

**Summary Report of the
Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA)
NAPLAN Online Trial Survey
dated 19th September 2016**

The attached full copy of this report is provided for your convenience.

Key findings include:

Increase teaching time for
keyboarding skills:
78.61%

Increase teaching time for
touch typing skills:
74.87%

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<https://www.appa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/APPA-NAPLAN-Online-Survey-Report.pdf>

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Summary Report: APPA NAPLAN Online Trial Survey

INTRODUCTION

This survey was undertaken by APPA to gauge the perceptions of primary school principals as to the impact upon schools in conducting the Platform Trial and Readiness Testing (PTRT) for completing NAPLAN Online. The trial testing enabled principals and schools to test devices, connectivity, technology requirements and students' engagement with the online format. Schools were able to experience the administration and set up for the test, providing staff with an opportunity to identify actions required to prepare the school and its students to undertake a fully implemented NAPLAN Online.

APPA's NAPLAN Online Reference Group met with ACARA on a number of occasions and discussed the challenges of moving NAPLAN online. This Online Trial was viewed as a necessary phase and, while further research and trialling on other aspects of NAPLAN will continue, APPA is keen to see that the challenges faced by schools to move to an online testing environment are identified and addressed. It was also important to identify where the Trial was successfully held and that the key aspects of that success are communicated broadly to schools.

ACARA is working with each State and Territory Assessment Authority in managing the change required for successful implementation. APPA has met with ACARA and provided results of the survey. The desired outcome is to ensure that every student, no matter what school she or he attends, has a comparable experience in completing NAPLAN Online, and one that is fair and equitable.

OVERVIEW

APPA developed a short online survey that was sent to its National Advisory Council. State and territory representatives then provided their members (primary school principals) who participated in the Trial with the link to the survey. APPA's understanding was that the Trial was conducted in 1100 schools. The survey was completed by 191 principals or their delegate. The results are provided below. For some questions, principals were able to provide comments. The comments have been summarised into key themes and common issues. Only schools that participated in the Year 3 Writing component completed questions 9, 10 and 11.

While the survey showed that approximately 77% of principals recorded that their school's overall experience with the NAPLAN Online Trial was positive, there were a number of challenges and problems experienced in conducting the Trial. The survey reports that approximately 77% of principals indicated that overall their school is ready to undertake NAPLAN Online in 2017, while 23% would not be ready for 2017.

Significantly, a large majority of principals (84%) reported problems with technology and connections. It was also reported that in order to be ready, schools would need to increase time spent teaching keyboard and word processing skills, increase time teaching and assessing online, and increase technology support. There is also considerable concern over the viability of iPads to perform under test conditions.

Further to the above, the survey showed that 35% of principals estimated it would take 4 – 6 days to complete NAPLAN Online; 38% estimated 7 –10 days to complete the NAPLAN Online tests. The survey also showed that 80% of principals reported that more than 6 hours was required in administration and set up for the Trial test.

Approximately 41% of principals indicated that Year 3 Writing should remain a pencil and paper test; 20% were undecided; 24% thought it could be either written or online: and 14% thought it should be online.

SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

Q1 Approximately how many total hours were spent in administration, preparation and set-up of the NAPLAN Online Trial at your school? (Collate the time spent by various people involved in the Trial.)

Answer Choices	Responses	
1 or 2	3.70%	7
3 or 4	6.88%	13
5 or 6	9.89%	18
More than 6 Hours	79.89%	151
Total		189

Q2 Overall, our school's experience with the NAPLAN Trial was positive.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	9.57%	18
Agree	67.55%	127
Disagree	15.43%	29
Strongly disagree	7.45%	14
Total		188

Overview of Q2 Comments

Key themes coming through in these comments relate to issues with the amount of time taken in preparation for the tests, dealing with technology issues, logging on and password management. A number of principals commented that once over the set up challenge, the Trial went well. Many commented about the additional time and workload required for set up. Respondents' experience of the online support or helpline was varied, with many acknowledging they used *in-school tech* support. Comments also noted the difference in student engagement with the observation that students who were known to have access to computers at home generally had a better experience of the Trial.

Q3 Overall, the students were able to follow the format and instructions of the test with ease.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	15.59%	29
Agree	74.19%	138
Disagree	9.14%	17
Strongly disagree	1.08%	2
Total		186

Q4 Overall, the devices used by students successfully handled the requirements of the Trial.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	19.05%	36
Agree	64.02%	121
Disagree	14.81%	28
Strongly disagree	2.12%	4
Total		189

Q5 Overall, the students successfully managed logging on and starting the test.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	23.81%	45
Agree	56.08%	106
Disagree	15.87%	30
Strongly disagree	4.23%	8
Total		189

Q6 Were there any technical issues experienced by students (power, internet, mouse, screen type problems; computer / laptop 'crash' or freeze; online / test functions not working; etc)?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	84.49%	158
No	15.51%	29
Total		187

Overview of Q6 Comments

The survey received over 161 comments for this section with 158 identifying one or more technical issues. This aspect of the Trial was the most commented upon by principals and included a wide range of problems. While some principals reported no major problems, most found the technology aspect challenging in conducting the Trial and with students completing the test. The major challenges involved inconsistent functioning of iPads, the number of devices capable of downloading the test and management of devices. Many reported freezing or the screen froze. This freezing ranged from a short time to requiring the device to be rebooted. Students experienced problems with sound and compatibility of the headsets used. Maintaining power was identified as a challenge with iPads and laptops having poor battery reliability. One school had to connect all devices by extension cords to ensure power was maintained. This then created a safety issue for movement of students and supervisors. Internet connections were another source of concern with many dropping in and out and overloading the bandwidth. Some principals reported students losing work or not being able to review completed tests. The aspect of logging on was challenging as was ensuring browser lockdown.

