

National Standards consultation analysis

Report for the Ministry of Education

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Executive Summary

The Ministry of Education invited submissions on the new National Standards in literacy and mathematics for Years 1–8, between 25 May and 3 July 2009.

- A total of 4,968 responses were received.
- 3,011 parent/whānau used the feedback form provided for them; 65 percent online. They provided a reasonable reflection of ethnic proportions among parents of students attending primary school, and at different year levels.
- 1776 sector responses were received, including 490 from groups, in total representing 4557 people. Most were from teachers; 486 came from principals, which is around a quarter of the total number of principals in primary and intermediate schools. School trustees accounted for 79 responses, and there were 220 from school advisers, teacher-educators and consultants working with schools. Forty-four percent of the sector responses were made online. Sector responses provided a good cross-section of different school types and socioeconomic decile.
- 181 submissions were made without using feedback forms. Steiner school staff and parents accounted for 132 of these submissions. Most of the other 49 were from groups, including whole schools, principals' groups, advisers and four national organisations.

In the analysis of submissions, we have quantified the responses made using the two feedback forms used in the consultation (a total of 4,968, representing 9,526 individuals), and summarised the responses that did not use the feedback forms.

People responding to the Ministry of Education's invitation to comment on the new National Standards were interested enough to take the time to do so, so they are a self-selected group. In terms of known demographic and school characteristics, the responses were broadly representative, with no obvious underrepresentation.

The two feedback forms used in the consultation asked different questions. Each included some broad open-ended questions, and answers to these were categorised and then grouped to identify the main themes in people's reactions. Because these themes come from open-ended questions, a theme that may have been mentioned less often may well have been given the same weight as another theme that was mentioned most often, if people had been asked to "vote" on the two things. However, these themes, and the themes from the other submissions, which are generally consistent with those made on the feedback forms, are useful in identifying issues to consider in finalising the National Standards and supporting the best use of them.

Parent/whānau views

The majority of parents/whānau who responded liked the sample learning plan they were given in the consultation material. This provides information on learning goals for their child. Parents/whānau liked a mix of different ways to get information about their child’s learning and achievement, including face-to-face discussions as well as written reports. Around three in 10 liked emails or downloading from the school website.

Table 1 **Parent/whānau preferences for getting information on their child’s learning**

<i>n</i> = 3,011	%
Written reports the child brings home	76
Meetings with parent, child and teacher	70
Parent/teacher meetings without child	62
Written reports that the school sends in the post	37
Emails	29
Reports and assessments downloaded from the school website	27
Text messages	5

Further indications of the kind of information parents want comes from a question intended for parents of students with special needs that just under half the parents answered. Most of these said they wanted both an individual education programme for their child, and a report on their progress in relation to the National Standards.

Asked in an open-ended question what the most important things the school could do to help them support their child’s learning, sharing information—in a timely way—was the most prominent theme:

- 49% share information about child’s progress in timely way, with good access to teachers
- 25% motivate child and respect their individuality
- 23% provide ideas or resources for parents to use at home
- 15% work with parents and respect them
- 9% good quality teaching and resources for underachievers
- 9% provide information about class programme and approaches
- 6% focus on literacy and numeracy/more homework

In response to a broad open-ended question asking for any further comments, around 14 percent made a positive comment on National Standards, either the general idea of comparing their child’s performance with national benchmarks, or the specific examples given. Around 38 percent voiced some concerns about the introduction of the National Standards. These included valuing their school’s current way of reporting and discussing student progress with them and not wanting to lose it, concerns that the National Standards ignored differences in individual patterns of growth,

would narrow teaching, ignore the development of the whole child, demotivate low-achieving students who never made the standard or lead to unfair comparisons of schools.

Sector views

Sector comments on the kinds of achievement data that they thought should be reported to parents were consistent with parent/whānau views. Sector views also emphasised the usefulness of parents having clear, timely, honest, accurate and valid information about their child's progress, and a picture that covered "the whole child" as an individual, looking to the future through setting goals together, as well as reporting on current performance.

The sector was asked some specific questions about the draft National Standards. They were divided about whether these draft standards were set at the appropriate level. Comments indicated that some were comparing the standards with their experience of current student performance levels and differences in student patterns of progress (e.g., of students who took longer to make progress in their initial school years, but did reach expected levels by the end of primary school). They were also divided about whether the criteria to judge student achievement against the standards were clear from the draft consultation material.

Seventy-two percent of school respondents thought their school had strengths in using assessment tools to assess against the standards; and most thought the current assessment tools their school used would be sufficient to assess against the standards in most cases or definitely. However, just over half thought their school would have strengths in making teacher judgements against the standards, or using the standards to improve teaching and learning. They were more confident about reporting to individual parents. Only 27 percent thought their school had strengths in making changes to their school information management system that would be needed for National Standards work.

Main themes in sector responses to the open-ended questions they were asked, and in the submissions that did not use feedback forms, are summarised below:

- Many respondents expressed concerns about some aspect of the use of National Standards. These respondents included quite a few of those who also made positive comments about having new national benchmarks, or about the learning plan example to be used with parents.
- There are three concerns related to students:
 - The National Standards allow labelling of students, at the expense of those students who may make progress, but not the standard. Continually being below standard, or being categorised as below standard early on in school may erode the motivation these students need to make progress.
 - A desire for some accommodation for students with nonstandard patterns of progress, including students with special needs, and English language learners.
 - Identification of those below standard *per se* will not improve their performance; schools will need guidance and support.

- There is concern about a range of possible negative effects for schools and a desire to see active work to limit these effects. These concerns are about:
 - a narrowing of the curriculum
 - a narrowing of teaching practice, with less personalisation/customising to meet diverse needs
 - a loss of school flexibility (e.g., in forms of reporting and work with parents, based on *The New Zealand Curriculum*).

There is concern with the time frame. Comments are made about the difficulty of implementing the standards in 2010 when they are not yet finalised, and the guidance and supporting material around them is yet to be developed. Professional development and the sharing and supporting of existing good practice are seen as important. There is some apprehension that a rapid introduction of “uncooked” standards and the processes of using assessments to make valid and consistent judgements will mean the displacement of school work with the NZC, at a time when many schools feel they will lose the progress they have made if they have to put it to one side for the next year and beyond.

- While reassurances were given over the course of the consultation that there was no intention that league tables comparing schools be created or used by the Government, considerable apprehension remains about league tables and school comparisons. Much of this is fear of media misuse, leading to schools concentrating on their literacy and numeracy standards results at the expense of the wider curriculum and the development of other skills and attitudes that are important in adult success. Some felt that existing good practice, ways of identifying schools in need of support to improve and ways of gaining national pictures of student achievement were being ignored.

There are also concerns about unfair comparisons being made between schools (either by the media or the Ministry of Education), if school demographics are not taken into account (including low socioeconomic context, transience, English language learners, students with special needs, differences in student cohorts from one year to another), or if teacher judgements are inconsistent between schools.

There was some preference for schools to report on the value they added, on patterns of progress rather than “raw” standards, to mitigate these effects. There is also a preference to use the existing school annual reports to the community and the Ministry to report school progress related to the National Standards, which would integrate the standards with school planning processes.

1. Introduction

The New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) is an independent national organisation that undertakes research and provides research-based knowledge, products and services, including assessment tools, in accordance with the NZCER Act. Because of our expertise, our role in education and our commitment to research-informed policy and practice, NZCER staff are playing a number of roles in relation to the development of the National Standards. NZCER staff are: serving on advisory groups; providing a position paper in November 2008, and developing some of the points in that position paper into a submission on the draft standards¹; and undertaking the analysis of the submissions data provided by the Ministry of Education on paper and electronically, that is reported here. In tendering for this analysis work, we noted that our “main interest in seeking to undertake this project is to ensure that this important consultation can be of real use in informing the final development of the National Standards”. This report contains the results of the statistical analysis of the responses to the consultation, and considerations of the four focus areas that the Ministry of Education wanted addressed, based on that analysis.

The submissions

The Ministry of Education invited submissions on the new National Standards in literacy and mathematics for Years 1–8, between 25 May and 3 July 2009.

- A total of 4,968 responses were received.
- 3,011 parent/whānau used the feedback form provided for them, 65 percent online. They provided a reasonable reflection of ethnic proportions among parents of students attending primary school, and at different year levels.
- 1,776 sector responses were received, including 490 from groups, in total representing 4,557 people. Most were from teachers; 486 came from principals, which is around a quarter of the total number of principals in primary and intermediate schools. School trustees accounted for 79 responses, and there were 220 from school advisers, teacher-educators and consultants working with schools. Forty-four percent of the sector responses were made online. Sector responses provided a good cross-section of different school types and socioeconomic decile.

¹ This submission was written separately and before the analysis of submissions reported here, and does not draw on the national patterns reported here.

- 181 submissions were made without using feedback forms. Steiner school staff and parents accounted for 132 of these submissions. Most of the other 49 were from groups, including whole schools, principals' groups, advisers, and four national organisations.

In the analysis of submissions, we have quantified the responses made using the two feedback forms used in the consultation (a total of 4,968, representing 9,526 individuals), and summarised the responses that did not use the feedback forms.

People responding to the Ministry of Education's invitation to comment on the new National Standards were interested enough to take the time to do so, so they are a self-selected group. In terms of known demographic and school characteristics, the responses were broadly representative, with no obvious underrepresentation.

The two feedback forms used in the consultation asked different questions. Each included some broad open-ended questions, and answers to these were categorised and then grouped to identify the main themes in people's reactions. Because these themes come from open-ended questions, a theme that may have been mentioned less often may well have been given the same weight as another theme that was mentioned most often, if people had been asked to "vote" on the two things. However, these themes, and the themes from the other submissions, which are generally consistent with those made on the feedback forms, are useful in identifying issues to consider in finalising the National Standards and supporting the best use of them.

Coding

We developed initial coding for each open-ended question by reviewing the consultation material and using our understanding of the issues around assessment use to create codes that would fit with a wide range of responses. This initial coding was discussed with the Ministry of Education and developed further. We then fine-tuned and added to this coding by reviewing the first 200 of the parent/whānau responses, and the first 200 of the sector responses. The codes were specific rather than broad, to gain the most information from the responses. The open-ended questions invited a wide range of answers. That has a value in identifying any issues that warrant attention. It does mean that the numbers for any particular view are likely to be lower than they would have been if people had been asked to respond to specific suggestions. It also means that the open-ended question figures should not be treated as the results of a poll that did ask specific questions.

We used 10 coders to categorise the open responses. All coders attended a morning training session, and after that they were encouraged to work as a team, and to discuss their decisions on how to code answers that were difficult to categorise. Almost all coders worked on both the parent and sector surveys. Typically, they coded a question at a time, to optimise their speed, efficiency and consistency.

Responses submitted on paper forms were hard coded onto the forms, and the codes were captured along with the responses to the closed questions and other data on each survey.

Responses submitted online had the open responses separated from the other data. The open responses were coded (using an Excel spreadsheet to hold both the words and the codes). When complete, the assigned codes were merged back onto their associated data, and the paper and online data sets were concatenated.

