

# Tutors paid to boost NAPLAN results

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Brisbane tutor John Alithinos working after school with Sienna Rizk, 9, and her brother Dean, 11

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Pushy parents are paying tutors to boost their children's test results in the National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy, to gain entry to top schools.

Some elite private and selective government schools are demanding high NAPLAN scores as a condition of enrolment or scholarship.

Parents will begin receiving their children's results this week for the NAPLAN test — designed to test students' basic skills in the "3Rs" in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9.

Australian Tutoring Association chief executive Mohan Dhall said one in four Australian students would be tutored at some

point during schooling. "For some parents it is a means to an end, to get their child into a particular school, schooling system or university," he said yesterday.

"For those seeking to enter the private education system or university on academic scholarship, tutoring can be seen as an investment decision that can save tens of thousands of dollars annually."

John Alithinos, a teacher who directs a Kip McGrath centre in Brisbane, runs NAPLAN coaching workshops during the Easter school holidays, a few weeks before the annual test. "Good NAPLAN results help kids get scholarships for private schools, and that could save parents \$7000 to \$10,000 a year," he said.

The Brisbane centre belongs to the nation's biggest tutoring chain,

Kip McGrath Education Centres, whose chief executive Storm McGrath said NAPLAN tests showed parents "how their kids are really going".

"Seventy to 80 per cent of kids coming to our centres are behind by a year or more, and 20 per cent have a learning disability," he said yesterday. "Twenty years ago you could finish school with poor literacy and numeracy and still get a low-skilled job, but those jobs aren't there anymore."

The founder of Canberra-based Big Improvements Tutoring, teacher Michael Clark, said NAPLAN results could come as a "rude shock" to parents because many teachers marked student results up on report cards.

"You have kids getting Cs on report card after report card,

therefore the parents don't really know there's been a problem," he said. "Then they get the NAPLAN result that compares their child's performance relative to others, and it's a rude shock."

Kate Edney, the founder of Confidence Boost Tutoring in Sydney, is expecting a rush of enrolments once parents receive their children's NAPLAN test results.

"NAPLAN is useful in showing parents where their child is really doing well or struggling, and is much more objective than a teacher could be," she said.

Stanley Rabinowitz, an Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority spokesman, said tutoring was not necessary to prepare for a NAPLAN test. "If NAPLAN results are used in

school selection processes, they should be used in concert with other information, such as in-school assessments, school report cards or interviews with students," he said.

Australian Education Union president Correna Haythorpe said schools should not use NAPLAN results to select students. "(It) is a diagnostic tool and not something that should be used to rank students in terms of selection for schools," she said.

The founder of Fruition Tutoring, Sherrin Gugenberger, said parents should not choose a school solely on high NAPLAN results. "If your child is fulfilling their potential with a C or a B, that student would feel very inadequate if placed in a highly competitive academic environment."