

Professional Discussion Kit for National Standards

Module One

This practical evidence-based resource kit provides a response to the government’s National Standards policy.

The purpose is to help build support in schools and engage staff, boards, parents and the wider school community.

MODULE ONE

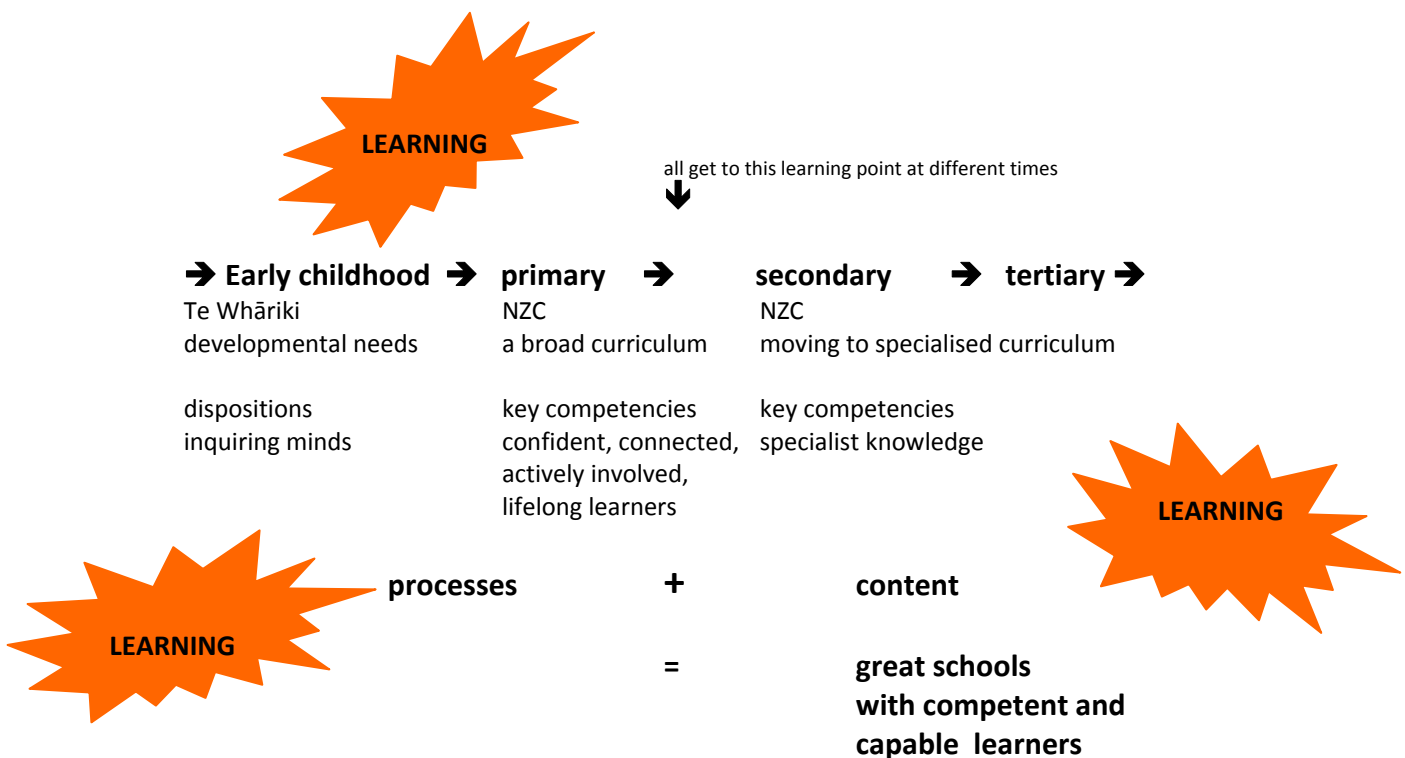
New Zealand Primary Schools – Moving from Great to Excellent

Learning is messy. Learning is cumulative. Learning is not necessarily linear nor achieved in hierarchical steps. Students progress and achieve at different times, and at different rates.

