

NATIONAL STANDARDS FACT SHEET

To correct constant misinformation from the Minister of Education to the Public of New Zealand.

The Minister's claims	The Truth
We need National Standards for all children because of a "long tail" of underachievement as shown in international surveys. National Standards will raise achievement.	Results from international student achievement tests show that we are in the company of the best in the world. About 10 percent of children struggle to achieve, and most of these children experience considerable disadvantage in their life circumstances. Most developed countries have similar percentages, and in those countries their National Standards have failed to make a difference. Why have National Standards for every child, every year, when the majority of our children are doing very well in literacy and numeracy.
Parents are not getting good, clear information about their children's achievement and progress.	You don't need National Standards and reporting to remedy this. Surveys suggest that parents are satisfied that they <i>do</i> get good, clear information. If not, the school itself should deal with this matter, rather than imposing a system on the whole country.
Parents and schools should be able to compare achievement with other children and other schools.	The most important comparison is the amount of progress made from achievement at one point in time to another, relative to the individual child's capabilities. All other comparisons have very little to do with helping the child's learning. Comparisons can de-motivate children and be unfair to schools.
There should be "no excuses" for schools not getting children to achieve the National Standards.	The reason why some children will struggle to meet National Standards is because of life circumstances which are beyond the control of the school. There should be no excuses for not helping every child to do their best, and nor should there be excuses for failure to acknowledge that teachers and schools cannot do it on their own!
National Standards will help teachers to know which children are struggling, and which children need help.	New Zealand schools already have and use a variety of assessment tools and processes that reliably show which children are struggling. National Standards were never needed for this.
Literacy and Numeracy are what school is all about.	This early 20 th Century attitude is blind to the kind of vision that is needed for our children who face a very different world to what it was. Literacy is essential and numeracy is useful, but so too are other areas of the school curriculum. National standards do not equate with good teaching of literacy and numeracy.
A lot of schools are not doing and using assessment effectively.	The Minister got this idea from a 2007 ERO report which covers both primary and secondary schools. That same report says over 80 percent of teachers in primary schools were using assessment information effectively to identify learning needs in literacy. Also, seventy-five percent did this effectively in mathematics, especially in numeracy. This clearly disproves the exaggerated claim of the Minister.
During "consultation" there was overwhelming support from parents for National Standards. NZ School Trustees Association are in favour of her National Standards.	The Government made it known before it was elected that it would introduce National Standards. It is a far stretch to suggest that everyone who voted for the Government also voted for National Standards. Of the 3000 parents who chose to respond to Ministry consultations on National Standards, 38 percent made negative comments, and only 14% made positive comments. It is unlikely that the small percentage of parents who like National Standards include many of the parents of the 10% of children who struggle with learning. It is the President and some of her executive that support the Minister – not every school board in New Zealand – and each school board matters more than the NZSTA Executive's opinion.
The Minister of Education says she knows how many toilets in NZ schools, but not how well pupils are achieving in reading, writing and maths.	New Zealand has comprehensive, detailed, and trustworthy information on our children's achievements. Every year the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) provides the Government with extensive data. NEMP does not count the number of toilets in schools.

Did you know:

- ⇒ The standards for reading, writing and arithmetic were made up by Ministry consultants and committees. They were made up at great speed without any genuine involvement of the education sector and people who actually know a lot about these things.
- ⇒ The new National Curriculum document, which was developed with wide involvement and has wide support, could be undermined by national standards. The National Standards books for literacy and numeracy are bigger than the National Curriculum itself!
- ⇒ The standards were made up without necessary evidence that they are realistic and suitable for the different age groups, or for common interpretation among teachers and parents.
- ⇒ There are to be different standards for children in regular schools and children who attend Kura Kaupapa Maori schools.
- ⇒ The Minister has set new rules for Boards of Trustees. They involve a new time-consuming bureaucratic industry of putting together a lot of data and reports to send to her Ministry of Education every year so that all sorts of comparisons can be made.

Lester Flockton 12/09