Q7 Overall, our school is ready to undertake NAPLAN Online in 2017.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	15.59%	29
Agree	61.83%	115
Disagree	15.05%	28
Strongly disagree	7.53%	14
Total		186

Q8 Generally, NAPLAN is currently completed by students over three days. For your school, how many days do you estimate would need to be set aside to complete NAPLAN Online?

Answer Choices	Responses	
3 days	12.70%	24
4 – 6 days	35.45%	67
7 – 10 days	38.62%	73
10+ days	13.23%	25
Total		189

Q9 Overall, the Year 3 students were very engaged in the Writing task.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	16.13%	25
Agree	54.84%	85
Disagree	25.16%	39
Strongly disagree	3.87%	6
Total		155

Q10 Overall, in completing Year 3 Writing Online, the students successfully managed the technology requirements.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	10.97%	17
Agree	44.52%	69
Disagree	30.97%	48
Strongly disagree	13.55%	21
Total		155

Q11 Should the Year 3 Writing component of NAPLAN be an experience that is:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Online	14.10%	22
Pencil and paper	41.03%	64
Either	24.36%	38
Undecided	20.51%	32
Total		156

Q12 What areas below would your school need to address in order to undertake NAPLAN Online in 2017?

Answer Choices	Responses	
No areas need to be addressed	4.28%	8
Change the approach to the teaching of writing	39.95%	56
Increase teaching time allocated to developing keyboard skills (drop and drag, scroll, magnify, etc.)	78.61%	147
Increase teaching time allocated to developing touch typing skills	74.87%	140
Purchase additional classroom devices	38.50%	72
Upgrade Internet access	25.13%	47
Reallocate technology and/or other resources	30.48%	57
Manage devices e.g. storage and security, power and recharging	37.43%	70
Amend current BYOD policy	3.74%	7
Employ additional tech support	33.69%	63

Overview of Q12 Comments

Principals identified a number of suggested actions for their school to undertake prior to participating fully in NAPLAN Online. Many comments identified the need to increase time in teaching and practising keyboard and desktop navigational skills. Principals also reported the need to increase the *in-school tech* support and that NAPLAN Online will require additional resourcing.

Principals saw that training in, and familiarity with, the testing requirements will require additional support in understanding the format and administration of the test. This was particularly apparent in comments on the Writing component with a number of principals commenting that Year 3 Writing was problematic. Conducting NAPLAN Online also meant reallocating or purchasing additional iPads and computers; buying additional headphones, keyboards, mouse and mouse pads; and, training staff in test administration; and, releasing staff to manage and administer the tests.

Conclusion

The survey has enabled APPA to provide a view of the Trial from the perspective of school principals. While it would be expected for a trial to identify challenges, having a large percentage of schools reported as experiencing technology problems is a concern. Within the three-year implementation period, it is critical that ACARA, systems and schools identify strategies that address these concerns and also develop a risk management plan that ensures success for all schools. This might include revising policies around selecting and purchasing devices. Some schools may also wish to conduct additional trials with ACARA providing further communication on the test format (adaptive/branching). This would assist teachers and students to understand more fully the move to NAPLAN Online.

The survey results highlighted the range in technology experiences and skills of students across schools and within schools. School and system leaders will need to ensure equity of access to technology learning on devices suitable for the NAPLAN Online test. Some principals commented that students who had a higher level of access to computers outside the school were observed to be more comfortable with the test requirements.

The administration of NAPLAN Online will need additional support for school staff to develop confidence and competency in managing the tests. This may include additional training and opportunities to experience delivering the tests. It is likely that teachers will benefit from a suite of strategies that could assist students in dealing with possible interruptions such as freezing, power problems, Internet connections, sound or functioning challenges.

Schools will need time and resourcing to prepare for completing NAPLAN Online. Additionally, for schools whose technology hardware is not sufficient, systems may need to support the purchase of devices, and ensure connectivity and power supply is reliable. Principals also reported that they would need to have an *in-school tech* support person with a high level of technology knowledge in order to manage the challenges that may occur in running the tests. Comments from the survey suggested that the use of iPads as a device for NAPLAN Online would need further investigation and research to improve reliability in a test environment.

Schools that participated in the Trial will be able to provide valuable information to other schools on preparation to undertake NAPLAN Online testing. Given the results of this survey, it would be advisable that every school conducts a trial to test its technology, connectivity and student readiness to participate in NAPLAN Online. This would also enable schools to identify the number of days required to complete NAPLAN, and determine requirements regarding access to, for example, computer labs and/or devices.

APPA acknowledges and thanks the principals and school leaders who have taken the time to complete the APPA NAPLAN Online Survey and provide comments and suggestions. APPA will meet with ACARA and provide a report and feedback. This will include suggestions on improving the communication to school administrators, the planning time and setup for students, and 'tips' for schools that were not part of this Trial.

Dennis Yarrington
President
Australian Primary Principals Association

19 September 2016