Early childhood education focuses on child-centred learning and encourages development of learning dispositions. Primary education builds on these sound beginnings in a more formal way by focusing on key competencies, literacy and numeracy as the basic foundations for specialised learning areas. The broad-based curriculum is the context and offers wide opportunities and horizons for primary-aged students. Secondary education starts with a broad-based curriculum and then moves to offer much more specialised subject content orientation. All education sectors are vitally concerned with student motivation, and all contribute to students becoming lifelong learners.

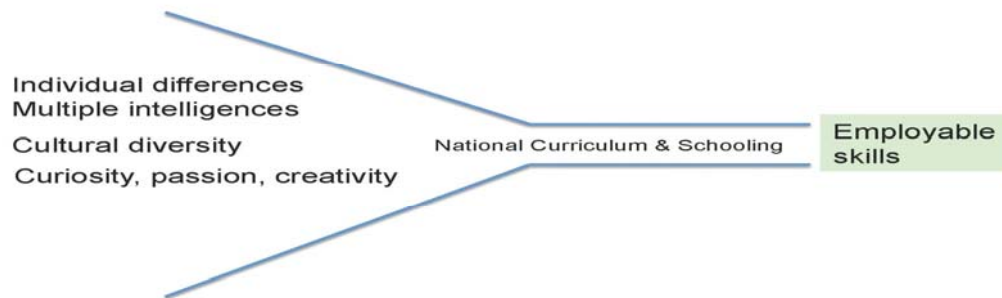
Primary Students' Learning Path

The primary students' learning path is situated in the complexities outlined above. The path is broad and multifaceted, and creates competent and capable learners.



Government's National Standards Path¹

The government's National Standards policy narrows the learning path for primary-aged students.



We need to:

- RECOGNISE** who needs help
- RESPOND** with appropriate interventions
- RESOURCE** with efficient decision making
- REALISE** student potential

We need to:

- PROTECT** what we have (the New Zealand Curriculum)
- PROMOTE** NZEI's vision (Advancing Quality Public Education)

¹ Adapted from Diagram for employable skills: Zhao, Y. (2011). 'Students as Global Entrepreneurs: Implications of Globalisation for Education'. Slide presentation at the New Zealand Principals' Federation Conference, Wellington 8 April 2011

NZEI Te Riu Roa Messaging

NZEI Te Riu Roa advice to schools:

- We know how to develop effective learners for the 21st century now; it is defensible
- Focus on the New Zealand Curriculum and putting the student at the centre of learning
- Talk through the issues with your board and encourage support for the Boards Taking Action Coalition (BTAC) direction - talk with other schools in your cluster and determine a cluster-based approach towards non-implementation
- Communicate NZEI's vision as "Assess for Success" – mapping children's progress and achievement so they move forward with their learning
- Challenge ourselves constantly to find new and more effective ways to engage families and whānau in children's learning
- Move from 'contractual' accountability to 'responsive' accountability
- Reject the government's National Standards - they are a backwards move to standardisation and mediocrity and will not solve the purported problem
- Understand and be informed about the government's National Standards to be strong in advocacy for school expectations based on student achievement, curriculum levels and community aspirations.

What will make the difference?

At School Level:

- Each school must make clear its evidence-informed and school-based teaching practice by which teachers collaborate with the school community to set expectations for its students based on multiple sources and to which they hold each other accountable
- A school curriculum that responds to individual students' learning needs supported by ethical use of data for improved learning
- Effective practice articulated and made consistent throughout the school e.g. learning inquiry into practice to bring about improvements for all learners, leading to a sense of ongoing learning
- Partnership and engagement with parents on their child's learning and what the school is trying to achieve.

At a Systems Level:

- Professional learning and development opportunities (in literacy, numeracy and assessment) across New Zealand, and not in a contestable environment
- Targetted resourcing for the 14% of the lowest-achieving students
- Resourcing to ensure teachers have the time, resources, and flexibility to reflect on and try out new ideas to better support student learning
- Ethical use of systems data through national monitoring of the education system in which assessments are carried out by "light sampling" multimatrix methods
- Support for building a network of quality public schools
- Strong coordinated social services support for schools when needed
- Access to high quality early childhood education staffed by qualified teachers.

