

MEDIA RELEASE

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LATEST NAPLAN DATA SHOWS IMPROVEMENTS IN NATIONAL NUMERACY LEVELS ALONGSIDE AREAS FOR CONTINUED ATTENTION

The latest data from the 2026 NAPLAN assessments shows signs of improvement from 2023 in national numeracy levels for Australian students in Years 5, 7 and 9, but also highlights some other areas requiring attention.

The 2026 NAPLAN National Results released today (5 August 2026) by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) show that the national average numeracy scores in Years 5, 7 and 9 are the highest since 2023 when new proficiency levels were introduced.

Continuing an encouraging pattern in numeracy in Years 5, 7 and 9 identified in last year's results, the 2026 NAPLAN results indicate increases in the number of students meeting proficiency standards. There are around 29,000 more students in the *"Exceeding"* category compared to 2023, and around 1,600 fewer students rated as *"Needs additional support"*. There was also a reportable increase, from 2023 to 2026, in the percentage of Indigenous students achieving *"Exceeding"* in numeracy at both Years 7 and 9.

The results also show that these gains were not repeated for younger students in Year 3, where the average numeracy score was the lowest since 2023.

Commenting on the latest NAPLAN National Results, ACARA CEO, Stephen Gniel, said:

"As the only national assessment that lets us see whether young Australians are developing critical literacy and numeracy skills, NAPLAN provides valuable information on how students are progressing in literacy and numeracy over time using a national, objective scale.

"What is particularly encouraging in this year's results is the continued improvement in national numeracy, with higher NAPLAN scores on average across Years 5, 7 and 9, especially among the stronger students. Around 29,000 more Australian students are performing at *'Exceeding'* – the highest proficiency level – in 2026 compared to 2023.

"It's also pleasing to see continuing progress in numeracy for our Indigenous students, with more achieving *'Exceeding'* in numeracy at both Years 7 and 9, and the average numeracy scores in Years 5 and 7 at the highest level since the scale was reset in 2023.

"All these improvements are testament to the exceptional work and commitment of our amazing teachers, principals and school staff around the country, as well as parents and carers and the students themselves.

"The drop in Year 3 numeracy results is clearly concerning. Education ministers are addressing this through a range of measures including the rollout of the national Year 1 numeracy check. ACARA is also playing its part by reviewing the Foundation to Year 2 Mathematics curriculum at the direction of education ministers to ensure our youngest learners get the strong grounding in mathematics and numeracy they need to succeed in their education and later in life."

The overall NAPLAN results in 2026 remained broadly stable at a national level, with no reportable changes in average scores between 2026 and 2025, or between 2026 and 2023. Around 2 out of 3 students achieved at the *"Strong"* or *"Exceeding"* proficiency level for their reading, numeracy and writing skills, with one in 10 students at the *"Needs additional support"* level across all year groups and domains.

The 2026 NAPLAN National Results also highlighted some other areas needing attention:

- Average reading scores in Years 5, 7 and 9 are lower than in 2025.

- There has been a slight increase since 2023 in students needing additional support in reading and writing.

A technical issue with the national NAPLAN platform affected the first day of testing this year. The disruption early in the morning impacted schools largely on the east coast of Australia and affected only the writing test and only students in Years 5, 7 and 9. Despite this, national average scores in writing remained similar to last year. However, given that the disruption varied in its impacts for students and schools, ACARA has included a caveat on the 2026 writing results for students in Years 5, 7 and 9 in the national reporting.

Reinforcing the need for focus on areas needing attention, Mr Gniel added:

"The latest results have also highlighted some other areas that need our collective action, particularly the decline in Years 5, 7 and 9 average reading scores since last year, and the increase in the number of students in the *'Needs additional support'* category in reading and writing since 2023.

"It is also disheartening to see disparities persisting over the years in the attainment of students from our regional and remote areas, Indigenous students and those from a disadvantaged background. This needs to be a continuing focus for all in the coming years."

The national participation rates remained high in 2026, with over 95% of students in Years 3, 5 and 7 completing at least one NAPLAN test, along with over 92% in Year 9. However, national participation rates are slightly lower than last year, due to the impact of low participation in Tasmanian government schools due to industrial action, and localised flooding in Northern Territory. Participation elsewhere in Australia remained strong. Queensland once again continued its improving trend, with small increases at all year levels.

Due to the lower participation rate in Tasmania, which was far below ACARA's technical data standard for the accurate reporting of results, education ministers agreed last month not to report Tasmanian state-level NAPLAN 2026 results.

Mr Gniel also took the opportunity of the national results release to remind parents and carers about the importance of the NAPLAN results being used in the right way.

"NAPLAN is not a pass or fail test – and it shouldn't be used as a proxy for school entrance exams. It's a point-in-time test that helps us understand students' strengths and areas for development, and is one aspect of a school's assessment program," he said.

To access the full 2026 NAPLAN National Results, including information about the socio-educational profile of each jurisdiction, please visit: www.acara.edu.au/naplanresults.

