



**Attention: Chair of the Board of Trustees**

**July 2010**

Dear Board Chair

## **NATIONAL STANDARDS AND THE ROLE OF BOARDS OF TRUSTEES**

NZEI Te Riu Roa congratulates you and your fellow Trustees on your recent election or re-election to your school's Board. The role of a Trustee is an important leadership position in your school community and is a key way in which parents, whanau and the teaching profession engage with each other to work for the best learning outcomes for all students.

A number of Board of Trustee members have asked NZEI for information on the National Standards. As the professional and industrial body representing primary principals, primary teachers and school support staff, we believe Boards have an important role to play with regard to the Government's National Standards policy.

This is particularly important because there is little confidence amongst principals in the Standards. An NZEI survey of principals last month found 94% had concerns about the Standards and just 2% were very confident they could implement the Standards, while 74% lacked confidence. This sentiment was confirmed recently by the Auckland Primary Principal Association's decision – since joined by other principal associations - to boycott any further National Standards training. (See [www.nzei.org.nz](http://www.nzei.org.nz) for details).

We believe it is important that Boards engage with principals and teaching staff about the key learning and teaching issues National Standards raise. As the professional leaders of their schools, principals are responsible for ensuring compliance with all professional requirements such as the National Administration Guidelines and the National Education Guidelines. They are also responsible for ensuring that the teaching and support staff have access to appropriate professional development to ensure they are able to work with confidence in their respective roles.

Boards all over the country are grappling with concerns about the risk to student learning when the standards may not be either accurate or educationally sound. The standards are highly "aspirational" and as a consequence, don't align with the current national norms that schools use to describe student progress against their age group.

These concerns have led the profession and education academics to consistently call for a trial. As Professor John Hattie has said:

***"The glossy, recently published New Zealand literacy and numeracy standards have no data no evidence and no evaluation - they are pronouncements without evidence. If there is evidence outside committee contemplations where is it? Until there is evidence the standards remain untested and experimental ....we seem complacent in our ignorance of the evidence and ignorance of standards-setting methods."***

(Hattie (2009) Horizons and whirlpools p8.)

## What can you do?

1. Boards can add an important voice to those of Principals in explaining why schools should not be compelled to implement the Standards before their concerns are addressed. NZEI has emphasised to its members the importance of working alongside Boards to ensure that the quality of the teaching and learning in the school is not compromised while this issue is being worked through.
2. NZEI encourages you and your fellow Board members to consider the issues, consult with parents, and come to a view about whether hasty implementation of the Standards is in the interests of children's learning and your school. We enclose a "Warrant of Fitness" which is designed to support such discussions. It provides a checklist for school communities to work through to ensure that there is discussion of key issues to inform decisions about implementing or deferring work on the Standards. This checklist has also been sent to principals and NZEI worksite representatives.
3. Many schools have held community forums and NZEI members would be very happy to work with Boards to organise such events in your school community. NZEI's concerns about the Standards are outlined in the enclosed leaflet for parents, and there are more information resources available online at [www.handsupforlearning.org.nz](http://www.handsupforlearning.org.nz)
4. If the Board has concerns about the Standards, we suggest the Board writes to the School Trustees Association (STA) and to Education Minister Anne Tolley outlining your views.

You may be wondering how the confusion around National Standards affects your Board's responsibility to prepare their 2011 charter. As you know, Boards will soon receive Ministry advice on the preparation of charters. However, these do not have to be completed in 2010. The Ministry website states that: ***"There is no set date for when your charter is due to the Ministry but if it is to be useful to you it should be completed by your board early in 2011. The Ministry would expect to receive the charter by May 2011 in order to provide feedback and prioritise schools requiring support in the 2011 school year."***

NZEI would advise caution in any immediate work on setting targets for the Standards when there is little confidence in whether they are robust and their alignment with current norm-based assessment tools is in the Ministry's own words "provisional and under review".