Advancing Quality Public Education for the 21st century

NZEI Te Riu Roa has developed its [vision](#) for quality education.

What every child needs:

- to attend a quality local school
- to have quality learning opportunities
- to have quality teaching and support
- to have recognition of their family and culture.

What makes the New Zealand education system great:

- high-quality early childhood education
- an innovative and broad curriculum
- learning supported by assessment information and practice
- effective teaching
- high-trust model
- locally accountable.

What does it take to move from great to excellent:

- access to high quality early childhood education for every child
- a school curriculum that responds to and extends every individual student's learning
- growth of creative practices encouraged, recognised and supported
- concentration on strengths and uniqueness
- targeting of resources for the 14% of students who are achieving at the lowest levels and their families; including smaller class sizes that make quality teaching achievable for every student
- genuine learning partnerships and respect between teachers, students, their families and the system.

What are the threats to the current New Zealand system:

- The government's National Standards policy and implementation as it is not educationally sound and won't solve the problem of low achievement
- under-resourcing of intervention programmes that work (e.g. reading recovery), professional development and learning (not national and placed in a contestable environment)
- low-trust environment and a lack of respect of professional advice.

We are ambitious to make a great system even better:

Our aim is to increase the number of students achieving (86%) in aspects of reading, mathematics and writing. Our aim will be achieved when the lowest levels of achievement are raised.

We will not settle for mediocrity:

Schools should not mess about trying to use the government's National Standards trying to make them work. Each school should articulate its own high expectations which reflect student achievement and progress. These expectations fit the school's vision for its students. These expectations are challenging and based on *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

An Expert’s View: ‘Accountability, Standards and Activism’

“...teachers collectively have a primary responsibility to contribute to public debates about the quality of teaching and the quality of student learning outcomes.”

In her keynote address at the PPTA Professional Conference, Judyth Sachs brought together what seem to be three competing concepts. She argued that: “Accountability, standards and activism do not need to be oppositional. Rather by pursuing an organic, profession- developed approach to standards, the external demands for accountability of government can meet the internally driven needs of teachers and their students and the communities which they serve”².

Sachs maintained that for there to be an alignment between accountability, standards and activism the shift will require the following:

Moving from	Moving to
Contractual accountability	Responsive accountability
Imposed by government	Developed by teachers
Regulation	Development
Imposed accountability	Individual and collective responsibility
Government directed and controlled	Profession developed and managed
Mistrust	Trust
External regulation	Self regulation
Compliance	Activism

Sachs believed the status quo was no longer tenable and a shift needs to occur. She identified areas where action can be taken to facilitate a more transformative outcome...

1. having a desire for and commitment to change
2. collective and connected action
3. commitment to ongoing professional learning
4. having confidence in our practice
5. developing a scholarship of practice

Sachs concluded that at the centre of accountability and activism is the commitment to making practice transparent, developing confidence in the teaching profession and improving student learning outcomes.

“...teachers need to speak out and in so doing make their practices public and transparent which ensures that they are accountable to their students, their communities and their peers.”³

² Sachs, J. (2011). ‘Accountability, standards and teacher activism: an unholy trinity or the way for the profession to shape the future. Keynote address at the Post Primary Teachers’ Association (PPTA) conference in Wellington, April 18-20.

³ Ibid.

International Summit of the Teaching Profession New York, March 2011

Ian Leckie, NZEI Te Riu Roa National President

The view that professionals and leaders in government had a joint responsibility for successful change of a system was recognised at the International Summit of the Teaching Profession in New York (15-18 March 2011). The summit was a meeting where Ministers of Education from high-performing, or fast-improving countries and their union leaders met jointly to share promising practices from around the world. The summit talked about their approaches to building highly-effective teaching workforce based on the understanding that great teachers are a pre-requisite to producing consistently high levels of achievement for every student.

The discussion was framed around four themes:

1. recruitment and initial preparation of teachers
2. development, support and retention of teachers
3. teacher evaluation and compensation
4. teacher union engagement in education reform

The summit acknowledged the importance of developing a central role for teachers in educational change. While the discussion agreed that more resources need to go into smarter development of professionals it also acknowledged that “above all professional development needs to be integrated into both an individual teacher’s career and school and system changes”.

