

Reporting on Literacy & Numeracy Outcomes in ACT Government Schools



Information for parents and carers

This paper explains how literacy and numeracy results are currently reported, and seeks your views on how results might be reported in the future.

Please take the time to read the paper and let us know what you think.



Australian Capital Territory

EDUCATION & COMMUNITY SERVICES

What Literacy and Numeracy information is provided in the ACT?

The ACT Government is committed to improving our schools and student outcomes by working in partnership with teachers, parents and carers. For this reason, a range of information on school performance is provided. This information includes:

- **School board annual reports**
- **Regular school performance reports from quality assurance assessments through the School Development process**
- **Comparative data on government and non-government College performance published annually.**

Reading, writing and numeracy skills are the basic building blocks of a successful education, and are vital to students' future life opportunities. Testing students' skills is an important way of monitoring student performance in these vital areas.

In the government school sector, parents and carers currently receive a comprehensive **student report** showing their child's level of progress according to the National English and Mathematics Profile levels. The report compares a child's achievement with that of the middle 60% of ACT students in the same year group.

Schools also provide the opportunity for parents and carers to receive feedback and discuss their child's performance through **parent teacher interviews**.

The ACT Government introduced **literacy testing** into government schools in 1997, and numeracy testing in 1999. The latest results on years 3, 5, 7 and 9 literacy and numeracy performance were given to parents in late February 2000.

A **National Benchmark** for year 3 reading has been established, with other minimum literacy and numeracy standards being developed for years 3, 5, 7 and 9. Reporting individual student and ACT results against these benchmarks will provide greater detail about how well we are achieving our literacy and numeracy goals.



As part of the current process, **schools also receive a report that remains confidential** to the school. This

report compares the school's performance with the system* results, but is not available to parents and carers. When the ACT testing regime was introduced in 1997 there was concern that individual school results be kept confidential. Under these arrangements, members of school boards, principals, teachers and other staff are not permitted to disclose individual school data.

The issue of whether some of this information should be passed on to parents and carers is discussed later in this paper.

What resources are provided?

Additional resources are targeted to support students in need of extra help. In 1999, \$5.48m was allocated as learning assistance support for students in the greatest need and an additional \$4.3m was allocated for learning English as a second language. In years 3 and 5, learning assistance support is provided for students performing in the bottom 20% of the year group.

Since 1995, there has been a 28% increase in resources allocated to learning assistance and a specialist Literacy/Numeracy Team has been created to support schools.

What's happening elsewhere?

There is a growing national and international trend towards developing greater transparency in school and student performance.

There is a strong public interest in providing more performance information to the public, although no government school system in Australia currently publishes school by school literacy and numeracy results in a form which enables comparisons to be made between schools.

*The system results are the average for ACT government schools

What information would you like?

After three years of testing and reporting literacy and numeracy it is timely to review how information is presented, and discuss what information should be made publicly available in the future. We need to consider whether more information should be made available to parents and school communities to improve the flow of communication, enable comparisons to be made between schools, and to focus attention on improving literacy and numeracy outcomes.

Of course information on individual students would continue to remain confidential and available only to their parents, carers and teachers.

There is a number of ways to increase the literacy and numeracy information provided to parents, carers and the community about ACT schools.

The following examples of possible models are included to show how results might be reported in the future. The models are not mutually exclusive and are presented to illustrate how reporting could take place.

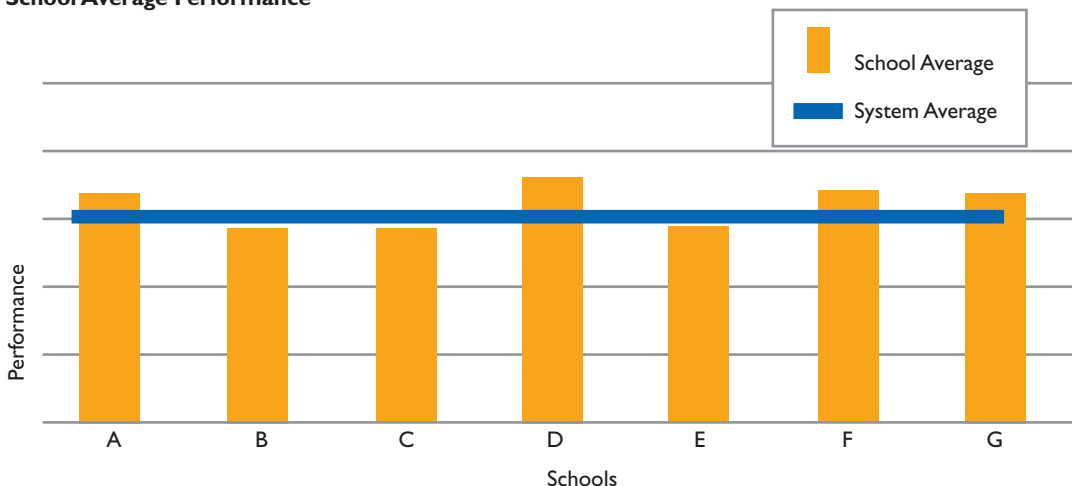


Model I

Publishing information on the average school results

Parents and carers could be provided with the average results of their school's performance in the tests, allowing them to compare their school's performance with those of other schools. This information could be published in a graph showing their average performance in literacy and numeracy.

