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## NAPLAN RESULTS CAN HELP SHAPE EDUCATION POLICY DEBATE

The National Catholic Education Commission says the release of the 2016 NAPLAN national report provides a third report on the performance of Australian students in three weeks, offering a chance for reflection on initiatives that can support teaching and learning.

NCEC acting executive director Danielle Cronin said while NAPLAN is only a snapshot of school education in some subject areas and some year levels, there are educational benefits to be gained at the individual and school level.

“Literacy and numeracy are foundational skills in children’s education and in their lives, so assessing progress is important in trying to set students up for the challenges that lie ahead,” Ms Cronin said.

“One of the great strengths of NAPLAN is its ability to highlight areas in which a student or a group of students can be supported in their learning. When parents, teachers and students are able to work together and focus on specific areas of learning, great progress can be made.

“But that focus must not be confined to the sitting of NAPLAN and the analysis of NAPLAN results. Parents, teachers and students work in partnership week in and week out to ensure that the learning journey continues as effectively as possible.”

Ms Cronin said the 2016 NAPLAN test will be the last year in which all students sit the test using pencil and paper. The benefits of a move to online testing will start to be realised next year as part of a planned three-year transition to all students taking the test online.

“While a number of questions remain about the move to NAPLAN online, not least the cost that some schools will face in making the transition, it is clear that online testing will deliver results more quickly, providing more timely information for parents and teachers and allowing important learning adjustments to be made more quickly,” she said.

Ms Cronin said the NAPLAN national report, coming a week after the Programme for International Student Assessment report and two weeks after the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study report, helps educators and policy-makers think deeply about how to best support students.

“The release of the three reports in quick succession provides a rare opportunity to see how the vast amount of information on student performance can be harnessed to improve teaching and learning in Australia,” she said.

“Much of the attention given to the three assessment programs has been negative, but success stories have been seen in each release of information. It is important that those stories are celebrated and where successful strategies have been employed to lift outcomes, those strategies are shared to help other students and schools.”

Ms Cronin said there will be a lot of discussion about school education in the coming months, including about how schools are funded in 2018 and beyond. She said the recent NAPLAN, PISA and TIMSS reports can serve as one piece of stimulus for those considerations.

“Australian students continue to be strong performers internationally, and NAPLAN results show that students are performing at levels similar to previous groups of students,” she said. “But families, educators and politicians rightly have high expectations for all Australian students, and discussions about the future of schooling must consider how all young Australians can best reach their educational potential.”

The full NAPLAN report can be accessed at the NAPLAN website: [www.nap.edu.au](http://www.nap.edu.au).