The submissions received early (the first couple of hundred) were recoded (thoroughly checked) by the coding team at the end of the process. They found very little they disagreed with, but added more detail (used more codes where appropriate) in the codes assigned.

The NZCER statistician checked all the online parent coding, and at least half of the online sector coding, and was pleased with the quality of the coding. Some spot checks of paper submissions were also done.

Analysis

The wide range of answers to the open-ended questions meant that we needed to group specific codes together to identify main themes, and to undertake analysis in relation to differences in respondent characteristics. That analysis has been done through cross-tabulation, checking for statistically significant differences at the 1 percent level, using chi-squared tests. We report differences that are both statistically significant and meaningful or substantial.²

Not everyone answered every question (both closed and open-ended). In some subgroup analyses, where one or more of the subgroups perceived a question was not particularly relevant to them, the nonresponse rate was so high that a comparison between that group and the other respondents is not meaningful.

² The sample sizes are large (several thousand), which gives a very small margin of error, even for most subsamples. Almost all differences are statistically significant at the 1 percent level. We have therefore not reported small differences that may be statistically significant but not particularly meaningful (differences of under about five percentage points).

2. Key themes

The Ministry of Education outlined four key areas in which it wanted an overall evaluation made from the patterns in the submissions, that would be of use in the final design of the National Standards. These four areas are answered below.

Do key stakeholder groups understand the intent of the draft National Standards?

The feedback forms did not directly ask people to give their understanding of the intent of the draft National Standards, so we have tackled this question by comparing the intent of the National Standards with patterns in the responses.

The intent of the National Standards given in the consultation material is to raise student achievement, particularly for those whose progress in literacy and numeracy knowledge and skills appears to be slower the rate they would need to access *NZC*, and to achieve NCEA Level 2. The intention is to do this by providing more clarity around achievement expectations for each year level, and using those as a framework for teachers' work with students, and for parents to see how their child is progressing. They are also intended to be used in "plain language reporting" to parents, with a "next steps" dimension that invites parents to support their child's literacy and numeracy learning.

Setting expectations based on secure track to NCEA Level 2

Sector views of the standards are divided as to whether the standards are set at the appropriate levels. This question could be understood in several ways: in terms of the intent of the National Standards, and their formation from the literacy and mathematics progressions developed within the *NZC*, ensuring a steady tracking to the achievement of NCEA Level 2, or in terms of current achievement patterns. Criticism of the standards' content, for example, was often based on current experience of student achievement at a given year level, but also on experience of different rates of student development, with some who were slower initially, nonetheless catching up with the expected level later on, and performing at the levels expected. Whether these students would then go on to succeed at NCEA Level 2 is probably unknown. But sector responses would suggest further development of the standards, showing the evidence supporting them in terms of patterns related to later achievement, is needed.

Plain language reporting to parents

Parents generally liked the learning plan, which used National Standards information. They also wanted timely and open communication with teachers, not limited to a written report. There was

more support for parent–teacher meetings that included the student than there was for parent–teacher meetings without the student. Parents were generally positive about their role in supporting children’s learning, and were interested in having information and connections that would help them do that. Pasifika parents were most interested in having timely information, and ideas or resources they could use at home.

Parents responding were interested in their child’s progress over time; some showed more faith in year-level benchmarks that the National Standards would supply than did others; some did not believe that there was a standard development path for all children; and some were concerned that the National Standards would provide the basis for demotivating labels for children. Overall, many parents who responded would be interested in knowing how well their child was doing in literacy and numeracy in clear terms, but not if this narrowed the existing curriculum, current effective ways in which they and the school communicated and interacted, or supplanted the time teachers had to work with their child, in ways that aroused their interest and confidence in learning. These concerns were strongest amongst Steiner school parents, but not limited to them.

The sector was also positive about providing parents with information that would enable them to understand and support their child’s school progress. Mention was made of using more sources than the National Standards to do this, and sharing and discussing information on the next goals for the individual child. There is understanding of the need for parent-friendly language, but some concern that this should not be superficial.

Main themes in sector comments related to reporting to parents were that schools were already doing this, in ways that the school community liked; that the example reports could oversimplify or raise expectations that the child or school could not meet; and concerns that using National Standards as the main form of identifying achievement levels would demotivate the very students—those with low performance—that the National Standards were aimed to better support, so their use could be counterproductive. The concern that the national standards would become the actual curriculum at the expense of the wider NZC in which they are framed, and the development of confidence and lifelong learning and other skills that are also important for adult success, also shows some scepticism about this intent.

Are there areas of concern and/or areas for improvement?

The responses identify some specific issues around the draft standards, but comments also suggested that many in the sector had not worked through these standards in detail. This indicates that it would be wise to seek experienced sector input and review of the standards and supporting material through means other than this consultation process, in the work to finalise the standards.

There is concern about a range of possible negative effects for schools and a desire to see active work to limit these effects. These concerns are about:

- a. narrowing of the curriculum

- b. narrowing of teaching practice, with less personalisation/customising to meet diverse needs
- c. loss of school flexibility (e.g., in forms of reporting and work with parents, based on NZC).

There is concern with the time frame. Comments are made about the difficulty of implementing the standards in 2010 when they are not yet finalised, and the guidance and supporting material around them is yet to be developed. Comments also indicate the need for supporting professional development, and for the sharing of existing good practice. There is also some apprehension that a rapid introduction of “uncooked” standards and the processes of using assessments to make valid and consistent judgements will mean the displacement of school work with NZC, at a time when many schools feel they will lose the progress they have made if they have to put it to one side for the next year and beyond.

While reassurances were given over the course of the consultation that there was no intention that league tables comparing schools be created or used by the Government, considerable apprehension remains about league tables and school comparisons. Much of this is fear of media misuse, leading to schools concentrating on their standards results at the expense of the wider curriculum. Some felt that existing good practice, ways of identifying schools in need of support to improve and gaining national pictures of student achievement were being ignored.

There are also concerns about unfair comparisons being made between schools (either by the media or the Ministry of Education), if school demographics are not taken into account (including transience, English language learners, students with special needs), or if teacher judgements are inconsistent between schools. Concern about league tables and their effects on schools is strongest with boards of trustees, and with decile 1–2 schools and intermediates.

Some preferred to see schools report on the value they added, on patterns of progress rather than “raw” standards, to mitigate these negative effects, and also to situate the use of the National Standards within school self-management, by focusing on school responsibility for improvement.

There are two concerns related to students:

- a. The National Standards allow labelling of students, at the expense of those students who may make progress, but not the standard. This concern is also more likely to be expressed by those from decile 1–2 schools.
- b. Identification of those below standard *per se* will not improve their performance; schools will need guidance and support, with some reporting that their current resources did not allow them to provide struggling students with the support that could help them make progress.

Are there barriers to the implementation of National Standards?

School staff views of their school's strengths in implementing the National Standards and sufficiency of their current assessment tools do suggest that concerted work will be needed if schools are to make the intended use of the National Standards.

While 73 percent of school respondents thought their school had strength in using assessment tools to assess against the standards, just less than half thought their current assessment tools were definitely sufficient to do so in reading, and around a third thought so for mathematics and writing. Principals were less confident than teachers about their current writing assessment tools.

School views of their strengths in implementing National Standards show more confidence in reporting to parents than to the community. Just over half thought their school had strength in making teacher judgements against the standards, or using standards to improve teaching and learning.

Only a quarter thought they had strength in making changes to the school information management system. This raises issues around ensuring that such systems can accurately store student data (current and longitudinal); but other uses of the student management system may not need immediate attention, if reporting to the Ministry of Education is done through building on the existing planning and reporting framework, which was a main theme in school thoughts about such reporting. Parent interest in electronic reports of their child's progress is not strong; it is highest among decile 9–10 parents.

Principals and advisers working with schools were somewhat less sanguine than teachers about school strengths in implementing the National Standards.

The school response patterns were generally consistent across school decile and type, with some regional differences. Decile 1–2 schools and intermediates were slightly less confident of their strength in reporting to school communities.

What information do parents need to engage with their children's education?

The usefulness of parents having information that is clear, timely, honest, accurate and valid comes through both parent and sector responses. Most focused on information about children's performance, a picture that covered "the whole child" as an individual, and looked to the future through goal setting, as well as current achievements. Some parents also identified needs to understand what teachers were focusing on, and their goals for that focus (e.g., a science unit), so that they could ask their child relevant questions and use those to support their child's learning. Parents who responded were open to working with schools: to discuss the information, to work together, and often with the child, to set goals, and to get ideas for what they could do (though some said their role was not to teach the same things as teachers).

Both parents and school staff emphasised the value of discussions and interaction, as well as formal reporting.

Some parents made positive comments about their school's current reporting and work with them, and the varied sources of evidence of their child's progress that they saw.

Decile 1–2 respondents were most likely to mention the value of face-to-face communication and focusing on progression, as well as comparisons with age, curriculum levels or similar students, and more likely to mention parent-friendly language as important, with ideas for how parents can support learning.

3. Parent/whānau feedback

There were 3,011 responses from parents using the feedback forms. Of these, at least 753³ came from one of the 39 consultation meetings held at a range of schools around the country; 1,949 were made online (65 percent).

Three-quarters were from women (this is par for the course with responses from parents in relation to education surveys).

Sixty-five percent identified as Pākehā/NZ European, 18 percent as Māori, 7 percent as Pasifika and 4 percent as Asian. One percent identified themselves within the hybrid Middle Eastern/Latin American/African option. Seven percent chose the “other” option. We cross-tabulated answers by ethnicity to see whether there are significant differences in views, including the hybrid category into the “other” category.

This ethnic mix is reasonably representative of the likely ethnic mix of parents of primary students, with the exception of Asian parents. We compared it with the 2006 Census data for 20–59-year-olds, which gives NZ European 60 percent, Māori 12 percent, Pasifika 5 percent, Asian 10 percent, Middle East/Latin American/African 1 percent and other 11 percent. We also compared it with 2008 student data for primary schools, which provides higher figures for parents/whānau in those ethnic groups which are likely to have larger families; the student figures are 52 percent NZ European, 23 percent Māori, 10 percent Pasifika, 8 percent Asian and 2 percent other.

There is a good spread of children’s year levels represented, with numbers highest at year 1 (27 percent) and lowest at Years 6–8 (17 percent each). We cross-tabulated their answers to the questions to see whether there were any differences in terms of their experience of their children’s schooling, by using the highest year level they indicated if they had more than one child. We used five groups: those with a child in Year 1 and no older children at primary school ($n = 809$); those whose oldest primary school child was in Year 2 ($n = 469$), in Years 3 or 4 ($n = 674$), in Years 5 or 6 ($n = 411$) or in Years 7 or 8 ($n = 265$).

We used the school names to identify school socioeconomic decile for 753 of the 1,062 paper responses; 25 percent of the total. We cannot tell how representative these would be of the total

³ 753 is the number of those who gave the school name or place of their meeting; other paper submissions are also likely to have come from those who attended one of these meetings. Some other meetings were more informal, and not held in schools. If the meeting was not held in a school, the name of the nearest school was used as a proxy, so that we could use all this information, and link it to the “demographic” data available about schools.

response, including the online responses. With this caveat, we have reported any differences between views of parents who attended meetings at different decile schools.

