

Education and Innovation Committee

From: Lorraine Petersen [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 13 May 2013 4:45 PM
To: Education and Innovation Committee
Subject: Assessment

I am writing to request a return to marks-based assessment methods wherever possible in Queensland schools.

As a parent of Primary School children, I find some modern reporting systems (in the style of "Diagnostic Nets" and NAPLAN-type reports) to be confusing, and even quite contrary to the abilities of my children in some subjects. I realise this inquiry is for Senior Maths, Chemistry, and Physics, but I believe the same common marking system should be used between Primary Maths and Secondary.

Wherever assessment is shown on an ABCDE or VHA,HA,SA,LA,VLA scale, it is immediately apparent how competent the child is - particularly when this is backed up with marks like 15/20.

But during interviews with my children's teachers, I am often shown nets and criteria and other ways that the teachers have arrived at the final assessment level, and the unnecessary intricacy of it seems ridiculous. Sometimes the teachers admit that the report is not a good indicator of my child's achievements! But they have been forced to fit simple exam results into some elaborate, wordy format.

I am concerned that in subjects which should have right or wrong answers, such as Maths, my children appear to have been assessed according to their communication skills, and NOT their factual recall!
I have been trying to research the current standards elaborations and learn about discernable differences or degrees of quality, but cannot help asking - why not use marks?

Everybody understands marks. Teachers can give them. Parents can help children based on them. Children can aim for them. And proud Grandparents can understand them!

Like most children, mine enjoy reaching goals, and are always keen to better themselves next time. My children are unable to understand some current reporting methods, even with interpretation.

I asked a teacher to show my child one of her completed Maths exam papers so that she could see where she'd lost marks (she'd given up halfway through the test, unable to see why it mattered), but the teacher said she was not allowed to show children their actual marks.
I find that amazing.

Children should have the right to understand their achievements.

Parents should be able to understand where their children need help.

Teachers should be able to use a mixture of marks and comments to communicate effectively with both students and parents.

There is no need for this maze of criteria and standards boxes. I can understand how criteria standards are useful for communicating what level young Prep students are at (Becoming Aware, Exploring, Making Connections, etc). I can also imagine that subjects such as English may benefit from assessment methods other than plain marks.

But I cannot understand why achievement marks are no longer used to assess markable subjects, and I was disturbed to hear that this is also the case in High School! Yet I've heard that Universities competently use marks, and the workforce is certainly concerned with actual achievement over description of achievement.

If this system is, as I suspect, causing confusion and overwork among teachers, then I support a return to marks-based assessment for subjects such as Maths, Chemistry, and Physics, particularly looking ahead to High School.

Lorraine Petersen

