

Education and Innovation Committee

From: Barbara Wasley [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 30 April 2013 4:03 PM
To: Education and Innovation Committee
Subject: Inquiry into Senior Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry Assessment:

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To: The Education and Innovation Committee, eic@parliament.qld.gov.au

I am a Mathematics teacher with 35 years' experience. I have been concerned for some time about the deterioration in the standard of basic mathematics skills in the students across all levels from Years 8 to 12.

The following points especially relate to the current Inquiry into Senior Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry Assessment:

- For years, I've felt frustrated that the criteria written in the syllabuses contain meaningless words which are impossible to use to assess and rank the students. Mathematics lends itself to marks and I would like to see percentage scores from well-constructed tests use to indicate a student's ability and position in the cohort.
- The extended research assignments in the science subjects are as big as anything done at third year university and the students don't have the background knowledge, time or maturity to deal with them. They cause extensive stress and it is getting worse. The time these assignments take up stops students from doing their other homework – in particular, Maths homework which needs regular consolidation. It's also very hard for them to find enough hours for assignment work and be awake for school the next day.
- It's not right for students' grades to be based on these assignments, as they can be done by tutors or anyone. Senior assessment and university entrance are competitive, so the grading ought to be fair for all students.
- There are too many assignments. Students lurch from one to the next like punch drunk boxers. They are spending all their time sitting at the computer doing assignments. They don't seem to be learning much - just getting the assignments done.
- Mathematics, Chemistry and Physics are based on equations and so are best learned through homework practice. Writing assignments is better suited to other subjects like English or History.
- Technical devices such as graphics calculators and spreadsheets have been overemphasized by QSA Maths syllabuses at the expense of rigorous skills acquisition.
- The teachers I know are very stressed and short of time. Our paperwork demands, particularly marking, are much more onerous than they used to be with questionable satisfaction on a job well

done. Our schools would be healthier if teachers had more time to prepare interesting lessons instead of jumping through impossible criteria hoops just writing simple assessment pieces.

- The whole education process currently seems nebulous and subjective. If schools used the same senior Maths exams across the state, then this would provide a benchmark for employers and ensure consistency and fairness across the state. We could then dispense with the core skills test saving a lot of wasted time and money.

Please consider all the comments made by me and other committed teacher and community members. We are at the coalface and we know what is going on. The system MUST CHANGE for the sake of our students, our good educationalists and our State's reputation.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Barbara Wasley

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