School Average Performance



What are the benefits of providing literacy and numeracy results this way?

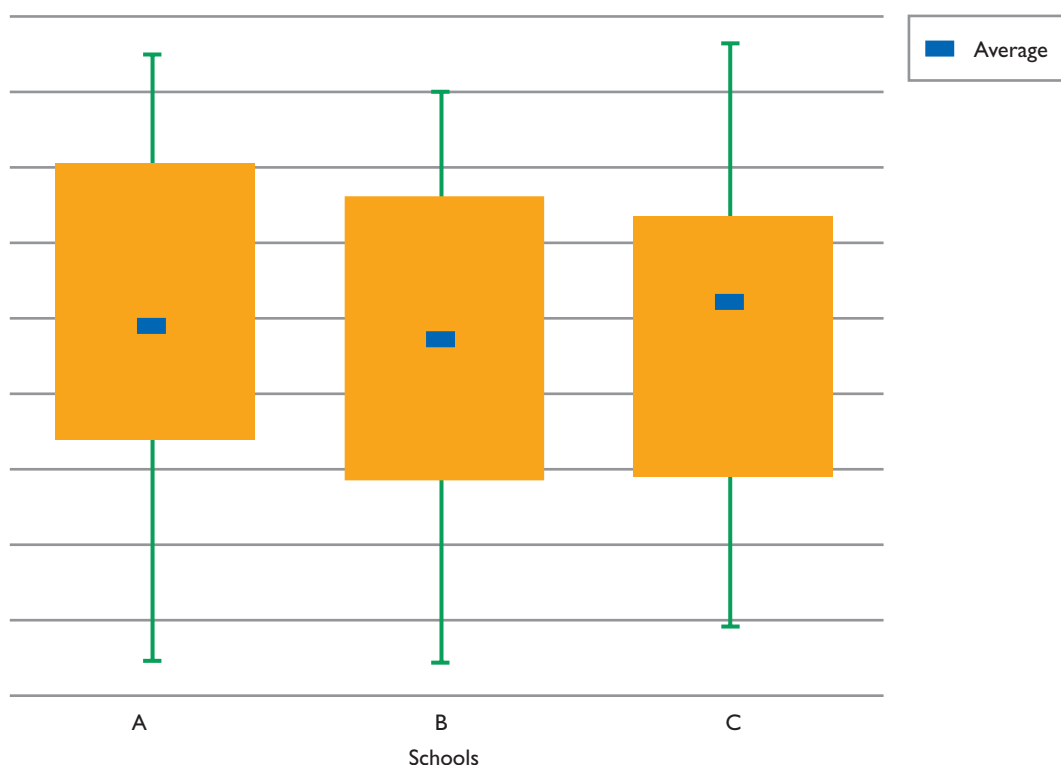
Such graphs would provide parents and carers and the wider community with information on how schools are performing. Care needs to be taken in relation to small schools, where the scores of just one or two students can skew the overall result.

Model 2

Publishing information on the range of school results

Parents and carers could be provided with the range of results achieved by students at their school. This would allow them to compare their school's performance with that of other schools. This information could be published in a graph showing the range of performance in literacy and numeracy.

Range of School Performance



This graph provides more information about the performance of schools. The orange box shows the range of scores for the middle 50% of students. The green lines show the top 25 % of scores and the bottom 25% of students. The average score for each school is marked.

This graph shows that all schools have students performing at high and low levels.

What are the benefits of providing literacy and numeracy results this way?

