

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL PETITION

As a parent of a school aged child I am very concerned about the introduction of 'National Standards' into New Zealand's Primary Schools. My concerns arise from the following observations:

Parents are not being given sufficient detail as to what 'National Standards' are. Only 11.9% of readers in a recent New Zealand Herald survey said they have a full understanding of the policy.

WHAT NATIONAL STANDARDS ARE NOT:

The process 'National Standards' does not in itself boost children's attainment or give them anything new. Our children are already tested and have their own 'child specific' goals. There will be no new tests or experiences available in the classroom. National Standards is a process whereby your child is given a mark to indicate where he/she lies against a standardized norm. This mark takes no account of abilities in any field other than literacy and numeracy. A sense of failure will be inevitable if children do not meet the standard for their age.

Just as infants do not all crawl and walk at exactly the same age, children do not attain a standard of literacy and numeracy at the same age. If a child displays a talent in a certain area, they are better to explore this talent in a setting that will allow them to transfer their skills to reading and writing when they are ready. That is why our best schools expose our children to a wide range of activities.

Several principals of well-performing schools have stated National Standards will create a greater administrative workload. This will reduce the amount of time teachers have to expose our children to a wide range of lessons and experiences within the classroom.

'Under achievers' will be given extra tuition in literacy and numeracy that they may not be ready for. All of our bright, talented and gifted children will suffer from the deployment of resources away from nurturing their strengths to highlighting their weaknesses. Children who are identified as poor readers are already well catered for with our Reading Recovery programme which was developed in New Zealand and exported world-wide.

ALTERNATIVE MEASURES

Pre-school years have a great influence on children's performance at primary school. To achieve a lift in literacy and numeracy, the solution may be greater support for parents and validation of the important and productive role that parents fulfill in society. Tax measures such as income splitting and universal funding of Parent-Infant programmes such as Parents As First Teachers would complement 20 hours ECE.

CONSEQUENCES TO COMMUNITIES

If collated information is available to agencies outside the Ministry of Education irresponsible third party reporting will control how our schools are viewed in the media.

Our schools and communities will suffer as schools are ranked. The inevitable 'league tables' will lead to an educational elite from primary school age, overhang our children's transition to secondary school and perhaps their careers.

We as parents have a right to know how schools are performing, but league tables are not the way to achieve this.

IDENTICAL POLICIES ARE BEING DISCARDED IN OTHER COUNTRIES.

The introduction of "National Standards" must be delayed until parental concerns have been satisfied.

Please sign the attached petition to show your support for this cause. Anyone in your household may also sign.

Other actions you may take:

- Sign the petition circulated by NZEI also – a teacher and parent initiative.
- Request that your children's information not be passed along from the school to a third party: The Ministry of Education. This will prevent accurate collation of data leading to 'league tables' but allow your school to assess your child's performance with all the tools available.
- Talk to your Principal or Member of Parliament about what improvements might make a positive difference to your child's education. As parents we are key stakeholders in the Education Industry.