The summit also maintained that it is essential to build a constructive political process in which teachers share with politicians and administrators the main goals of the reforms. Teacher union engagement in education reform needed to be a partnership agreement and process.

NZEI Te Riu Roa Activism

NZEI Te Riu Roa has undertaken a wide range of activity with members and wider public communities, to highlight the lack of evidence and challenge professional and public confidence in the Government's National Standards policy. Listed below is a selection of ongoing and recent activity to engage with membership and wider groups to hear their experiences and concerns and bring these into the public debate.

Research Project:

The RAINS project is a three-year research study into the effects of the government's National Standards policy on New Zealand schools and students which will

- track changes over time
- use case studies to reflect the diversity of schools and provide in-depth insights
- be well informed by existing research and scholarship
- involve principals, teachers, boards, parents and students
- have credibility through robust and rigorous procedures within an ethical framework

The RAINS project is a partnership between NZEI Te Riu Roa and the University of Waikato led by Professor Martin Thrupp and supported by an advisory group of New Zealand academics and an international reference group.

NZEI's Immediate Past President and Martin Thrupp ran a workshop at the PPTA Professional Conference 2011 using the RAINS project as a case study to look specifically at role of teacher unions setting an alternative policy agenda.

Whakahau, Whakamana, Whakahihi:

Led by Te Reo Areare this will be a year long campaign (in the first instance) focused on the successes achieved for tamariki Māori throughout Aotearoa. The plan will include one major event and one minor event that will be initiated during that term but could continue to roll out longer than that term. General headings for each term are; what, why, how, when and where.

What is Māori education will be the evidence gathering stage that will involve kura/schools centres and kōhanga and whānau who have success stories and strategies that have raised achievement levels for tamariki Māori in their circles of learning.

Why Māori education, why tamariki Māori and all the others reasons why that come into our thinking at this time.

How can we get this information out there, how can we engender the interest needed, how do we drive the attitudes of negativity away.

When and where will focus on when will there be positive outcomes for tamariki Māori, when will the rest of Aotearoa realise that a success for Māori will be a success for Aotearoa. When the “when” question is answered then the where should be a given

Events in each term will build on the previous term events leading towards the year end as the general momentum builds the best education system for tamariki Māori.

NZEI Te Riu Roa Initiated Sector Forums:

Between November 2009 and November 2010, NZEI Te Riu Roa hosted three primary sector forums with invited academics, researchers, principals and trustees from the primary sector. Each forum focused on the issues and concerns emerging from the implementation of the Government’s National Standards policy and built on discussions from the NZEI Te Riu Roa earlier meetings. At each forum:

- the overarching purpose was to share the perspectives of different groups within the education sector and to gain consensus, where possible, and clarity about what action is needed and how best to support the solutions identified
- commitment was sought from each group of participants present on action that they would undertake on the issues discussed.

Similarly, an NZEI Te Riu Roa initiated early childhood meeting with a broad range of participants was held in March 2010 to discuss the possible impact of the government’s National Standards policy on the philosophy and principles of Te Whāriki, and on pedagogy and practice in early childhood education services, and to reach some agreed statements.

A Pasifika Forum was held (October 2010) for Pasifika parents and family members in Porirua Wellington on promoting discussion on the potential negative impact on Pasifika student learning of the Government’s National Standards policy. Over 100 Pasifika parents and community members participated as did politicians. Forty-seven people signed the letter to John Key and many parents signed commitments to get involved in the ongoing campaign.

“Mapping my Success” – an online reporting tool with students, parents and teachers:

The key purpose of promoting online reporting is to show that there are more effective, and modern ways to celebrate and report the complexity of student learning in the 21st century rather than the government’s “plunket” graph response.

NZEI Te Riu Roa wants meaningful interactive reporting to and with students and parents. It intends to:

- develop and launch an online reporting initiative as a challenge to Government's 19th century thinking
- use member, parent and student voices in the process of developing and launching this
- develop materials for members to use at parent-teacher-student interviews

- advertise or YouTube video campaign on our concerns with National Standards including the negative impact on students, schools and their communities
- promote what works.