Ten percent of the responses came from parents whose children attended Steiner schools. Only 0.28 percent of the Years 1–8 student population attend these schools, and we could see that for some open-ended questions, the Steiner emphasis changed the overall figure. We have therefore weighted the Steiner parent responses according to the proportion of the student population to give overall figures for parents as a whole; but we have also reported the Steiner concerns separately so that these are quite clear.

Respondents’ interest in their child’s education

The majority of the parents/whānau who responded to this consultation thought it was very important to help their child learn, and over half said they were very involved in helping their child learn:

- 86 percent of the parents/whānau responding thought it was very important to help their child learn, and 10 percent quite important. Only 0.4 percent thought it was not very important. Four percent did not respond to this question.
- 59 percent rated themselves as very involved in helping their child to learn, and 31 percent as quite involved. Four percent said they were a bit involved, and 1 percent as not involved much. Five percent did not respond to this question.

Pasifika parents were most likely to say that it was very important to help their child learn, and that they were very involved in helping their child learn. There were no differences related to children’s year levels, or between school decile levels.

Preferred ways to get information about their child’s learning and achievement

Parents/whānau who responded like a mix of different ways to get information about their child’s learning and achievement. They still prefer the traditional ways: written or face to face, although around three in 10 liked emails or downloading from the school website.

Table 2 **Parent/whānau preferences for getting information on their child’s learning**

n = 3,011	%
Written reports the child brings home	76
Meetings with parent, child and teacher	70
Parent/teacher meetings without child	62
Written reports that the school sends in the post	37
Emails	29
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Text messages	5

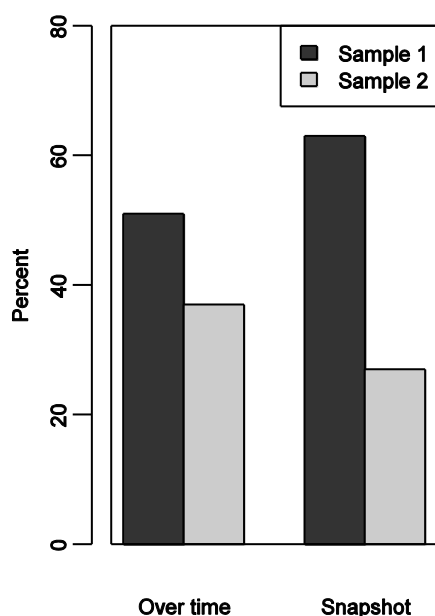
There were some differences between parents of different ethnicity. Māori and Pasifika whānau were more likely to want meetings that included children as well as parent and teacher. Pākehā/European parents were less likely to want written reports sent in the mail, or text messages. Only one difference related to year level was apparent: parents/whānau of Years 7 or 8 students were more likely to want written reports sent in the mail (49 percent).

Parent-teacher meetings without the child present were less appealing to parents from decile 1–2 schools (54 percent, cf. 75 percent of decile 9–10 parents)—but 70 percent of decile 9–10 parents also showed interest in parent, teacher and child meetings to discuss learning and achievement. Most interested in emails were parents from decile 9–10 schools (45 percent, and least interested in posted reports, 16 percent).

Views of the samples of reporting

Parents/whānau preferred the first samples to the second, for both the over time and snapshot graphs.

Figure 1 Parent preferences in the sample graphs



- 73 percent thought the *learning plan* would be useful. Twelve percent were unsure, and 11 percent thought it would not be useful.

Māori whānau and Asian parents had more evenly divided views of the two progress over time graphs (split half in favour of sample 1, and half in favour of sample 2). Pākehā parents were more likely to think that the learning plan would not be useful (17 percent). There were no differences related to student year level. Decile 9–10 parents were most in favour of the longitudinal progress sample 1 (81 percent), and the snapshot sample 1 (91 percent). There were no decile-related differences in views of the usefulness of the learning plan.

Ease of understanding the written sections of the sample reports

Generally, parents found the written sections of the sample reports easy to understand.

Table 3 Parent views of the understandability of sample reports

<i>n</i> = 3,011	Very easy	Quite easy	Some easy, some hard	Difficult
	%	%	%	%
Maths—progress after one year at school	61	20	7	2
Maths—next steps	66	17	4	1
Reading—progress at end of Year 4	60	20	6	2
Reading—next steps	64	19	4	1
Writing—progress at end of Year 8	59	20	7	2
Writing—next steps	63	19	5	2

There were no differences related to student year level. There were some ethnic differences: Māori and Pākehā/European parents were somewhat less likely than others to say they found the sample reports mixed in their ease of understandability or difficult. This was most evident in relation to the understandability of the reading progress at the end of Year 4, where 7 percent of Māori and Pākehā/European parents said so, cf. 20 percent of Pasifika parents and 17 percent of Asian parents.

The higher the school decile, the more likely it was that parents would say they found the sample reports understandable, but at least 75 percent of decile 1–2 parents found the reports understandable.

Parents with children with special needs were asked for their preference for Individual Education Programmes (IEP) or National Standards. This question was in fact answered by 48 percent of the parents, so it does not give a reliable steer on the preferences of parents with children with special needs. Answers here may tell us more about parents' desire for something individual to their child as much as related to the national standards. Thirty-one percent said they wanted both an IEP and the use of the National Standards. Nine percent wanted only the IEP, and 8 percent wanted only the National Standards as shown.

There were no differences related to year level, ethnicity or decile.

Responses to open-ended questions

Parents/whānau were asked two very broad open-ended questions.

Parent/whānau views of the most important things their child's school can do to help them support their child's learning

Eighty-two percent of the parents/whānau made comments here.

The most frequent theme was the importance of good information, and good communication with teachers, particularly timely information that could alert parents to any problems their child was experiencing. Next come two aspects related to parents: providing them with good ideas they could use at home, and working with them in a respectful way. Respect for children and motivating them to learn was the fourth most mentioned theme. Some parents wanted good information about the class programme, sometimes so they could provide relevant linked learning opportunities at home; some thought of the quality of teaching and support to address children's learning needs; and some wanted an emphasis on literacy and numeracy, or more homework.

Table 4 **Themes in parent/whānau views of the most important things their child's school can do to help them support their child's learning**

<i>n</i> = 3,011	%
Share information about child's progress in timely way, with good access to teachers	49
Motivate and respect individuality of child	25
Provide ideas or resources for parents to use at home	23
Work with parents and respect them	15
Good-quality teaching and resources for underachievers	9
Provide information about the class programme and approaches	9
Focus on literacy and numeracy/more homework	6

There are some ethnic differences in what parents emphasise in their answers here; but bear in mind that because they were responding to very broad questions, these differences may not have been evident had everyone been asked specific questions. Pasifika parents were more likely to mention a focus on the literacy and numeracy or more homework (20 percent), and also more interested in having ideas or resources to use at home (32 percent) and were the group most interested in having information shared with them in a timely way (62 percent). These apparent ethnic differences may in fact reflect the emphasis given to these themes in the consultation meetings, since 71 percent of the Pasifika parents' responses came from forms filled out at meetings, the highest proportion of any ethnic group.

There were no decile or year level differences apparent.

The comments below illustrate these themes, and also show that quite a few parents covered more than one theme:

Open and honest communication between parent and teacher; access to the teachers and to my child's work; continuity between parent/teacher meetings so if something is a goal in term 1 achievement can be seen in term 2; information on what the child is learning, for example, on the weekend the child can take one book home to show excellent work in maths, enabling parents to find out what the child is doing.

Good lines of communication—informal and formal so any issues are brought to light quickly. Providing exciting and stimulating learning experiences that we can build on at home, e.g. the space topic they are doing at the moment.

Let me know, on a regular basis, how things are going, and how I can support. If there is a problem, say so. Report early enough at the end of the year so that there is time to address problems and have a strategy in place. What can I do to help over the holidays? etc. To receive a report on the last day of school and discover your child is not performing as expected is simply unacceptable. The end of November seems reasonable. It would be helpful to know what the expected level is—so not just what the next step(s) are but what are we aiming for if a child is working below expectation.

I'm definitely in favour of a system like the National Standards but I'm concerned that this may identify higher numbers of students needing assistance or support to progress but will the schools be provided extra funding to support the needs of these students? There are currently students being identified as needing further assistance or support but there is not enough of this support available in the schools. Also, there needs to be support for not only the children with literacy and numeracy needs but also the families as they may also have literacy and numeracy needs themselves and may not know how to work with their children. Has this been thought of? There are currently very high numbers of parents with these needs and they are not able to provide this support to their children.

Send information home about things we can do to support her learning. Advise us on any areas she needs support. Give detailed information on curriculum, for example: we were given information that she was learning about 'capacity' in maths, what part of capacity does that mean? Are they talking about specific measurement (1/2, 1/4 etc) or just bigger/smaller, heavier/lighter? That information would help us understand how to help her or to extend her learning at home. Some idea of what we would expect her to be learning in a year or term.

I believe that the 3-way conferences and the student ownership of their learning is more powerful than any of the fancy graphs above.

Value each child as individuals, notice and respond to their strengths and interests rather than teaching the 'gaps'. Children are more motivated to learn if it is relevant and purposeful.

Make school interesting to encourage a 'love of learning'. Research skills so children can do their own learning independently. Provide a safe, secure environment where the children can take responsible risks.

Involve the child in their own goals and the parents in these too. Our school does this extremely successfully.

Having a great teacher that understands that all children are different. And to give each child the encouragement no matter what level they are at.

Develop and foster a self-driven love of learning. Help instil self-confidence in themselves. These two things are far far far more important in a child's success in school and in later life than any type of standardised testing/grading.

I think sometimes schools put a lot of effort into the under-achievers. Over-achievers need to receive more stimulation. Average kids seem to miss out, I think this needs to be addressed. I also think the teacher needs to talk with the children more as individuals instead of in groups. My daughter is having a few problems with maths but she would never approach the teacher in a class situation.

Listen to what parents share about their children in regard to individual needs—learning/physical/health/social issues.

That the school and parents have open and honest communication—the parent supports the school in teaching the child and the school supports the parent.

Other thoughts, suggestions or feedback

Finally, parents were asked for any other thoughts, suggestions or feedback. Half the parents/whānau responding made some comment. These comments ranged widely, and even with grouping, there are no strong themes as there were with the question on the role of schools in relation to parent support with learning.

This question did not address the National Standards or reporting to parents' policy explicitly. However, negative comments and concerns about the standards outweighed positive comments related to standards. The negative comments included comments that the change was unnecessary, since the parent/whānau already got good information from their child's school, concern that the standards would ignore individual patterns of growth and the development of the whole child, with narrowing of the curriculum. Positive comments often did not give reasons for liking the ideas included in the consultation, with the main explicit reason being the value seen in knowing how one's child's performance compared with others.

