

Will National Standards Put Learning At Risk?

NZEI Te Riu Roa - which represents more than 90% of primary teachers and principals - has recently joined leading education academics in calling for the Government's controversial National Standards implementation to be abandoned unless it is first trialed in a limited number of schools.

The Government has claimed that teachers don't want National Standards because they don't want to be accountable. This is not the case, and NZEI would like to explain to the community why the teaching profession feels so strongly that the Standards put children's learning at risk.

1. The validity of the standards is untested and presents risk both to the teaching process and to students' learning. Children's learning is too important to experiment with.
2. The short timeframe for implementation of national standards puts schools under unsustainable pressure. This may risk successful implementation of the NZ Curriculum in 2010, which NZEI believes should have priority over National Standards.
3. If standards are to be fair, the NCEA experience shows that appropriate moderation frameworks, processes and exemplars must be developed so that there is consistent interpretation of what each standard represents. This has not happened.
4. National Standards impose a "one size fits all" approach onto a Curriculum that encourages the development of locally relevant learning for students. Professional Development that meets the varying needs of staff and trustees is essential for every school before Standards are implemented so that the Standards support, rather than undermine the NZ Curriculum. The Government has not made a commitment to this.
5. Assessment data should be used for the purpose it is collected and/or collated for i.e. focused on appropriate use at school level for teachers, students, parents and the school community. No harm should be done to students and their learning through the generation of league tables.
6. Teachers are at the heart of quality learning and assessment, but they have not been engaged with National Standards and do not have "ownership" this policy.
7. Leading education academics and international experience with national testing regimes both suggest major risks with National Standards:

"In our view the flaws in the new system are so serious that full implementation of the intended National Standards system over the next three years is unlikely to be successful. It will not achieve intended goals and is likely to lead to dangerous side effects."

Open Letter to Education Minister Anne Tolley from Professor John Hattie (University of Auckland) Professor Martin Thrupp (University of Waikato), Professor Terry Crooks, University of Otago and Lester Flockton, University of Otago

For more information visit www.nzei.org.nz
Have your say at www.nationalstandards.org.nz

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Engaging our communities in discussion

NZEI believes it is vital to engage parents and our wider community in the discussion about National Standards and the risks they pose to quality teaching and learning..

ACTION:

* Make a commitment to having at least one conversation over the summer with friends, over the BBQ or on the beach... about the profession's concerns about National Standards. Use the factsheet overleaf, which outlines the key concerns NZEI has, as a guide.

* Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper about why you're concerned National Standards may put learning at risk. Keep it brief (200 words) and in your own words.