

NATIONAL STANDARDS WHAT DO THEY MEAN FOR OUR CHILDREN'S LEARNING?

A DISCUSSION SHEET FOR PARENTS

NZEI · TE RIU ROA
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The Government's "Crusade on Literacy and Numeracy" is focused on introducing national standards for reading, writing and maths for children who are in years 1-8. These standards will be in place from 2010. The aim is to standardise the way teachers assess student progress and achievement and to introduce a format for reporting on that to parents that is easy to understand.

NZEI, the union representing primary teachers and principals, believes the test of any new system is whether it improves and motivates students to learn.

| NZEI SUPPORTS | NZEI OPPOSES |
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| Standards reflecting "rich" assessment which allows a teacher to use their professional judgment and knowledge of your child as well as existing national assessment tools, such as PAT. | "High stakes" national testing where all children sit the same test at the same time and a child's success or failure is based on a pass/fail mark. |
| Assessment which helps teachers, parents and the children themselves identify the child's next learning steps and goals. | Tests that result in children as young as 5 being labeled as "failures". |
| Reporting to parents and children in clear English so that families understand how their children are doing in relation to expectations of their year level. | Reducing the complex way and rate at which individual children learn – a child's progress becomes focused on ranking, rather than their own individual learning progress. |
| Being accountable to the local community by keeping parents, Boards of Trustees and others up to date with what's going well and where improvement is needed. | The publication of school "league tables" that could result from central collation in Wellington of data from each school. League tables create an incorrect and unfair perception of "good" and "bad" schools. For example, they can reinforce prejudice about the performance of students in low decile schools when the school may be having as good or better impact on the learning progress of its students as the "good" school. |

What can you do?

- Think about what your school does in terms of assessment and reporting now. What difference might national standards make?

Talk to your school and to other parents about the issues raised by national standards

- Attend the Ministry of Education's consultation meetings about standards – see <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/theMinistry/Consultation/NationalStandards.aspx> for more information
- Write to Prime Minister John Key asking for an assurance that the Government will not allow centralized data collation and the production of league tables of schools because of the harm they would do to children's learning.