Table 5 **Themes in parent/whānau other thoughts, suggestions or feedback**

n = 3,011	%
Negative comments on National Standards	16
Value of parents supporting their child's learning, working with teachers	11
Positive comments on National Standards	7
Negative comments on the examples/current information on standards	7
Negative effect on teaching and teachers	6
Negative effect on students	5
Positive comments on examples given	4
Negative effects for schools	4
More support needed for schools and students	4
Positive comments on having information comparing child's achievement with national benchmarks	3

There were no ethnic or year-level differences apparent here. Decile 9–10 parents were most likely to make positive comments on having information on their child's performance in relation to national benchmarks, but this group also showed more concern with possible negative effects for teaching and teachers.

Below is a selection of comments to illustrate the range of views expressed by parents:

The kind of feedback on children's progress looks fantastic. We have one child who is doing well at school and one who is struggling. So I especially like the individual goals and specific comments about what they need to learn. The only thing I don't like as much is the graphs that show very plainly where they sit on the National Standard. For our child who is struggling it could make them feel a lot dumber than they already feel.

'What gets measured gets done'—looking forward to 2010!

Our school is doing the whole assessment and reporting very well. National Standards that can be made public can be more detrimental than beneficial. The media will LOVE getting hold of a school's results and playing 'God' with them. 'Weighing the pig won't make it fat.' If my child is failing and that is identified ... what will the Ministry do to provide this wonderful one-to-one help suggested on the example? I have more questions than answers and wonder if the correct thing to do is not enforce National Standards, but help those schools struggling with assessment at present. Will our schools be able to access training to implement this?

I had thought we already had National Standards in place. All of the reports you have shown here I am already receiving from my son's school. I am NOT interested in seeing how he stacks up against his peers—all I care about is that he is learning in a safe and happy environment, and being taught by competent people (and the MoE measures this with your regular ERO reviews). People and schools do not need to be compared with each other because there are so many issues particular to every person and environment that you aren't

going to get an equal picture. How can you compare a decile 1 school in Kaikohe with a decile 10 school in Christchurch? My fear is that is exactly what will happen if these ill-thought-out new National Standards are to be imposed on our educators. I think this is a complete waste of time and money and nothing more is to be gained by putting it in place. What we have currently works, and as the old adage goes, don't try to fix what ain't broke.

I do not agree with testing very young children as children all develop at different stages and ages. I have brought up 5 children and each were different and each achieved very well when they were ready.

I disagree with the concept of ranking children according to a national standard, I believe it will further marginalise those who are struggling and will be a source of stress and friction for both the child and their parent. Individual progress plans are a good concept but should be just that, individual, you can't and shouldn't measure all children with the same stick.

Parents of underachievers will be scared off when you show them those graphs! I would be terrified to turn up to school after being sent home a graph like that.

I think some parents would not understand the reports and need to have them interpreted. I also think students who are just new to learning English should not have their literacy reported against National Standards.

To keep all the jargon out of the reports (even though I can work out what 'mind mapping' might be, to me this is still education jargon) > To have more personalised comments about our children. What their strengths are and the areas they can work on? > NOT to focus on just Maths/Reading/Writing but also report on more general topics such as sciences / special topic work / physical abilities / interpersonal skills etc > I like the graphing over time approach, as my child may not be quite achieving the standard but if I can see they are continuing to make progress, I would be happy.

I am quite concerned about the possible introduction of national assessment/reporting of each child in schools. To me, schooling is not just about learning literacy & numerical skills nor about any other academic skills. Sure, academic skills are important, but I would like to think that schools are also a space for children to grow together & share experiences with each other. Social skills, appreciation & encouragements of arts & music, are a few among many other factors that I think are equally important. It would be a shame to reduce each child to mere percentages and marks and to focus so much on academic skills alone. And the possible focus on academic competition also concerns me. After all, each individual child is unique, with his/her original talents, abilities and tendencies—we cannot possibly appreciate their individuality by academic testings. And I feel it is important for each child to be valued & appreciated for his/her own unique abilities, particularly when they are young—in their primary school years at least.

My children are currently at primary and intermediate and attended different primary schools. I have found that different schools have vastly different ways of reporting and that is quite confusing for parents—so I think national guidelines or standards of reporting will help parents understand their child's progress more. However I do feel concerned that schools have to spend so much time adapting paperwork as really, I want the teachers to be able to focus on teaching not reporting.

Basic cognitive skills are what the schools should be focusing on, rather than practical skills (such as cooking or gardening), which we can teach our children at home. (It is much easier to teach cooking at home than to teach maths.) The National Standards look good in this respect BUT it is important that they not become a bureaucratic nightmare for teachers. Please keep the process as simple as possible.

Are there differences in views related to how parents fed back their views?

We did find some differences, though these need some caution with interpretation, since they may, for example, reflect differences in the parents who attended meetings cf. those who had not; or they may reflect differences in thinking about the consultation material, with more chance to hear more about the intent of the National Standards, and for discussion with others at the meetings.

Parents/whānau whose forms indicated they had attended one of the consultation meetings were somewhat more likely to be interested in three-way meetings involving parent, teacher and child (79 percent), and to prefer sample 1 of the graphs showing progress over time. They were more likely to think the learning plan would be useful (84 percent). They were more likely to comment on the importance of timely information sharing with parents about their child's progress.

The questions about respondents' interest in their child's education give some indication of possible differences between parents who attended meetings, and those who responded online. Ninety-five percent of parents identifiable at meetings (giving the place of the meeting) felt it is very important to help their child learn, as did 85 percent of those making submissions on paper (who may or may not have been at a meeting) and 79 percent of those who answered online. The question about involvement in helping the child to learn elicited a similar pattern of responses: 68 percent of those at a meeting, 53 percent of others making submissions on paper and 59 percent of those responding online reporting being very involved.⁴

Another area of difference is how "wired up" the parents are. Parents choosing to respond online were more interested in receiving reports as emails (35 percent, cf. 22 percent of those responding on paper), or being able to download information from the school website (30 percent, cf. 22 percent). However, like all parents, online respondents' most preferred ways to receive information were written reports brought home by the child (67 percent), meetings without the child (67 percent) and meetings attended by the child (65 percent).

Steiner school parents

There are some clear differences between parents who have chosen Steiner schools for their children, and other parents. These parents were less interested in written reports brought home by

⁴ This analysis excludes parents whose children attend a Rudolf Steiner school.

a child, or in parent–child–teacher meetings, and in electronic forms of communication about their child’s progress. Only 11 percent thought the learning plans given would be useful in reporting their child’s progress. They were more interested in parent–teacher meetings without the child and posted reports. Most did not comment on the two sample graphs or the understandability of the report material (though where they do, their views are similar to other parents’). Their views of the importance of helping their child learn, and of their current involvement in helping their child learn, were similar to other parents’. They were more likely to comment on the importance of a broad curriculum, making learning enjoyable and working with the different ways that different children learn, and express fears that the National Standards would narrow the curriculum, with less acknowledgement of children’s different learning paces, and the value of individual learning goals. They felt they already got good information about their child’s learning from the school. General submissions were also received from 132 Steiner parents and those working in Steiner schools, expressing dismay that the special character of their school and its approach to learning would be destroyed if they had to use National Standards.

4. Sector feedback

There were 1,776 responses using the feedback forms online or hard copy, representing 4,557 people. There were 1,286 responses from individuals, and 490 from groups ranging from two to 67 people. We have weighted the group submissions by the number of individuals they represent (i.e., if a response was given for a group of 10, 10 were counted as having that response).

There were 780 online forms received (44 percent), and 987 paper forms (56 percent). Groups were more likely to use the paper forms—so when we weighted it by number of individuals, there were 3,172 individuals (70 percent) whose responses used the paper form, and 1,385 (30 percent) whose responses were done online.

Individuals were asked to identify their sector role, and those who responded in a group, to identify the nature of the group. Some of these groups contained several sector roles; for example, school groups that could include the principal, or the board of trustees (BOT). Where groups were mainly teachers, we have classified them as teachers. Seventy-four percent of the responses ($n = 3,375$) came from teachers, 11 percent from principals ($n = 486$), 5 percent from advisers, teacher-educators and consultants working with schools ($n = 220$) and 2 percent from BOT members other than principals and teachers ($n = 79$). Six percent did not identify themselves, and 3 percent were a broad group that included a few test developers, some government employees and those who described themselves in ways we could not use for analysis.

In terms of school type, 44 percent came from contributing schools, 32 percent from full primary schools, 9 percent from intermediates, 3 percent each from composite/area and secondary schools and 2 percent from special schools. Ten percent did not have or did not give a school type.

In terms of school decile, 15 percent came from decile 1–2 schools, 13 percent from decile 3–4 schools, 16 percent from decile 5–6 schools, 19 percent from decile 7–8 schools and 27 percent from decile 9–10 schools. Ten percent did not give or have a school decile.

How representative are the responses? Probably the most valid comparison for this consultation is with the number of school staff, rather than schools. We used student numbers as a proxy for teacher and principal numbers, and found a good representation of school types in terms of schools catering for Years 1–8, and a good representation in terms of school decile. The Auckland region was slightly underrepresented.

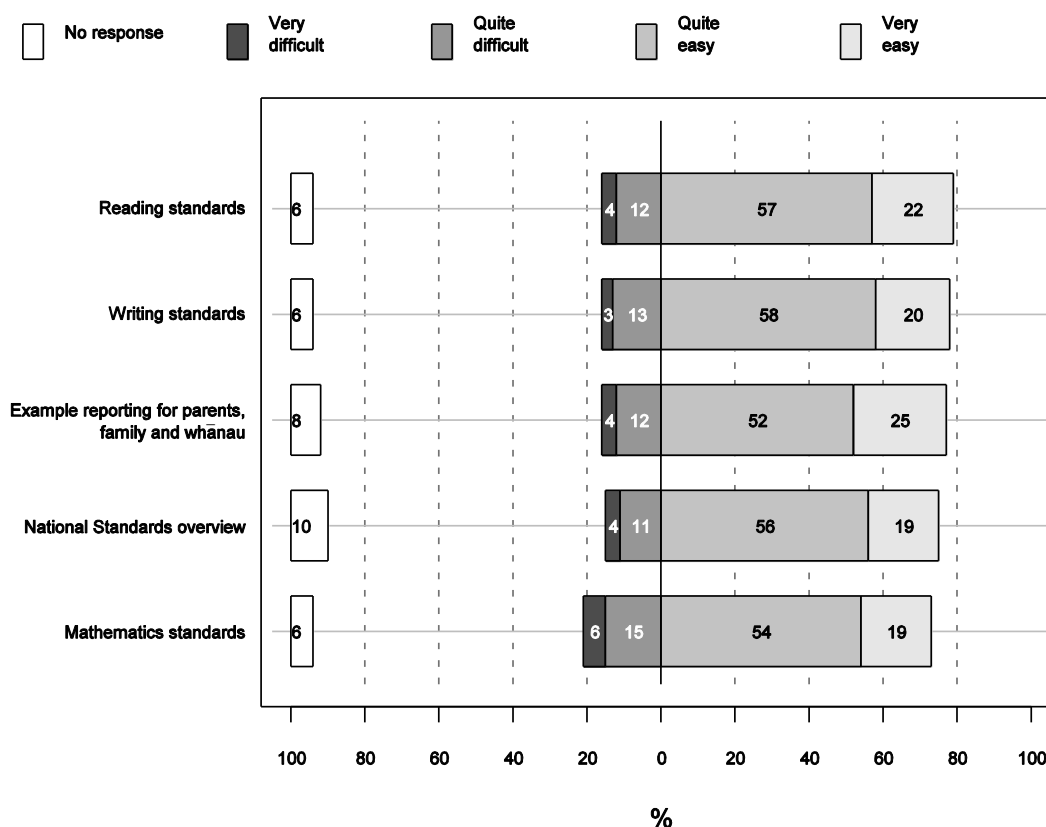
To explore sector responses by region we combined the regions into seven almost evenly-sized categories:

- Northland, East Coast, Poverty Bay ($n = 330$)
- Auckland ($n = 1,188$)
- Waikato, Taranaki, Manawatu, Wanganui ($n = 673$)
- Bay of Plenty, Hawke's Bay ($n = 554$)
- Wellington, Wairarapa ($n = 539$)
- Canterbury ($n = 561$)
- Rest of South Island ($n = 646$).

