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CALLS MOUNT FOR NATIONAL STANDARDS TO BE ROAD-TESTED OR ABANDONED

The education sector union NZEI Te Riu Roa warns that calls are increasing for National Standards to be 'road-tested' before being rolled out nationwide or abandoned altogether.

Information packs on the Standards and direction on how they are to be implemented are now in schools. They are expected to be introduced from the beginning of next year.

"The reality is now sinking in that the Standards are being imposed on schools with absolutely no evidence that they will raise student achievement as the government so confidently claims," says NZEI President Frances Nelson.

"We as education professionals have not been engaged with the development of this policy and the impact of a National Standards regime is completely untested. There is a growing body of opinion that National Standards represent a considerable risk to the teaching process, the implementation of the revised curriculum, and most of all to student learning."

NZEI, education academics and other sector groups firmly believe that National Standards need further development work. They want to see a trial set up in a limited number of schools along with a robust monitoring and evaluation process to measure their effectiveness in terms of student progress and achievement.

Frances Nelson says "schools and parents need to be able to assess what the risks and possible consequences of National Standards are before any system-wide implementation happens. No one wants to be in a 'do it now, clean it up later' situation. Children's learning is too important to experiment with."

NZEI has developed a plan for a National Standards trial which it will be presenting to the Education Minister later this week. It says if a trial cannot be agreed on, National Standards should be abandoned.

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