



An invitation to learn more about National Standards

As an ex-teacher, an employer, and a mum, I believe that a good education opens doors and is the key to a better future for our young people. Learning comes in all shapes and sizes, but everyone needs basic literacy and numeracy skills to succeed.

It is common sense that National wants to lift student achievement in our schools.

Right now, one in five children are leaving school without the basic skills in reading, writing, and maths that they need. We want and expect all children to develop those skills.

That's why at the start of the school year, we launched National Standards in all primary and intermediate state schools.



"National Standards in education are a critical part of the National-led Government's plan for securing a brighter future for New Zealand.

New Zealand deserves a future with more highly-skilled citizens, who have better job prospects, greater life choices and, in turn, who live in a society with less dysfunction, unemployment, welfare dependency, and crime."- John Key, Prime Minister of New Zealand.

We are now a few weeks in, and despite all the argy-bargy, we've had a lot of positive feedback from parents and schools. We know that the vast majority of teachers and schools are putting National Standards in place in a practical and professional manner.

National Standards are simply signposts showing what children should be able to achieve in reading, writing, and maths, and by when. Twice a year, schools will report to parents in plain language, illustrating children's progress against the standards.

I like the idea that it is a bit like the old Plunket book reporting graphs. When I had babies I watched those graphs like a hawk. If my boys weren't putting on weight I fed them up, I crowed if they were doing better than the bench marks.

I hope that parents will be able to understand National Standards and react just like I could. If their children aren't keeping up, they can read to them more and help them with their maths and they can encourage and support when they are doing well. Schools themselves will also make sure that children who have been identified as struggling, will get the help they need to get back on track.

A recent survey in the New Zealand Herald showed that 73 per cent of parents support National Standards. We are confident that even more parents will support the standards once they receive their first reports from their child's school and enjoy getting the accurate information about their child that they deserve.

National Standards are not about labelling children. They are about making sure that teachers, principals, and parents know exactly how children are achieving and progressing, and how they can be supported to lift their achievement.

Evidence shows that one of the best ways to lift achievement is having clear, challenging, and achievable goals, followed up with quality teaching.

A report from the Education Review Office at the end of last year showed that almost two-thirds of schools do not monitor the performance of Year 1 and 2 children well, and that three-quarters of principals don't set expectations of high achievement levels. This shows how urgent it is to take action.

We're investing \$26 million this year to train and support teachers as they implement the standards. And we're investing an extra \$36 million over three years to assist students identified as needing extra help.

We are not introducing national testing like that seen in Britain, the United States or Australia. We have learnt from their experiences. Now the rest of the world is looking at our groundbreaking approach.

Last month we appointed a five-member independent advisory group to support the implementation of National Standards. This group, which includes Professor John Hattie, will provide the Minister of Education with free and frank advice about the implementation of National Standards and any refinements that could make them even better.

If you want to learn more about National Standards then join me and the Minister of Education Hon Anne Tolley tomorrow night. We are holding a meeting in Christchurch at the Linwood Rugby Club, 56 Kearneys Rd, Bromley, Tuesday 23rd March at 7.30pm.

It is so important for the future of our children, our families and our country that every single child gets the opportunity to succeed at school. National Standards is an important tool to help make that happen. I feel strongly, that if it is good enough for Plunket to use benchmarks to keep parents informed, it is good enough for schools to do the same.

See you soon.

Cheers Nicky

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