

NAPLAN 15

Newsletter: November 2015

To keep teachers informed, please post this newsletter on staff noticeboards.

Test dates

The test dates for 2016 are 10–12 May.

Please advise school communities of these dates. Test dates for 2016–20 are on the NAPLAN website:

www.nap.edu.au/Information/key-dates/key-dates.html.

NAPLAN Online

ACARA has released the technical requirements for NAPLAN Online. This information was recently communicated directly to schools and is also available on the NAP website: <http://nap.edu.au/online-assessment/naplan-online/technical-requirements.html>. Currently, ACARA intends to offer the NAPLAN tests online in 2017.

Marking

Recruitment workshops will be offered between 22 February and 24 March.

These workshops are offered free to those teachers who are considering marking. If you think you might like to become a NAPLAN marker, but are unsure of what it entails or whether it is for you, consider attending a recruitment workshop to find out. You will need to register as a marker–applicant through the QCAA website:

www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/MAO/login.jsp.

SunLANDA online

The next generation of SunLANDA has been released through the School Portal on the QCAA website:

www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/schoolportal/login.

The new version is web-based and allows teachers to log on to their school’s NAPLAN results.

Teachers can use SunLANDA online to analyse the data from their students’ NAPLAN test performances. SunLANDA allows for dynamic subsetting of both test items and students. Teachers can organise and view information about students in different ways and easily see patterns in students’ incorrect responses or make a closer examination of particular questions.

SunLANDA also has links to an analysis of each test item.

Workshops

Spelling matters — workshops on the teaching of spelling in secondary schools will be conducted in early 2016 by Denise Keane from the NAPLAN team. Find out more or register through the QCAA



website: <https://events.qcaa.qld.edu.au/Catalogue.aspx?yl=2>.

11 February 2 x half-day sessions	Brisbane Central QCAA Office	Test information sessions
26 February 9 am – 3 pm	Brisbane Central QCAA Office	Spelling matters
4 March 9 am – 3 pm	Brisbane Central QCAA Office	Spelling matters — Years 7–10
11 March 9 am – 3 pm	Rockhampton Leagues Club	Spelling matters — Years 7–10
17 March 9 am – 3 pm	Cairns, Brothers Leagues Club	Spelling matters — the primary years
18 March 9 am – 3 pm	Cairns, Brothers Leagues Club	Spelling matters — Years 7–10

Reading: Teaching inference in the middle years

Making correct inferences about situations, characters, experiences or textual features is important to us all. How often have we taken the wrong inference from the briefest text message, even one written by someone we know well? We layer meanings onto the few characters presented to us on our mobile phone screens; to our context and prior knowledge of a person; to place, situation, and motivation — and we draw conclusions that may, sometimes, be proven wrong.

Clearly, then, inference as a cognitive process plays an important role in our day-to-day lives, irrespective of our age. Unsurprisingly, this aspect of comprehension forms a significant part of NAPLAN Reading tests. For example, 39 of the 49 items in the 2015 NAPLAN Reading test for Year 7 required some level of inferring to identify the correct responses.

Making 'correct' inferences when we read

The linguist Hayakawa (1939) defined inference as '... a statement about the unknown made on the basis of the known'. Other writers and educators have more simply defined the mental process of inferring as 'reading between the lines'. To make an inference, the reader has to **gather clues** from the text being read; align these clues with the past experiences, **prior knowledge** and the wider contexts of the reader; and then draw **conclusions** (inferences) based on this textual and contextual understanding. Not all inferences may be proven, disproven or resolved by the end of the text, particularly in an imaginative text. By their very nature, **inferences are more open-ended than predictions**, though they share similarities (Harvey and Goudvis 2007).

Bintz et.al. (2012) note that making a correct inference is not a process of 'uninformed guessing'. Rather, inferring (in a reading comprehension context) requires evidence from the text. This may involve:

- identifying words, phrases, images
- selecting supporting evidence
- considering text structure
- recognising the writer's grammatical choices
- questioning, hypothesising, confirming or disconfirming.

Teaching strategies — an example

One proven strategy which teachers may wish to employ is the use of the **Three Level Guide**. Three Level Guides involve the development of a series of statements based on a classroom text of any genre. The statements are structured so that students answer true or false. The 'levels' move from the **literal**, (on the lines) to **inference** (between the lines) and finally to higher level **analysis, hypothesis** and **application** (beyond the lines). The strength of the Three Level Guide approach lies in the necessity for students to metacognitively engage with the text through group discussion, defence of the true-or-false stance taken, and general sharing of views on the text. In the higher levels, inferences made need to be supported from both textual and contextual understanding. Three Level Guides can be generated to accommodate many different levels of readers, suit flexible grouping arrangements, fit comfortably into normal lesson sequence and timing, and are an excellent vehicle for delving into more challenging texts to strengthen inferential understanding.

References

- Bintz, W, et al. 2012, 'Using literature to teach inference across the curriculum', *Voices from the Middle*, vol. 20, No. 1, September 2012, National Council of Teachers of English, pp. 16–24.
- Glasswell, K, Mostert, W, Judd, L, and Mayn, L 2013, *Accelerated Reading Comprehension*, Sydney, ACER Press.
- Harvey, S, and Goudvis, A 2007, *Strategies that Work: Teaching comprehension to enhance understanding and engagement*, Stenhouse Publishers, Portland, Maine.
- Hayakawa, S 1939, *Language and Thought in Action*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York.