Views of the consultation material

Most of the sector thought the consultation material quite or very easy to understand. The mathematics standards were somewhat more likely than the literacy standards to be thought of as difficult to understand.

Figure 2 **Ease of understanding National Standards consultation material**



Respondents from decile 1–4 schools were around half as likely as those from decile 5–10 schools to say that the consultation material was difficult to understand, with the exception of views of the reporting to parents, where views across deciles were most consistent.

Principals were more likely than teachers to class the consultation material as very easy rather than quite easy to understand, other than the writing standards, but they were just as likely as

teachers to class the material as difficult to understand. BOT members were most likely to describe the consultation material as difficult to understand, other than the mathematics standards.

Primary and secondary school respondents were more likely than those from intermediates, composite or special schools to say they found the overview, reading and writing standards difficult to understand; primary school respondents were more likely than others to say they found the mathematics standards difficult to understand, and intermediate schools, the reporting to parents example.

More South Island respondents saw the reading standards (about a quarter), writing standards (28 percent) and mathematics standards (33 percent) to be difficult to understand. Northland/East Coast/Poverty Bay respondents were more likely to see the reporting to parents example as difficult (31 percent), although under 10 percent of the same respondents saw the reading, writing or mathematics standards as difficult.

Views of standards

There is no strong consensus from the sector respondents about the standards levels, the clarity of the criteria for judging student achievement or the setting of the exemplars at the appropriate standards level. Views of the standard levels are the most evenly divided.

Reading

- 45 percent say the reading standards are set at the appropriate levels; 47 percent disagree.
- 53 percent say that the criteria for judging student achievement in reading are clear; 38 percent disagree.
- 52 percent think the reading exemplars are *mostly* or definitely set at the appropriate standards; 39 percent say they are mostly too high.

Writing

- 42 percent say the writing standards are set at the appropriate levels; 50 percent disagree.
- 54 percent say that the criteria for judging student achievement in writing are clear; 35 percent disagree.
- 48 percent think the writing exemplars are *mostly* or definitely set at the appropriate standards; 43 percent say they are mostly too high.

Mathematics

- 47 percent say the mathematics standards are set at the appropriate levels; 45 percent disagree.
- 50 percent say that the criteria for judging student achievement in mathematics are clear; 41 percent disagree.

- 52 percent think the mathematics exemplars are *mostly* or definitely set at the appropriate standards; 38 percent say they are mostly too high.

The New Zealand Association of Mathematics Teachers (NZAMT) was critical of the standards: it disagreed that they were set at the appropriate levels, that the criteria were clear and thought the exemplars were mostly set too high.

Generally, respondents who found the consultation material very easy to understand were more likely to think that the standards were set at the appropriate levels, the criteria were clear and the exemplars were set at the right level. Similarly, those who thought the criteria for judging student achievement were clear were also more likely to think the standards were set at the appropriate levels. And those who thought the standards were set at the appropriate levels and the criteria were clear were least likely to think the exemplars were set too high.

Respondents from decile 1–2 schools were the most likely to agree that the criteria for judging student achievement were clear for writing (68 percent), and for mathematics (65 percent), and with their colleagues from decile 3–4 schools, that the criteria for reading were clear (60 percent). Respondents from decile 9–10 schools were least likely to think that the reading exemplars were too high (32 percent, cf. 45 percent of respondents from decile 1–6 schools).

Intermediate staff were most likely to think the writing and mathematics standards were not set at the appropriate level (62 percent and 65 percent), and that the criteria for judging reading achievement were unclear (55 percent). However, primary staff were more likely than others to think the criteria for judging writing and mathematics were unclear, and that the writing exemplars were set too high. Full primary and secondary staff were more likely than others to think the mathematics exemplars were set too high.

Teachers were more likely than principals to think that the reading exemplars were too high (42 percent, cf. 32 percent of principals), and that the criteria for judging student achievement in reading were not clear (42 percent, cf. 30 percent of principals).

School advisers and support people tended to be less likely than principals and teachers to think that the standards were set at the appropriate levels, but were also less likely to think that the exemplars were set too high. They also showed less disagreement that the criteria for judging student achievement were clear. More than a third of the school advisers and support people did not answer these questions, so caution needs to be taken with these patterns.

Respondents from Auckland and Bay of Plenty/Hawke's Bay were most likely to think that the standards were set at appropriate levels and that the exemplars were at an appropriate standard, and those from Wellington/Wairarapa and the South Island were least likely to do so.

Comments on the literacy and mathematics standards

We have summarised the main themes of those who made specific comment on the feedback forms on the literacy standards (51, many representing groups), or the mathematics standards (49,

many representing groups), since these may be of particular use in the further development of the standards.

Comments on mathematics standards

The main themes were:

The maths dimensions introduce new language, and are unclear, needing simpler expression. Some support the use of dimensions or “big ideas” to integrate content across mathematics strands. But concern is also expressed that the use of these dimensions to organise the standards will atomise mathematical ideas, and will be used to allocate teaching time equally for each dimension, at the cost of the emphasis on numeracy. The link with NZC was said to be unclear, and the New Zealand Statistical Association Education Committee argues that the statistical enquiry cycle is missing from the standards.

The standards are seen as so aspirational that near half the Year 8 students would not reach them, a statement supported by references to current national data. Some fear the negative effects for students; others wonder whether in fact NCEA Level 2 is too aspirational for the level of numeracy needed for contributing adults. Some suggested that this level was higher than that achieved by quite a few primary teachers entrusted with teaching mathematics.

Current Year 8 levels were most focused on; but several also commented on Years, 1, 4 and 6 onwards as being set too high for current patterns of achievement and progress. The NZAMT noted that current patterns on standardised data showed “staircase” progression rather than linear, and several submissions raised questions about how the standards in the years “in between” the standards shown for the consultation would work.

Maths teachers were seen as needing more support and deeper mathematical understanding to work with students if they were to make progress towards the aspirational levels of the National Standards. Some expressed fears that unconfident teachers would “teach to the standard” only, narrowing student mathematical development.

A few comments focused on the progression aspect of the standards, and recommended developing them for Years 9 and 10 as well to provide a national picture of progression.

There were also comments on the exemplar material given, including concerns with their literacy level, and their reliability as indicators of particular standards. Several suggested that more exemplars need to be developed for each standard, with examples of nonachievement as well as achievement.

Comments on literacy standards

The main themes were:

Setting the reading standard at the end of Year 1 as green was too high. More than 20 comments mentioned their own experience or data showing that the blue level was more realistic, and some said their evidence was that the blue level was in fact a good indicator that students would have reached the right curriculum level in Years 3 or 4. Some commented on the importance of consolidating good skills in the first year of school, and saw dangers in trying to focus too much on an initial higher level than the current. Some who worked in low-decile schools said their students, who came in with low oral and reading skills, took longer to reach national norms, but did match Year 8 norms in Year 8 through careful teaching and individual tracking of their progress. Several expressed concern that the standards would result in focusing on aggregate figures and averages, rather than individuals and their particular trajectories.

Twenty comments thought the writing standard at the end of Year 1 was set too high, and saw inconsistencies between the exemplar used and the level at which that exemplar had been used in the literacy progressions.

The other main themes were around the importance of good guidance to teachers in terms of their text selection; of their rating of reading comprehension using running records, which can give different results depending on the text chosen; and of not over-focusing on text level at the expense of assessing reading comprehension skills. There was also concern that the model of progression did not match the experience of ESOL and bilingual learners; and concern that the literacy progressions could become a “checklist”, resulting in teaching to the checklist.

Some thought the Year 4 reading levels were too high, noting that they assumed an 8.5–10-year age range, where Year 4s could stop at 9.5 years.

Some called for more exemplars, including examples of low levels of performance, and linkages between texts, exemplars, curriculum levels and the literacy progressions, so that teachers had a coherent picture of reading progress and how to assess it.

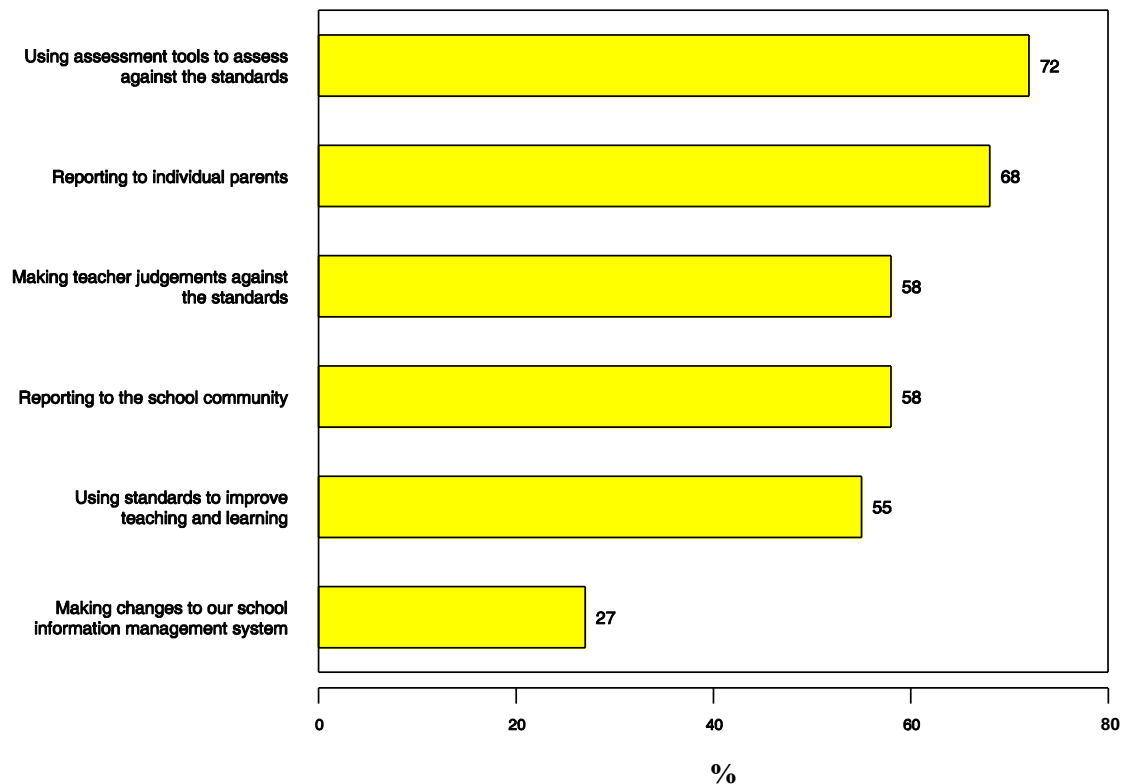
Views of school strengths in implementing the National Standards

This mixed level of confidence around the standards and their use is also evident in looking at school views of school strengths in implementing the National Standards. Overall, the responses here suggest the need for concerted work with schools if the standards are to both work well, and serve their intended purpose.