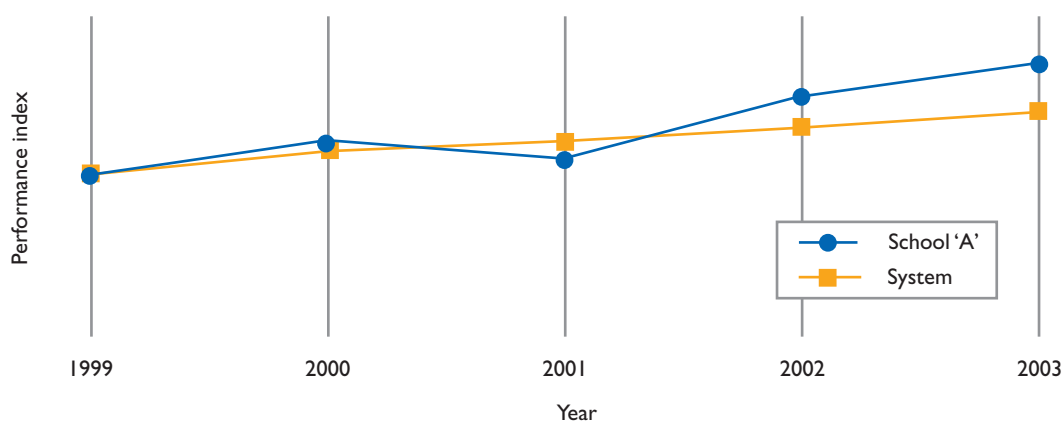
Such graphs would provide parents and carers and the wider community with information on how schools are performing for students across the full range of achievement. Comparisons can be made for the top, middle or bottom group of students.

Model 3

Publishing information on the performance of a school over time

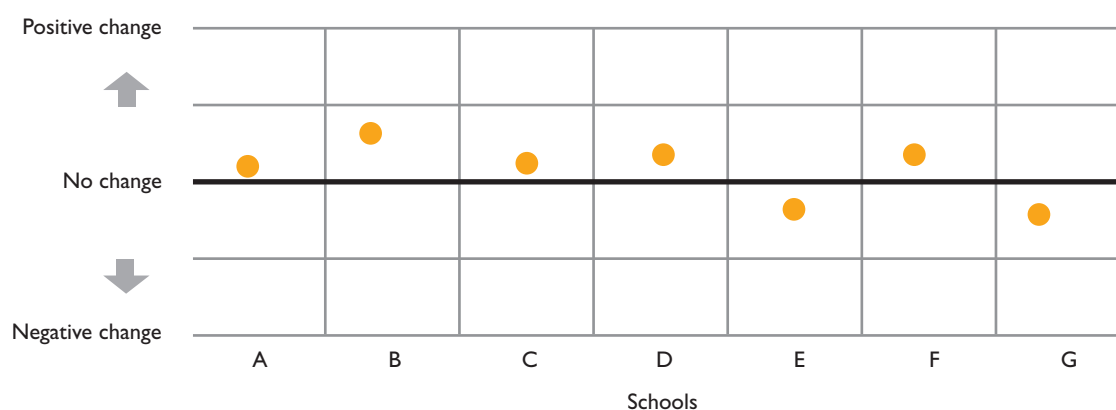
This could take the form of an index, which would show change in relation to a base year. Subsequent changes in school performance would be represented by movements in the index and show improvement or otherwise compared with the base year.

Performance of school 'A' over time



The graph above shows how the performance of a school could be reported to its community.

Percentage Change in School Performance Compared with the Previous Year



The graph above shows the percentage change for each school compared to its performance in the previous year.

What are the benefits of providing literacy and numeracy results this way?

Such an index would alert parents and carers to trends in an individual school's performance. It would indicate whether or not a school's performance in literacy and numeracy was improving or declining in particular areas. This approach would show a school's performance against itself and in relation to changes at the ACT system level.

