



Professional Discussion Kit for National Standards Module Two

This practical evidence-based resource kit provides a response to the government’s National Standards policy. It aims to help build support in schools and engage staff, boards, parents and the wider school community.

The [introduction](#) provides an overview.

This is the second of three modules, and includes:

- a comparison of strengths and risks to the current system
- reporting to and strengthening partnerships with parents, student and teacher.

There is an accompanying discussion guide.

[Module One](#) outlined NZEI's messaging and vision and through a [professional discussion guide](#) supports teachers’ discussion about quality public education, and the challenges of upholding their ethical and professional beliefs.

A COMPARISON OF STRENGTHS AND RISKS TO THE CURRENT SYSTEM

A world-class system which:	A standards-based environment which:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> meets 21st century needs by developing: knowledge, skills and learning for living 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> takes primary teaching back to mediocrity and educates primarily for employment skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produces creative, energetic and motivated learners by broadening opportunity based on literacy and numeracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> narrows learning opportunities by focusing solely on isolated aspects of literacy and numeracy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is based on a concept of learning as organic and dependent on a diversity of talent and experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is based on a concept of learning as going through a linear track with a singular conception of ability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has the New Zealand Curriculum where teachers are encouraged to customise and personalise learning for every student 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demands conformity where every student is expected to be at a particular standard at a particular time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> allows schools to decide on the learning needs of their students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> gives politicians and bureaucrats control and regimentation over learning with a focus on outputs and a disregard for outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> encourages teaching which builds on students' strengths and is pitched just above their present level of achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has a framework that does not take account of students' strengths and is pitched to a particular standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> allows for the interpretation of the curriculum within each school but informed by normed assessment information throughout New Zealand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has standards that have been backward mapped from NCEA Level 2 with no evidence base that it will be successful in what is asserted and does not match the current performance norms of students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has a curriculum which demands teaching takes account of diverse learning needs, and of students' varying backgrounds, interests, needs and abilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> assumes that a learning approach of "one size fits all" is appropriate

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> every student is valued for what they bring to school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ignores overseas experience showing that 'bright' students and students who are 'slower' learners will not be challenged in their learning, because any gains in their achievement levels will rarely be reflected in public reporting of assessment results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has intrinsic accountability with professional responsibilities to students, the school and its community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has extrinsic accountability based on student scores against the standard i.e. above, at, below, or well below
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has formative assessment practice to assist better learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> misuses standardised assessment tools for diagnostic and accountability purposes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses the New Zealand Curriculum to motivate students and bring spark, spontaneity and a love of learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> means there will be less time for the teachable moments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> celebrates every student's learning achievement and progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is likely to distort the primary school philosophy of child-centred teaching
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses data reported nationally... NEMP data was valid and reliable, and able to be used to support teacher practice and school development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses large-scale reporting with simplified data that does not provide accuracy regarding student achievement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> encourages parents to engage with their child's learning as part of the learning partnership between the teacher-student-parent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is based on political direction, and has children's achievement reported against a four-point scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses the New Zealand Curriculum which was developed over nine years with wide consultation with teachers, parents, community, business groups, and students, thus ensuring a commitment to the spirit and the intention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> was developed in haste meaning the clarity of purpose and use of the standards has been compromised
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides a considerable amount of national data on literacy and numeracy, through annual charters, numeracy data, and literacy professional development programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> creates comparative data rather than data for learning, with the potential for media to collate and create league tables which ignore context

REPORTING TO AND STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS WITH PARENTS, STUDENT AND TEACHER

Parents do want to know how their children are progressing and achieving at school. Clear, easy-to-understand school reports are valuable and, in some ways, the National Standards has served as a 'wake up' call for schools to really focus on the quality of their reporting to parents. This has been beneficial and timely, but you do not need to implement National Standards to achieve this¹.

-Courtney, B. (2010)

The purpose for reporting to and with parents must be for the child and teacher to communicate about achievement and progress in a way that supports further learning. It is a collaborative exercise. Good reporting is consistent with the principles underpinning The New Zealand Curriculum (p9) and the principles of good assessment (New Zealand Curriculum p40).

Reports, whether oral or written, should be a concise appraisal of cumulative records of progress and development. The language used in the reports should be clear, simple, brief, constructive and understandable. Written reports are only part of the reporting relationship. Any serious concerns should be dealt with on a personal level.

There is no requirement for any school to report to parents against the Government's National Standards four point scale (above, at, below, well below). In fact there are very good professional reasons why a student's learning and achievement should not be rigidly categorised.

Reporting on student progress and achievement should tell where the student is at in relations to expectations appropriate to that student. These expectations can be referenced to "bigger picture" learning goals which are part of the school's vision and goals supported by understandings from norm referenced information and the school's context. Teacher judgment should come from multiple sources of information (no one test) and describe particular successes and priorities for moving forward as well as areas of where more focus is required.

Parents want to know how their child is doing compared to other children of their age. Schools have this information through their assessment norm referenced tools and should be sharing this information with the parent and child. This information should be in the context of the student's next learning step.

Student's engagement and judgment should also complement this information and reflect their role and engagement in the learning and assessment process. For students to be able to improve they must develop the capacity to monitor the quality of their own competencies during the actual performance and this requires them to be able to articulate the quality of what they are achieving. This is a co-constructed exercise with the student leading the discussion about their learning and how it meets the quality learning standards previously agreed as well as being facilitated towards their next learning step.

What are the strengths of your school's reporting?

What areas could you develop further?

What are the implications for moving from great to excellent?

¹ Courtney, B. (2010). National Standards: A Parent's Perspective. *New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work*, vol. 7, issue 1, 8-14