Just less than three-quarters identify their use of assessment tools to assess against the standards as one of their school’s likely strengths. The ability to make changes to school management information systems is seen as a strength by just over a quarter of the respondents. Note also that only just over half think their school would be strong in using the standards to improve teaching

and learning. Responses here may also reflect views that the standards will be a useful tool *per se* in terms of improving teaching and learning.

Figure 3 **School strengths in implementing National Standards**



Decile 1–2 respondents were slightly less confident of their strength in reporting to the school community (48 percent), as were intermediate staff (42 percent).

Principals were less confident than teachers that their school had strengths in making changes to the school’s student management system (SMS) (15 percent), in reporting to the school community (51 percent) or individual parents (60 percent) and in using the standards to improve teaching and learning (48 percent).

While this question was directed at teachers and principals, other respondents, who included advisers and others working with schools, also answered it, presumably thinking of the range of schools they worked with. Their responses were less sanguine, though this may simply reflect those who chose to answer this question, and the knowledge they used. Forty-eight percent thought schools would have strengths in making teacher judgements against the standards (cf. 60 percent of principals and teachers). Between 25 and 31 percent thought schools would have strengths in the other areas asked about, other than making changes to school management systems (4 percent).

Only 28 percent of the trustees responding answered this question. They were most confident in terms of school strengths in reporting to parents (24 percent, so almost all the trustees who answered this question thought this); 16 percent saw using standards to improve teaching and

learning as a strength, 15 percent saw reporting to the community as a strength and the other items were seen as strengths by 14 percent or fewer.

Respondents from the South Island were less likely to see using assessment tools as a strength (58 percent); those from Bay of Plenty/Hawke’s Bay were most likely to see reporting to the school community as a strength (67 percent); those from Wellington/Wairarapa were least likely to see using standards to improve teaching and learning as a strength (40 percent). Northland/East Coast/Poverty Bay and Bay of Plenty/Hawke’s Bay respondents were most likely to see reporting to individual parents as a strength (78 percent); those in the South Island other than Canterbury were least likely (48 percent).

Views of sufficiency of current assessment tools

School respondents are most confident that their current assessment tools are sufficient to use in reading. However, while very few think that their current assessment tools are *insufficient* for this purpose, the level of those who give a definite affirmative view is less than half for reading, and around a third only for mathematics and writing.

Table 6 **Sufficiency of current assessment tools to assess against the standards**

<i>n</i> = 3,898	Definitely sufficient %	Sufficient in most cases %	Sufficient in some cases %	Insufficient %
Reading	46	33	9	2
Mathematics	35	34	17	4
Writing	33	34	17	5

Those who thought the standards were set at the appropriate levels were more likely to think that their current assessment tools were sufficient to assess reading, but this was not the case for writing or mathematics.

Principals were less confident that their school’s current assessment tools were sufficient to assess the writing standards, with 31 percent saying only in some cases, cf. 16 percent of the teachers responding. Advisers were less likely to say that current assessment tools were sufficient in only some cases or insufficient, but a third of this group did not answer these questions. Forty-two percent of the trustees answered this question, and most of those who did thought their school’s current assessment tools were definitely sufficient.

There were no clear differences related to school type or school decile.

Open-ended questions

Below is a summary of the themes from the open-ended questions.

Comments on the plain language reporting to parents

Seventy-eight percent of sector respondents made a comment here. A range of comments illustrating some of the main themes here is given in Appendix A.

Table 7 Themes in sector comments on plain language reporting to parents

<i>n</i> = 4,557	%
Our existing ways of reporting to parents would be undermined by this standard approach/we already give such information to parents	25
Positive comment on next steps element/involving parents through reports	21
Negative comment on graphs and learning plans	20
Reports need to be parent-friendly in language used (including criticism of language used in examples)	20
Negative effects for students below standard/will not take into account differences between students	18
Positive comment on the graphs and learning plans	14
Reports oversimplify/will mislead parents	10
Additional work/costs	7

Decile 1–2 respondents were more likely to mention negative effects for students (33 percent), and the need for reports to be parent-friendly (28 percent). Decile 9–10 respondents were more likely to mention oversimplification (17 percent).

Respondents from the school sector were more likely to comment that reports need to be parent-friendly in language used (22 percent) than others (12 percent). The themes described in Table 7 are predominantly those of teachers as they are by far the largest group (three-quarters of all respondents). The other groups that gave different comments are:

- Advisers were particularly concerned that existing ways of reporting were sufficient or would be undermined (45 percent).
- Trustees were less likely to comment on additional workload (3 percent), or on next steps/involving parents (8 percent), but they were more likely to make comments about graphs and learning plans (negative comments by 48 percent), the need for parent-friendly language (33 percent) and possible negative effects for students (24 percent).
- Principals were less likely to make negative comments on the graphs and learning plans (14 percent), but more likely to be concerned about additional workload or costs (11 percent).

There were some differences by type of school, some of them relating to the kinds of learning taking place in the school, or even to the length of time the students would be in the school:

- Intermediate school staff were least likely to have made negative comments on the graphs and learning plans (6 percent), and most likely to have made a positive comment on the reports (32 percent) or fear the negative effect on students (33 percent).

- Special school staff were most likely to comment on the need for parent-friendly language (60 percent), or to make negative comments on the reports (60 percent).
- Contributing school staff were the most likely to comment that their existing strategies were enough or would be undermined by the change (29 percent).
- Secondary school staff were the least likely to comment that their existing strategies were enough or would be undermined by the change (3 percent).

Achievement data to be reported to parents, family or whānau

It is hard to know what weight to put on the answers here in relation to information on student achievement, or how they fit with the answers to question 5, which indicate that most schools are using a range of assessment tools (as other data show). You would not necessarily be able to see that from the answers given here. Only 10 percent mentioned literacy and numeracy, the subject of the standards, perhaps because they felt it was clear from the consultation material what was intended to be reported to parents, family and whānau. Eighty-two percent of sector respondents made a comment here. A range of comments illustrating some of the main themes here is given in Appendix A.

Table 8 **Themes in sector comments on types of achievement information that would best inform parents, family or whānau on progress against the standards**

<i>n</i> = 4,557	%
Progress (including in terms of individual goals/within standards)	32
Information other than standardised data (particularly portfolios, exemplars, and to lesser extent students' own assessments of their work)	30
Information on next goals for child, and school support for child	25
Through discussions/interviews/face to face	24
Student achievement levels/whether performing at standard	22
Parent-friendly language, with ideas for how parents can support learning	18
Assessments giving standardised/national data	17
Comparison in relation to age/national curriculum levels/students like them	16
Concerns about negative effects for current practice, student motivation, narrowed curriculum, cost and time	9
Information on skills, attitudes, behaviour, key competencies	9

Decile 1–2 respondents were most likely to mention face-to-face communication (38 percent). There was a distinct gradient across the responses by decile group for many of the themes (Table 9).

Table 9 **Themes in sector comments on types of achievement information that would best inform parents, family or whānau on progress against the standards by decile group**

	Decile 1–2 (<i>n</i> = 697) %	Decile 9–10 (<i>n</i> = 1,216) %	All respondents (<i>n</i> = 4,557) %
Progress (including in terms of individual goals/within standards)	60	26	32
Information other than standardised data (particularly portfolios, exemplars, and to lesser extent students' own assessments of their work)	24	36	30
Student achievement levels/whether performing at standard	14	23	22
Parent-friendly language, with ideas for how parents can support learning	19	13	18
Assessments giving standardised/national data	10	21	17
Comparison in relation to age/national curriculum levels/students like them	23	13	16

Difference in emphasis by type of school are:

- Respondents from special schools were more concerned about showing progress (60 percent), next goals (76 percent), assessments giving standardised/national data (61 percent) and no respondents from a special school made any mention of comparisons of any kind, or the narrowed curriculum/cost/time or skills, attitudes or key competencies.
- Intermediate school respondents made less mention than other schools of progress (21 percent), information other than standardised data (22 percent) or standardised data (5 percent), comparisons (12 percent) and information on skills, attitudes and key competencies (5 percent). They made more mention than respondents from other schools of discussions, interviews and meetings (31 percent), and the need for parent-friendly language (25 percent).
- Composite school respondents made more mention than others of information other than standards (40 percent), and less mention than others of next goals (11 percent) and parent-friendly language (15 percent).
- The respondents from secondary schools are unlikely to form a representative group, but they were less likely to mention reporting if the student was performing at standard (8 percent) or negative effect for current practice/cost/time (1 percent), and more likely to comment about comparisons (20 percent).
- Advisers were most likely to comment on reporting on progress (44 percent), reporting information other than standardised data (39 percent), reporting by discussion or interview (38 percent), reporting comparisons (37 percent) and concerns about negative effects for current practice etc. (20 percent). They were least likely to comment on reporting next goals (15 percent), if the students were performing at standard (11 percent), reporting assessments

using standardised or national data (11 percent) or reporting on skills, attitudes etc. (5 percent).

- Principals were most likely to comment on reporting whether students were performing at standard (33 percent), using parent-friendly language (23 percent), reporting assessment using standardised or national data (26 percent) and giving information on skills, attitudes etc. (14 percent). They were least likely to comment on reporting progress (28 percent) or comparisons (12 percent).
- Trustees were most likely to comment on concerns about negative effects on current practice (19 percent) and giving information on skills, attitudes etc. (14 percent). They were least likely to comment on reporting information other than standardised data (7 percent), reporting using interviews or discussions (18 percent), using parent-friendly language (1 percent) or mention assessments giving standardised data (11 percent).

Achievement data to be reported to the school community

61 percent made comments here.

Table 10 **Themes in sector comments on achievement data to be reported to the school community**

<i>n</i> = 4,557	%
School targets, progress, priorities	26
Sources of sharing information—mainly the BOT, newsletters, school meetings	19
Concerns about school comparisons/misuse of data	5
In clear language/graphs	4

A range of comments illustrating these themes is given in Appendix A.

