

NAPLAN success for schools

By Jemma Jones

Shades of red, white and green shown on MySchool's NAPLAN results table tell a familiar story of regional disparity: local schools cannot keep up with the national average.

However, a shining outlier has flipped that narrative on its head.

Tongala Primary School's Year 3 students have achieved a 430 on the Writing NAPLAN tests; ranking above the national average by a full 16 points in that year level.

It also ranks the highest in its category of all schools around the district and is a stark improvement on the school's previous result of 374, which was considered well below average.

With 21 students, and a 100 per cent participation rate in the 2025 NAPLAN tests, Year 3 and learning specialist teacher Liana Haw couldn't be prouder of her students.

"It all really comes down to the kids," Ms Haw said.

"I'm just so proud of what they've achieved. They've worked really, really hard."



Tongala Primary School's Year 3s scored well above the Australian average in their 2025 NAPLAN writing results.

She said the cohort's success came from a perfect concoction of adapting the teaching process, students' enthusiasm and a smidge of luck.

"We ... sort of show them what a really good (narrative) example looked like,

and we spent a lot of weeks just breaking that down, analysing it and changing it around," she said.

"Then got the kids to use that as an example and create their own ... we changed the setting, we changed the character, we changed the problem, change the solution.

"When it came to NAPLAN, we were lucky enough that it came out as a narrative, and we just spent all that time analysing, and they nailed it."

After sharing the news with the class, Ms Haw hopes she has inspired confidence in her students.

"As teachers, we shared (the results) with them as a class and just say, this is where last year's were, and this is where you guys are," she said.

"They were really receptive to that, so I think it's given them a bit of drive going into next year."

While Tongala Primary students have excelled dramatically in writing, their other subjects remain below national averages, reflecting a common pattern among regional schools.

Kyabram P-12 College fell short in spelling for students in Years 5 and 7 compared to students with a similar background, but its Year 9 numeracy figure was above the average student with a similar background.

St Augustine's College's results were on par with what is expected of students with a similar background, and ranked only slightly below for reading, spelling, grammar and numeracy on a national scale.

Schools such as St Patrick's Tongala, St Mary's Rushworth, Girgarre, Stanhope and Lancaster primary schools did not have enough students participating for averages of some

year levels to be made.

Ms Haw said it was generally accepted that teacher vacancies were a downside for regional schools when it came to NAPLAN results, with most freshly graduated teachers preferring cities to start and continue their careers.

She said it was also hard to find a consistent replacement or substitute teacher for when other teachers were sick or on leave.

"I suppose there's a lot more opportunities for parents in the city, so on the socio-economic side of things, we're in a worse position in the country," she said.

"I think it's a combination of those things, which mean our kids are at a bit of a disadvantage."

But it all comes back to that crucial question: is NAPLAN an accurate measure of student learning progress?

For Ms Haw's class of talented writers: no.

"I don't think it's the only indication," Ms Haw said.

"There's a lot of factors — it can depend on how they're feeling on the day, or what's happened the night before.

"I don't take NAPLAN as the be all end all assessment by any means."

As the 2025 school year concludes, Ms Haw is celebrating the year's achievements with her class as they prepare for Year 4.

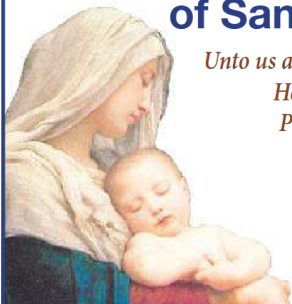
"It's the kids more than it is the teachers," she said.

"It's their willingness to try new things and put in a little bit of extra effort — and the kids love coming to school, so hopefully we continue down that path and continue to see results."

To see more information about each school's NAPLAN results, visit the MySchool website at myschool.edu.au

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ISAIAH 9:6



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