ENDS

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BACKGROUND

Further information about the NAPLAN National Results

The NAPLAN National Results provide nationally comparable data on the 2026 national and state/territory results for each test domain and year level assessed, and by gender, Indigenous status and language background other than English.

This year's NAPLAN National Results also show:

- In reading, the average proportion of students who achieved at *"Exceeding"* and *"Strong"* levels in 2026 was 66.3% (compared to 68.2% in 2025), increasing from Year 3 (65.6%) to Year 5 (70.9%), then dropping in Year 7 (66.8%) and in Year 9 (62.0%).

- In reading, the average proportion of students who achieved at “*Needs additional support*” levels in 2026 was 10.2% (compared to 9.3% in 2025), decreasing from Year 3 (11.3%) to Year 5 (7.7%), and increasing in Year 7 (10.7%) and Year 9 (11.1%).
- In numeracy, the average proportion of students who achieved at “*Exceeding*” and “*Strong*” levels in 2026 was 67.0% (compared to 66.8% in 2025), increasing from Year 3 (62.1%) to Year 5 (70.7%), remaining relatively stable in Year 7 (69.9%) and then dropping in Year 9 (65.3%).
- In numeracy, the average proportion of students who achieved at “*Needs additional support*” levels in 2026 was 9.6% (compared to 9.2% in 2025), decreasing from Year 3 (11.0%) to Year 5 (7.6%), increasing again in Year 7 (9.0%) and Year 9 (11.0%).

The demographic results in 2026 reflect trends in other national assessments and previous NAPLAN results, with female students outperforming male students in literacy, and higher results tending to align with students from the highest socio-educational backgrounds, in urban areas and from non-Indigenous backgrounds.

- Nationally, a higher proportion of Indigenous students need additional support compared to the overall student population. For example, across all year groups:
 - in reading, around one in 3 Indigenous students (31.8%) are in the “*Needs additional support*” level, while fewer than one in 10 non-Indigenous students (8.5%) fall into that proficiency level.
 - in numeracy, almost one in 3 Indigenous students (32.4%) are in the “*Needs additional support*” level, while fewer than one in 10 non-Indigenous students (7.8%) fall into that proficiency level.
- The average NAPLAN scores for all year levels and all domains for students from the highest socio-educational background (measured by either parental education or parental occupation) were substantially above those from the lowest.
- A lower proportion of students in very remote schools are rated as “*Strong*” or “*Exceeding*” compared with students in major city schools. For example, across all year groups:
 - in reading, 23.1% of students from very remote schools are in this category, compared to 70.0% of students from major city schools
 - in numeracy, 23.1% of students from very remote schools are in this category, compared to 70.8% of students from major city schools.
- Female students outperformed male students in writing, achieving average NAPLAN scores above male students in every year group, with higher percentages of female students at “*Strong*” or “*Exceeding*” levels, notably 69.6% of female students compared to 55.6% of male students in Year 7 and 68.1% of female students compared to 52.0% of male students in Year 9.
- Male students generally outperformed female students in numeracy. There were 5.9 percentage points fewer Year 3 female students, 7.8 percentage points fewer Year 5 female students, 7.1 percentage points fewer Year 7 female students and 6.1 percentage points fewer Year 9 female students achieving in the “*Exceeding*” level compared to male students.

The NAPLAN assessments

NAPLAN was successfully undertaken in schools across the country in March 2026. A record 4.8 million online tests were submitted by over 1.2 million students in over 9,400 campuses and schools across Australia.

The NAPLAN proficiency levels are:

- **Exceeding:** the student’s result exceeds expectations at the time of testing.
- **Strong:** the student’s result meets challenging but reasonable expectations at the time of testing.
- **Developing:** the student’s result indicates that they are working towards expectations at the time of testing.
- **Needs additional support:** the student’s result indicates that they are not achieving the learning outcomes that are expected at the time of testing. They are likely to need additional support to progress satisfactorily.

Additional information on the proficiency levels and the literacy and numeracy skills at each level is available on the National Assessment Program (NAP) website (www.nap.edu.au). The proficiency levels were validated by the expert judgement of teachers, who used student responses to NAPLAN questions linked to the

Australian Curriculum to identify what students should be able to answer at the time of testing in each year, to be considered as having met a challenging but reasonable expectation.

NAPLAN tests are one aspect of a school's assessment and reporting process. They assess numeracy and literacy only. Parents and carers should speak to their child's school or teacher to discuss their child's overall progress.

NAPLAN test incident report 2026

ACARA has also published the NAPLAN test incident report 2026, which sets out that of the approximately 4.8 million NAPLAN tests sat by over 1.2 million students nationally, there were no substantiated cheating breaches on the part of a school.

There was a total of 68 substantiated aggregated incidents, compared with 51 substantiated aggregated incidents in 2025 and 53 in 2024. The number of reported test incidents is extremely small and does not affect overall NAPLAN results.