting must not increase the workload of teachers. It is incumbent on school authorities to resource and integrate new approaches without causing increases in overall teacher workload and/or subsequent reductions in teaching and learning time in the classroom.

IEUA believes that there must be a systematic review of the growing requirements around individual student programming. The current expectations are leading to excessive testing, data collection and reporting. This is reducing the time available for teaching and increasing the stress and workload of teachers.

Reporting

The primary purpose of reporting is to provide meaningful information so as to improve student learning. Reporting must be an integral part of the teaching and learning. Reporting should enhance students' capacities to reflect on their learning, their successes and areas for further learning cycle.

Reporting should be based on teacher judgements, based on sound evidence and teachers' shared understandings of the standards that apply. The development of reporting policies and practices must involve teachers and must value their professional expertise and experience.

Resourcing and Professional Development

Schools and systems must allocate sufficient resources for adequate time release for reporting and for professional development to enhance teachers' skills and knowledge.

Parental Involvement

The IEUA believes that parents should have access to timely, meaningful information about their children's progress and are entitled to comprehensive and accessible reports.

Teacher workload

The effective management of reasonable teacher workloads is central to the provision of quality teaching, assessment and reporting.