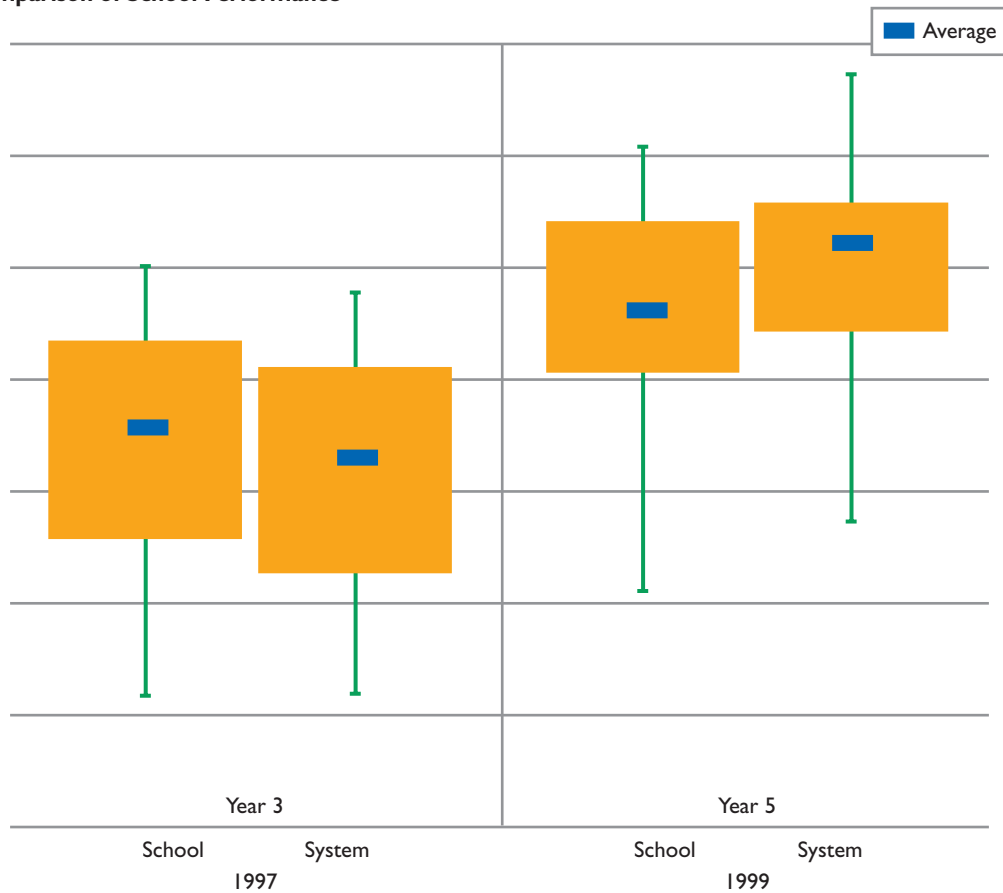
Model 4

Publishing information on the progress of groups of students through school

Another approach involves publishing information that indicates the extent of improvement in student performance in literacy and numeracy from years 3 to 5 and 7 to 9. This would enable comparison of the rate of improvement across schools as well as that of individual schools.

Movements between schools by students would need to be taken into account to provide accurate data.

Comparison of School Performance



This graph provides more information about the performance of schools. The orange box shows the range of scores for the middle 50% of students. The green lines show the top 25 % of scores and the bottom 25% of students. The average score for each school is marked.

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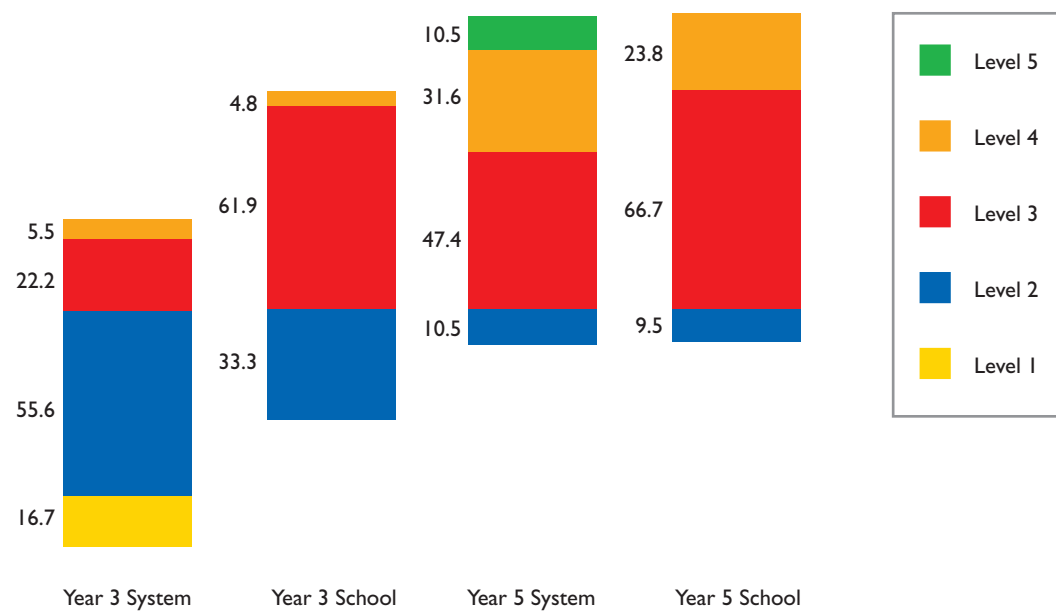
Such information would give parents and carers and the community an indication of progress over time and if mainstream and intervention school programs are actually making a difference to students' learning.

Model 5

Publishing information on levels of achievement

Parents and carers could be provided with information on levels of achievement, allowing them to compare their school's performance with the system. This information could be published in a graph showing the percentage of students at each level for literacy and numeracy.

Comparison of School and System Performance



This graph shows the performance of the school and the system against national profile levels.

What are the benefits of providing literacy and numeracy results this way?

These graphs would provide parents and carers and the wider community with a clear idea of how schools are performing against literacy and numeracy standards.

Having your say...

The core issue for parents and the community to consider is whether or not they would like more information and what type of information would be helpful.

The models shown are only a few of the approaches that could be used to improve the literacy and numeracy testing information available to parents.

We would like to know your views.

Comments on this paper can be forwarded to:

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Tuggeranong ACT 2901**

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To enable your views to be considered please provide your response by 17 July 2000.

We will also be conducting a random telephone survey of parents and carers over the next few weeks.