If you would like any further information about any of these issues, visit [www.nzei.org.nz](http://www.nzei.org.nz) or contact Stephanie Mills at [Stephanie.mills@nzei.org.nz](mailto:Stephanie.mills@nzei.org.nz)

Regards



Frances Nelson,  
National President

### Some background reading:

Parliamentary Library research paper on National Standards – [www.nzei.org.nz](http://www.nzei.org.nz)

Media coverage of the issue: [www.handsupforlearning.org.nz](http://www.handsupforlearning.org.nz)

APPA statement on National Standards – [www.nzei.org.nz](http://www.nzei.org.nz)

Background papers to support NZEI Warrant of Fitness:

[www.nzei.org.nz/nationalstandards.html](http://www.nzei.org.nz/nationalstandards.html)

Parent and former Board of Trustee chair Bill Courtney says the failure to develop sound policy may lead to chaos -

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/opinion/3868221/lts-time-for-a-Lange-cuppa-before-we-bring-in-national-standards>

# Are National Standards fit for the road?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

WARRANT OF FITNESS

**National Standards are being introduced without any trial to check if they are “roadworthy” – robust and supportive of student learning.**

NZEI has developed this checklist to help your school community “road test” whether it is safe and appropriate for student learning to implement the National Standards in your school.

## Pass/Fail

Steering	<input type="checkbox"/> P <input type="checkbox"/> F	National Standards support the professional leadership in our school to implement the <i>New Zealand Curriculum</i> and steer it in a way that is relevant to our community.
Safety	<input type="checkbox"/> P <input type="checkbox"/> F	National Standards are safe and supportive of student learning (achievement and progress), motivation and self esteem.
Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> P <input type="checkbox"/> F	National Standards are robust, transparent and evidence-based.
Direction	<input type="checkbox"/> P <input type="checkbox"/> F	National Standards align clearly with the <i>New Zealand Curriculum</i> and its intent to have “confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners”.
Speed	<input type="checkbox"/> P <input type="checkbox"/> F	The Government has ensured the National Standards process has been given sufficient time to allow for confident implementation by the profession and to gain parent support.
Interior	<input type="checkbox"/> P <input type="checkbox"/> F	Information from our school’s assessment tools (eg AsTTLe, STAR, PAT etc) can be confidently aligned to the National Standards.
Exterior	<input type="checkbox"/> P <input type="checkbox"/> F	Parents will easily understand the difference between the Standards and norm-referenced assessment tools.
Fuel	<input type="checkbox"/> P <input type="checkbox"/> F	There is sufficient resourcing to ensure good quality professional learning for all appropriate staff to understand and implement the Standards.
Windscreen wipers	<input type="checkbox"/> P <input type="checkbox"/> F	The National Standards provide clear guidance about how to achieve consistent teacher judgement locally and nationally.
Brakes	<input type="checkbox"/> P <input type="checkbox"/> F	National Standards will improve educational outcomes, particularly for Māori and Pasifika students, by providing appropriate resources for the school to further raise achievement.

**PASS** RE-INSPECTION REQUIRED BY: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Reasons for further review:

NZEI encourages you to use the National Standards Warrant of Fitness checklist to help initiate staffroom discussions about the professional issues raised by the Standards before proceeding with a decision about their implementation. Use the supporting material (available at [www.nzei.org.nz](http://www.nzei.org.nz)) to help determine your school's readiness or otherwise to implement the Standards. For each item on the checklist, identify a "pass" or "fail" and identify what needs to happen as a result.

Pass/Fail	If a FAIL, why?	Actions we will take as a result of a FAIL	Outcome of our actions
Pass/Fail		<p><b>1. Talk to your BoT and school community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ask for a discussion with your BoT</li> <li>identify with them how the issue(s) be might be addressed.</li> </ul> <p>If it cannot be resolved in a way that meets your professional concerns, consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>agreeing to use the WoF to review the situation in 3-6 months</li> <li>calling a school community meeting to discuss the issues</li> <li>undertaking further consultation with parents and whanau about reporting requirements</li> <li>explaining the issues in your school newsletter or website</li> <li>recommending to the BoT a timetable to proceed/defer further steps to implement the Standards.</li> </ul>	
Pass/Fail			
Pass/Fail			
Pass/Fail			
Pass/Fail			
Pass/Fail			
Pass/Fail		<p><b>2. Talk to the Government</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>write to your MP or visit him/her to explain the professional and moral dilemmas posed by the Standards</li> <li>tell your Ministry representatives about your professional concerns.</li> </ul>	
Pass/Fail			
Pass/Fail		<p><b>3. Talk to NZEI</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>give your feedback on the Warrant of Fitness and how your school used it to <a href="mailto:Stephanie.mills@nzei.org.nz">Stephanie.mills@nzei.org.nz</a> or call 0800 NZEI HELP.</li> </ul>	
Pass/Fail			