Decile 1–2 respondents were more likely to mention sources of sharing information, particularly through newsletters, on school noticeboards and at meetings (28 percent).

Intermediate respondents were also more likely to mention school newsletters, noticeboards or website; and those from contributing schools, school meetings. Respondents from special schools were particularly concerned about comparisons/misuse of data (76 percent), but made almost no mention of school targets etc. or using clear language for parents (both 1 percent). Comments around sources of sharing information were most commonly made by respondents from composite schools (28 percent), and least often by those from full primary schools (11 percent). Secondary school respondents made most mention of school targets etc. (36 percent) and using clear language (15 percent).

Advisers made most mention of school target etc. (43 percent) and sources of sharing information (44 percent). Trustees made least mention of school targets etc. (3 percent) and principals made least mention of sources of sharing information (14 percent).

Reporting data to the Ministry of Education

80 percent made comments here. Illustrative comments are included in Appendix A.

Table 11 **Themes in sector comments on the best ways for schools to report achievement data against the standards to the Ministry of Education**

<i>n</i> = 4,557	%
No league tables/need to safeguard misuse of data by media	24
Use school annual report/portfolio/focus on improvements	24
National picture of performance should come from other sources, e.g. NEMP/advisers/ERO	18
Need for all schools to provide consistent and accurate information	15
Use electronic systems	14
Aggregated data (not individual)	12
Comparisons between schools are likely to be unfair (especially if demographics, transience, small cohort size not taken into account)	9
Results should be used to support schools, not blame	5
Additional work/cost	4

Decile 1–2 respondents (24 percent) with decile 3–4 respondents (19 percent) were most concerned that unfair comparisons between schools would be made.

Respondents from different types of school tended to voice slightly different opinions:

- Intermediate respondents were less likely to voice concerns about league tables and the need to safeguard school data from misuse (8 percent), to support the use of school annual reports (9 percent), to be concerned about consistency (8 percent), to mention the use of aggregated data (6 percent) or comment on additional work or cost (3 percent), but were most concerned with the data being used to make unfair comparisons between schools (21 percent). Intermediate respondents were also most likely to say that they were already undertaking the kind of analysis and reporting included in the National Standards. They were also most likely to indicate the need for additional professional development and support. Concern for late developers and students with nonstandard patterns of development was most likely to be voiced by intermediate respondents.
- Respondents from special schools were particularly likely to prefer to use the annual report etc. (76 percent) and to be concerned about unfair comparisons (76 percent), but were least concerned about using aggregated data (1 percent) being able to report electronically (1 percent), or about extra work or cost (no such comments).
- Respondents from full primary schools were most likely to comment that existing data could be used (23 percent) and were most concerned that aggregated data should be used (15 percent).

- Respondents from secondary schools were most likely to comment about not wanting league tables, and the need to prevent misuse of the data by the media (30 percent) to suggest use of the annual report etc. (33 percent), to want use of aggregated data (16 percent) and to foresee extra work or cost (8 percent), but were least concerned about consistency (8 percent).
- Respondents from composite schools were most likely to be concerned about consistency (24 percent) and want to report electronically (27 percent), but least concerned about unfair comparisons (6 percent).

Views that the standards were set too high were more likely to come from intermediate and full primary respondents.

Profiles of responses for those in different roles, which closely reflect the responsibilities associated with the roles, are:

- Advisers were more concerned about consistency (23 percent), electronic reporting (29 percent) and using aggregated data (15 percent), and were least concerned about league tables (8 percent), unfair comparisons (5 percent) and extra work or cost (1 percent).
- Trustees were most concerned about league tables (63 percent), using existing sources of data (47 percent), unfair comparisons (20 percent) and extra work or cost (13 percent). They were least likely to mention using the annual report etc. (1 percent), consistency (1 percent), electronic reporting (no comments) or aggregated data (9 percent).
- Principals were most likely to want to use the annual report (29 percent).

Overall comments

Eighty six percent made comments here. Illustrations of the range of comments—and showing how many covered several themes in their comment — concludes Appendix A.

Table 12 **Themes in sector comments when asked for any further comments in relation to National Standards**

<i>n</i> = 4,557	%
Criticism of the standards described in the consultation	37
Will have negative effects for students (especially not allowing for different trajectories of learning, and demotivation for those who do not reach standard)	23
Scepticism about the value and use of National Standards to improve education (including that it will allow league tables)	23
Will undermine NZC	19
Concern at speed of development and implementation of standards	18
Positive comments about standards	15
Schools will need good support	13
Will result in teaching to assessments/won't increase real student learning	12
Schools are already providing good information	11
Standards will need adaptation for particular student groups: ESOL, special needs, bilingual	11
Negative comments (other than the categories given)	10
Teachers will need more support	9
Need for more resources/support for students not meeting the standard	9
Will increase teacher workload and stress	7
Concerns that consistency between schools is not achievable	6
Concerns that system will enforce conformity/take no account of school differences	6
Should focus on progress rather than meeting standards	6

Decile 1–2 respondents were most concerned about negative effects for students (38 percent, cf. 22 percent of decile 9–10 respondents), to raise concerns about the need for adaptation for particular student groups (20 percent, cf. 7 percent of decile 9–10 respondents), to express concerns around teaching to assessment/not increase real student learning (30 percent, cf. 21 percent of decile 9–10 respondents) and to mention a focus on progress rather than meeting standards (12 percent, cf. 4 percent of decile 9–10 respondents). They were least likely to express a criticism of the standards described in the consultation (23 percent, cf. 38 percent of decile 9–10 respondents), or the speed of implementation (10 percent, cf. 24 percent of decile 9–10 respondents).

There were some differences by type of school:

- Respondents from full primary schools were more likely to be critical of the standards described (42 percent), of the speed of implementation (24 percent), and least likely to be concerned about the effect on NZC (14 percent).

- Respondents from intermediates were more likely to voice concerns about a negative effect on students (32 percent), feel they already give good information (24 percent) and comment that teacher workload and stress are likely to increase (25 percent), but less likely to suggest that schools will need support (2 percent).
- Respondents from composite schools were more likely to comment that schools will need support (20 percent), but less likely to voice concerns about adapting standards for groups (2 percent) or having resources to meet the needs of students not meeting the standards (3 percent).
- Secondary school respondents voiced most concern about undermining NZC (28 percent) and the need for resourcing students failing to meet the standards (16 percent), but were least likely to voice concern about the speed of implementation (7 percent), suggest that they already gave good information (1 percent), feel that standards will need adaptation for groups of students (1 percent), that teacher workload or stress will increase (3 percent), comment on consistency (1 percent) or conformity (2 percent).
- Respondents from special schools had a distinctly different profile from the others. They were most likely to be concerned about the value of standards and the prospect of league tables (77 percent), separate standards for subgroups of students (61 percent) and consistency (16 percent), but least likely to have been critical of the standards described (17 percent), the negative effects for students (17 percent) or the speed of implementation (no comments), or comment that they already gave good information (no comments) or conformity (no comments).

There were some differences related to the different roles of the respondents:

- Advisers were more likely than other respondents to comment about negative effects on students (39 percent), make a positive comment about the standards (37 percent), suggest that schools will need support (29 percent), suggest that student learning will not be increased/there will be teaching to assessment (31 percent), that the system will enforce conformity (11 percent) and that the focus should be on progress (29 percent). They were less likely to comment critically on the standards described (22 percent), league tables (14 percent), the speed of implementation (10 percent), that they already give the information (1 percent), about the need for separate standards for subgroups (8 percent) and teacher workload or stress (3 percent).
- Trustees were more likely to comment about league tables (51 percent), undermining NZC (39 percent), the speed of implementation (51 percent), that good information is already given (24 percent), the need for separate standards for subgroups (34 percent), concerns about enforced consistency (28 percent), but were least likely to comment positively on standards (3 percent) or conformity (1 percent).
- Principals were most likely to comment on an increase in teacher workload or stress (22 percent) and needing resources for students not meeting the standards (16 percent), but least likely to comment on negative effects on students (16 percent), undermining NZC (14

percent), schools needing support (13 percent), teaching to assessment (14 percent), or reporting progress, not standards (2 percent).

5. General submissions

Forty-nine groups or individuals made submissions that did not use the feedback forms. These comprised the staff of 12 schools, five principals, four principals' groups, seven teachers, eight BOTs or individual trustees, two parents, seven advisers/consultants/remedial teachers and four organisations: NZEI, IHC and from either end of the spectrum of views of education, the Maxim Institute and QPEC (Quality Public Education Coalition).⁵ Summaries of these submissions are included in Appendix B. Because comments on the limited nature of the consultation were very common, we have not included these in the summaries of each submission.

Most of the submissions expressed some concerns about the introduction of the standards, and scepticism that they could achieve their purpose was evident. The few who made positive comments accompanied those with concerns that the standards needed to be carefully developed, and if not trialled, then reviewed, and that they not be used to make unfair comparisons between schools. Some wanted practising teachers to be involved in the finalisation of the standards.

The Maxim Institute was most positive that the National Standards would improve teaching and learning, but concerned that they needed to be consistent, recommending a mandatory assessment to ensure this. Like others, it supported value-added analysis as a way to provide fairer comparisons.

Quite a few mentioned the need for support for schools to make the most of the standards, and for support with communication with parents and the media around the meaning of standards. Some suggested that if the issue was teachers and schools making better use of assessment to improve student learning, a better use of money might be to target those schools identified by ERO as struggling with this, or to provide professional development.

Concern that the National Standards would undermine *NZC* was the most prominent theme. Some mentioned the nature of *NZC*; some the flexibility it gave to meet individual needs; some the flexibility to respond to community needs; some the importance of not reducing the curriculum to literacy and numeracy; or “teaching to the standard, not the need”. A professional developer with experience of the English standards approach expressed concern that New Zealand teachers' ability to assess individuals' current achievement level, plan their next steps and teach so they progress would be lost in a system based on age-expected outcomes. This concern that National Standards not mean standardisation of teaching—or in some cases, reporting—came through many of these submissions.

⁵ The NZCER submission was not analysed for this report.

Others mentioned the difficulty of continuing work on *NZC* introduction at the same time as needing to get to grips with the National Standards.

Around a third of these submissions were concerned with league tables, unfair comparisons of schools and the negative effects this could have, especially on low-decile schools, students and communities. There was a concern to avoid the negative effects for students of early labelling as below standard. Issues were also raised about how the National Standards could, or should, accommodate English language learners, students with special needs and home-schooled students.

Appendix A: Illustrative comments from the sector

Plain language reporting to parents

We like the clarity of the reports. The suggestions for things parents can work on at home are useful—many parents ask for these already. Otherwise it will be a lot of work that is duplicated at every school.

I like the sample of child's progress but not so keen on sample learning plan. The little people holding hands is TERRIBLE. How would you like to be the lowest?

