

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF
GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS
PRESS RELEASE 920**

**NAPLAN analysis shows no difference
between public, private schools**

According to reports in the [Brisbane Times](#), the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* a major study of NAPLAN results over time found only slight differences in scores between the three school sectors, and these differences disappeared once a student's family background was considered.

An analysis of students' improvement between years 3 and 9 also found no variation between the private and public sector, "thus undermining conceptions of private schools adding value to student outcomes", the researchers found.

The research team, led by Sally Larsen from the University of New England, looked at the NAPLAN results of more than 1500 students who were involved in the national testing program in years 3, 5, 7 and 9.

They found no difference in average achievement between the three school sectors in primary school, except that year 5 students in public schools performed slightly better in numeracy than those in Catholic schools.

Year 7 and 9 students at independent schools were slightly ahead, but their "apparent advantage ... disappeared after including SES [socio-educational status]," said the report,

"Results such as these highlight that school sector is not a strong predictor of basic skills achievement, and suggest that it is the social background and academic ability of children who attend private schools which support the appearance of better quality schooling."

Dr Larsen said the researchers wanted to explore whether private schools improved student outcomes, given NAPLAN is billed as a way to evaluate the extent to which schools contribute to students' literacy and numeracy skills.

A student's background - particularly their parents' education levels - is a strong predictor of their academic achievement. However, many parents do not take this into account when they look at the strong academic results from high-fee private schools.

The study's findings can reassure parents that "it's OK if you can't afford private schooling", Dr Larsen said.

"The largest predictor of academic achievement in NAPLAN is previous achievement in NAPLAN. If we accept NAPLAN does assess something about the basic achievement of students, then the school sector is not going to make a large amount of difference."

Perhaps the most interesting comment on this research was that of Angelo Gavrialatos from the NSW Teachers Federation. He had this to say on Twitter:

Apart from the exclusionary enrolment policies of private schools, the biggest difference between the sectors is that public schools remain underfunded at only +/- 90% of the govt agreed minimum funding levels necessary for all kids to achieve their best.

Angelo could have added that some private schools receive more than 100% of their resource funding levels from taxpayer funds.

This all goes to prove that our public schools are doing a marvellous job on shoestring budgets while private schools are a waste of money.

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