

We Deserve a Fair Deal!

From the start of 2010, the Government has introduced national standards for reading, writing and maths for students in years 1 – 8. The government’s stated aim is to standardise the way teachers assess student progress and achievement, and to introduce a format for reporting to parents that is easy to understand and in ‘plain language’.

The Government claims the Standards will help our children do better, and that they will raise the achievement of Māori, Pasifika and children with special education needs, along with the overall performance of our education system.

There is no evidence to support these claims. In fact, there is widespread concern about the Standards from parents, educational experts, principals and teachers because the Standards are untested and potentially inaccurate. Professor John Hattie of Auckland University has called them “fundamentally flawed”.

NZEI Te Riu Roa is therefore calling for a trial of the National Standards before any implementation. NZEI is concerned that the Standards will not lead to any significant increase in learning support for those children who do not meet the Standards. It is also likely to lead to dangerous side effects such as a narrowing of the curriculum being taught in schools.

As well as implications for teachers and students, NZEI Te Riu Roa believes there are potentially major ramifications for School Support staff. Support Staff are a key group within the Education Sector and it is timely that consideration is given to what the possible implications might be for school support staff.

Potential Issues	Questions
Students who have been identified as ‘under achieving’ or ‘not meeting the standard’ may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> not fit within their class and so be allocated to a support staff member display undesirable behaviour as a result of being identified as ‘under achieving’ and be removed from class. 	If you work in supporting literacy and/or numeracy programmes in your school, what implications could National Standards have for your role?
Students identified as ‘under achieving’ in years 1 – 8 may move into year 9 and above having been exposed to a ‘narrowed curriculum’. Teacher aides in secondary schools may be expected to deal with the fallout of this.	If you are a support staff member working with year 9 and above students, what implications could there be for your role if students have been taught a narrowed curriculum when in years 1 – 8?
The additional administrative requirements will add to an already large and demanding workload in schools.	As an Administration person working in a school, how might National standards implementation affect your role?
Schools are allocated a set amount to cover the staffing of teachers in their school. Additional staffing would usually come from the Operations Grant, which schools tell us is under severe pressure.	What are the implications for support staff and students if schools are forced to employ more staff to ensure that students who are identified as ‘under achieving’ are to be appropriately supported?

Action:

- Organise a meeting with Support staff in your worksite
- Discuss the issues and questions above and record your responses
- Go to www.fairdeal.org.nz and click on the tab labelled ‘Discussion sheet response’ and record your information. Be sure to include your name, school, and how many participated in the discussion, when completing your blog
- Go to <http://www.handsupforlearning.org.nz> to find more information, including the itinerary for the National Standards Bus tour and on what NZEI Te Riu Roa are doing to ensure that the National Standards are trialled
- Join in the action as the National Standards Bus tour goes through your area and sign the petition.