

# A considered riposte to Mr Boylan's ad hominem attack on the No Failure Learning trial

Dr Neil MacNeill and Ray Boyd

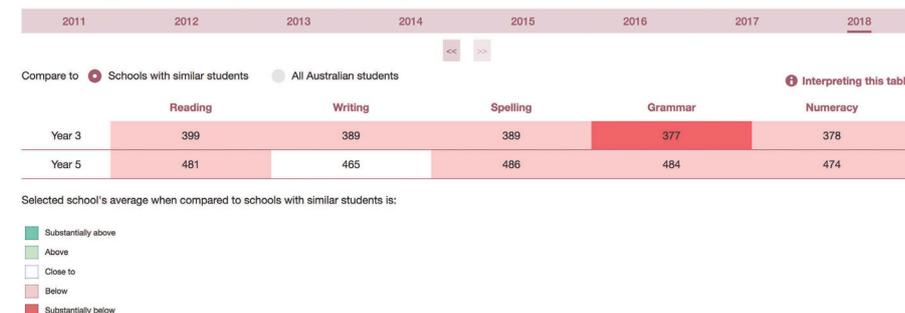
**W**e are delighted that Mr Boylan raised his concern about our work-in-progress that we have called 'No Failure Learning' (NFL), because he is one of many who stereotype attempts to improve teaching and learning.

Schools are dynamic, and (hopefully) ever-changing as teachers are driven by the moral imperative of making teaching and learning more interesting and therefore, improving every student's life opportunities. With NFL we are not taking a one recipe approach to teaching and learning, because it is silly to think that one approach to teaching and learning can be applied to all types of learning. Different parts of lessons require different teaching strategies. We are constantly seeking to find what works best for each group of students, and what works now may be different to what will work with next year's class. Importantly, we are trying to move beyond the clichéd, ideological approaches that have kept educational improvement in the grasp of mystique and gut feelings.

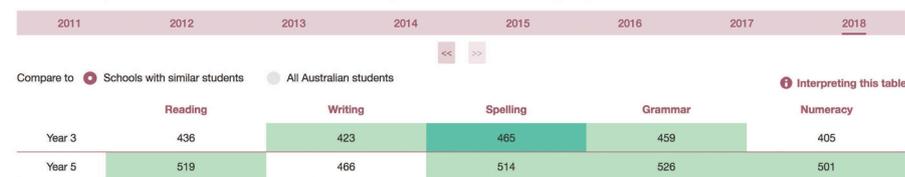
Our starting point is that we believe that:

- 1 There is a natural joy in learning;
- 2 Everyone can learn, and everyone can succeed;
- 3 While failure is a part of any learning process, we consciously act against overt, continuous and targeted labelling of the kids who fail;
- 4 Every learning act is designed to facilitate deeper learning;
- 5 In transparency, so we open our classroom to visitors from other schools; and
- 6 Education is an important factor that shapes every person's life pathways.

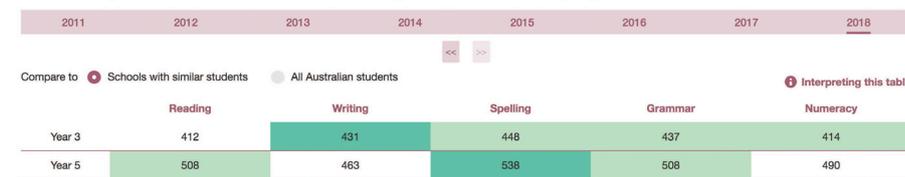
As we all know, educators can argue until the cows come home about what is best for their students, but we need to move beyond our words and idiosyncratic beliefs and consider the parents and their aspirations. At our schools we see our mi-



Tapping Primary School (Mr Boylan, Principal)



Ellenbrook Primary School (Dr Neil MacNeill, Principal)



West Beechboro Primary School (Ray Boyd, Principal)

grant parents going online and looking at the *My School* site to check schools' data in the recently published 2018 NAPLAN results. (We know the limitations of this approach, but parents are seeking confirmatory, independent information.)

This is what a parent would see. Remembering that green is good, and red/pink is not good):

So, what would conclusions would parents draw from these comparisons?

A high proportion of our (West Beechboro and Ellenbrook) students come from low SEI homes, and we see that it is our job to ensure that we bridge the achievement gap to give these kids the skills to succeed in secondary school and university. Our parents rejoice when they see that their children can succeed in a caring environment and it gives them a hope that they

would never have experienced in their childhoods. Consequently, through word of mouth and social media we have a stack of people trying to cross boundaries into our schools because of the caring, higher standards that we set for our students.

Parent and student satisfaction, combined with the higher intention of making certain that our students have all of the knowledge, skills and beliefs to participate in further education and life as Australian citizens. This keeps motivating us in our efforts of improving education and not getting locked into some ideological position that short-changes students and their families. In our schools we just have to keep trying harder.

Neil, Ray, and Greg – principals working hard to get the best educational deal for our students and our teachers.