

## SUGGESTED NATIONAL STANDARDS TEXT FOR SCHOOL NEWSLETTERS

### Will National Standards Put Learning At Risk?

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

*"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

NZEI represents more than 90% of primary teachers and principals. It 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.

NZEI absolutely supports parents' rights to know about their child's progress and the next steps for their learning. This is an essential part of education. But the bottom line for principals and teachers is that any new education initiative must benefit children's learning, not damage it.

### What does NZEI want?

NZEI believes the test of any new system is whether it improves and motivates students to learn. We support:

- assessment which helps teachers, parents and the children themselves identify progress and the child's next learning steps and goals and the right of parents to know how their child is progressing, and to have this explained clearly
- schools being accountable to their Board of Trustees and local community.

### What's Our Concern with the Standards?

The National Standards present a risk to student learning because:

- They are completely untested – without a robust trial there is no way of knowing whether they will be effective in raising student progress and achievement

- The Standards system assumes children are failing if they do not meet the standard for their age, rather than reflecting the progress each child is making. This will lead to the repeated labeling of many young children as failures, resulting in them turning off learning and achieving
- The new NZ Curriculum being implemented in 2010 gives schools the opportunity to make learning relevant to their local situation and their individual students' needs. The opportunities for engaging children in learning that is meaningful to them may be lost with the imposition of a national "one size fits all" standards approach
- The international experience of national testing suggests that if National Standards result in "league tables" of schools being published, incorrect and unfair perceptions of "good" and "bad" schools are created.
- The Standards have been rammed through urgently without full consultation or engagement with teachers, the people at the heart of children's learning.

Children's learning is too important to experiment with. New Zealand has a world-leading education system and our teachers are sought internationally because of our innovative and high quality teaching. NZEI believes we should build on the strengths of current teaching and assessment, rather than adopt a system that is unproven and risky.

To find out more, talk to your school or visit

<http://www.nzei.org.nz/National+Standards.html>