

Education and Innovation Committee

From: Anne Patton [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 13 May 2013 1:26 PM
To: Education and Innovation Committee
Subject: Senior External exams options.

Categories: Blue Category

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a clinical psychologist in private practice.

Over the last 10 years in private practice I have endeavoured to assist the many students that continuous assessment fails.

This form of assessment, in my clinical opinion, not only fails students with chronic physical or mental health conditions, I believe it causes/exacerbates poor mental health and educational outcomes for a sector of the secondary school population.

Poor outcomes manifest themselves in:

-moderate to severe depression (some parents have to be on suicide watch for the latter) -school refusal (students who end up so fearful and stressed by the demands of school that they refuse to go to school) -internet and gaming addictions -refusal to complete assignments -educational underperformance, especially in some gifted/talented students -leaving school early (especially those with ADHD, those with skills and talents other than academic) - increasingly higher numbers of students on anti-depressant/anti-anxiety medication in order to cope with the demands of year 11/12

It is hard to encapsulate the misery that some parents go through to try to keep their children at school. It is also clear how assignments and the sense of constant pressure factor in to the low mental health of a sector of our teenagers. Clearly some students respond well to the system of continuous assessment. But for others it causes high levels of distress..

Apart from strategies which are already in progress such as alternative TAFE courses, not for OP subjects and distance education a system of external exams is a useful option.

The system best suited to external exams would also incorporate small regular tests. The difference between tests like these and continuous assessment is that there is no pressure to include the marks in the final results. Students work to improve their own performance. Tests are flexible in time (if you are sick that day you can do it another time) and mostly related to attainment (satisfactory/ still to be achieved) and build upon attained knowledge. By the time external exams are reached students will be prepared and confident about what they know. So even though external exams cause pressure, it is time limited and for some students, more predictable and controllable than continuous assessment.

So if the aim is to retain students in education and reduce the burden of mental health costs alternatives are necessary. I would love to see my patients achieve less suffering and more real enjoyment of senior education. Furthermore it is their right.

Sincerely

Anne D'Arcy-Evans

Clinical Psychologist