It looks great as a range of ideas. I really like the visual displays. I prefer the plunket graphs, particularly the Sample 2 over time: it demonstrates progress not just achievement; and because I know most parents know how to read them. In terms of taking up least room on a report so that we have room for professional commentary re progress rates, effort and key competencies along with PE and topic areas the Sample 1 snapshot is most effective. Sample 2 snapshot is a very clear graphic but it worries me how even young children will interpret this one and the effect it may have on the developing belief in themselves as learners. Some children need more time to 'learn how to learn' and I have had many in my classes zoom ahead at 6½—8. I hate to think of how seeing themselves a 'well below standard' at one year and two years after starting school would have affected their motivation and belief in their capacity to learn.

I feel that most of what you are proposing is already being carried out in a much better way at our school. We have worked really hard at improving our communication with parents and students about their learning and achievement and you are proposing to throw all of that away and replace it with what I consider to be quite insulting forms of reporting, particularly in the form of the cut out figures. If that was presented to me as a parent (and I am one) I would feel that the teacher/school thought I was a complete idiot. These proposals for reporting are seriously lacking detail. I think parents want to know more than just where their child sits in comparison with other students (although it is helpful to know this). This is 'old school' stuff. I had a grandmother (who is the parent) in for 3 way conferences recently and all she cared about was how her granddaughter compared with the rest of the class without any consideration for how well she was doing and had already made the assumption that she was below average and this was very negatively impacting on the self-esteem of the student. The way you want me to report would feed the grandmother's need totally and crush the child in the process.

Accurate and informative plain language reporting is the ultimate goal (obligation) from this process. Sample 1 graph over time is excellent. Sample 2 is more ambiguous. Sample 1 snapshot is OK—just need a line at the level of achievement rather than a name. Sample 2 snapshot is 'twee' and smacks of reporting to the unintelligent—how can the standards be raised if you think that parents can only understand happy pictures? Sample learning plan goals have some merits for teachers, kids and parents because they can be very specific.

Sample reporting on maths for Manu is fraught with fishhooks. It seems to suggest that each part of each standard will be ‘measured’, ‘assessed’ or have ‘evidence’ separately and that is not how the maths standards are intended—they are intended to be more connected than that. If parents get the same ‘Plunket baby graph model’ sample one over consecutive years then no writing is needed about ‘he is still well below the National Standard’. Some specific next steps is great.

Representing achievements on a graph, in relation to other students, is not going to contribute to a student’s individual learning successes. It is unrealistic to make a judgement based on a single test. There are a number of criteria to take into account. Some of the assurances given to parents are unrealistic and vague.

The reading, writing and maths graphs are difficult to interpret (parents have always found these shaded types confusing) and do not allow for information on particular strands within the curriculum areas (our parents like this information.) On our reports we have Areas of Achievement and Areas for Further Development in language that parents and students can both understand. The students then use this information to inform their future learning goals. The learning plan discussions should be much earlier in the year when there is sufficient time for the teacher, parents and students to work together on these goals.

I favour oral reporting to parents. Regular oral contact between home and school should result in parents being well informed so that any written reports do not provide unwelcome surprises. Any written reports to parents should be written in language meaningful to parents and void of all graphs. Graphs are a simplification and distortion of the complexities of assessment of teaching and learning. Reports to parents should include next step learning, particularly how the school and home can work together to achieve this. Schools will need to be careful to promise support only for that which they have the expertise and finance to deliver. An aside: Parents who attend Home School Partnership meetings learn about the curriculum and are in a favourable position to interpret and discuss their child’s learning. HSP meetings therefore should be promoted by schools.

The examples are clear. I like the box that says ‘what you can do at home’. However, we already report to our parents in much this way and still have many parents who don’t read the data and info and are surprised when told at an interview that their child is falling behind.

What is meant by ‘plain language reporting?’ I am concerned about what this could mean for different schools. Plain language in my school, may mean some thing completely different in another school.

Reporting to parents

Clear simple information that makes sense and tells parents what they can do to assist their child to reach expected levels. No teacher jargon. Norm referenced showing how their children are doing compared to national expectations. How much ‘value’ has been added. Where the child is ‘at’ compared to where they need to be.

Currently, for teachers and parents information, we collect data using AsTTle, STAR, PROBE, PM Benchmark running record tests, 6 yr Reading Surveys, Numpa diagnostic data, numeracy achievement maps/rubrics, reading/writing progress indicators and basic

facts acquisition accumulative data. At parent/child/teacher interviews all the data gathered is available for all stakeholders to discuss and use to inform next learning/teaching steps and what can be done at home to support that learning. All this information gives a clear picture of a student's achievements and progress and our parents feel that they are well informed. Once the comparison draft being developed by the MOE is completed, we feel that we will easily see where our data sits with the standards.

I believe achievement information should be related to the curriculum objectives. This information should result from teachers' formative assessment practices, interviews with students and where appropriate, written tests. Student progress should be tracked throughout the year and progress reported as the teacher/school thinks appropriate to meet the students' learning needs. Assessment and teaching and learning go 'hand in hand'. I see no place for annual reporting against national standards.

Whether students are below, at or above the national standards. This is preferable to reporting against curriculum levels as parents don't always understand these. Reporting needs to explain what the standard is and also specify what the child can do.

I believe there are far more effective and meaningful ways of reporting to this group about children's progress. Our school has worked hard over several years to develop portfolios and train our pupils to run Student-Led Conferences. Our families, students and staff all find these valuable.

Specific detail about steps in learning rather than a broad standard — examples need to be shown. Individual goals and individual situations influence students' learning and there must be room for dialogue rather than a standard level.

National standards need to be broadly rather than narrowly stated, and include a balanced and interrelated set of abilities and dispositions, including those that are not amenable to measurement by formal tests. National standards should be relative to the individual student's learning, and can be used to show the progress they are making. Achievement of standards should be decided from multiple sources of evidence including teachers' day to day observations and professional judgements. National standards must not undermine a well rounded schooling as prescribed by *The New Zealand Curriculum*. National standards and reporting procedures must be aligned with the New Zealand system of school self-management. This can be achieved by the classroom teacher, parents and children 'keeping in touch' informally throughout the year and by meeting at times prescribed by the school. Three way conferencing where the child does much of the explaining informs parents of their child's learning, in language and a medium that all parties understand. For example, the child may choose to demonstrate their IT skills and present their learning in PowerPoint format.

We have created (borrowed from other excellently functioning schools in our area) learning pathways that are in both child and adult speak. They show clearly, on a continuum, what they have achieved, what they are working on and where they are heading to. The students have responded to these really positively. They are the main part of our student profiles and the students can have input into updating them. We have them for numeracy, maths strands, reading, writing, oral language, visual language and inquiry learning. With all these progressions clearly laid out teachers, students and parents can track where we've been and where we are heading. They have been a breath of fresh air for me personally and all I can

see is that you are going to wipe all this good work away and replace it with something that just compares all the time. We use e-asTTle which does give comparisons and shows where they sit nationally and that is enough of a signpost for teachers and parents (as well as the students themselves).

Ongoing information over the WHOLE of the curriculum. This is reported regularly to parents and families. We are looking at the whole child over many areas not just ‘snapshots’ which are not always true indicators of their abilities or needs. We currently take regular running records and compare this with their group reading skills, their independent work, their reading logs, their results from nationally recognised tests such as PAT and STAR and their attitudes. This is called triangulating data and is a recognised and reliable way to gather data. Not these one-off things! This sort of process is also used for numeracy and writing.

As learning is not linear and students progress at different rates any comparative reporting is meaningless and potentially damaging. Reporting progress from their entry point, or their last report, referenced to the standards would make it more individualised and meaningful. As literacy and numeracy are only part of what is mandated to teach, reporting progress against exemplars in other subjects, about key competency and values demonstrated and participation in wider curriculum is as important.

Our parents want valid information with evidence. They have stated that the most useful reporting we do is in the format of an interview—involving students too. They have also stated that they want information that shows where their child is in relation to others so the use of norm referenced tools is helpful and used. They are very aware of assessment information not being valid after a short time as students move on etc. so don’t value information that is not up to date.

Sounds good in theory BUT what about the decile 1 schools like I work in where you never see the parents and the children’s learning suffers so much because their families DO NOT value education and the attendance of these children is totally below acceptable standards. The children are quite bright but have no consistent attendance at school to develop their abilities and you cannot get the parents in to talk about it and even if you do they take no notice and the cycle just continues, the standards mean nothing to them.

Reporting to the school community

The community want reassurance that the school is performing as well or better than other schools in the region and nationally. This will need to be fair in that all schools measure the same things, in the same way, with all students (or an understanding and clear statements about students who are left out of the data). Reporting on things such as writing or reading levels based on running record data is fraught with problems in that unless there is a shared understanding of what the assessment means across the whole sector there is a danger of these measures being very subjective.

I believe we can continue to agglomerate achievement at age or year levels against the national standards quite easily. Currently we do so based on AsTTle norms, Star stanines, NEMP tasks etc. more thoroughly to the Board of Trustees, in summary in our school newsletters, one learning area or competency at a time. I believe strongly that allowing the media to publish ‘league tables’ of this data would be detrimental to developing quality

schooling. I believe the MOE can request sufficient data to work out where support needs to go in to raise children's achievement across the board. Competition and 'telling schools that they're not doing well enough' as ERO often does now is not useful in inspiring and coaching teachers and leaders to improve the quality of learning opportunities and reporting. Where teachers see they really can improve learning opportunities, and how they can do this, 99 percent will. Leaders (and middle level management who often end up responsible for teacher appraisals) also need really specific support in how to deal with teachers who won't change their game.

This is problematic. On one hand the school community should be able to understand where their school sits compared to the standards for each year group. In small schools this could create privacy issues if for example there was only one Year 4 child in the school. More importantly if there is a consistency of reporting to school communities then the opportunity exists for the media to pick this up and compare schools. International experience tells us to avoid this at all costs. The trick will be to provide communities with robust information about the performance of their students in such a way it can't be compared to the school next door.

The board has already decided what priorities the school should have in terms of learning and they should under Tomorrow Schools be deciding. What happens to their needs as a community? I thought schools were self managing.

We already report to our parents, mostly by way of the BOT about our achievement levels. Once again, the area of need is finding and implementing programmes that support identified student learning. Currently we ferret about looking for programmes, then creatively find the money to pay for them and employ teacher aides to work with the identified students. Is this the best way to lift achievement?

Reporting to the Ministry of Education

Specific numerical data, i.e. pass marks, would not be appropriate to send as these would have the potential to get 'out' and be used to form comparisons between schools and would not show how much progress students have made even if not making the standard. Neither would the professional knowledge and judgement that is a vital part of a teacher's 'arsenal', be evident in stark test results as reporting is not simply a technical matter. Therefore, the information that the MOE should receive could be in trends/patterns form, so that areas needing attention or celebration would be evident and used for resourcing and target initiatives.

The analysis of variance that we currently supply but in the areas of literacy and numeracy.

This will be difficult if schools are given the autonomy to decide which assessment tools they can use. There will be too much variety to make comparisons. Similarly, schools may find their hands tied if MOE's choice of mandatory assessment tools does not give them the information/data they require to inform teaching and learning decisions and to make adequate measurement of progress. Many of the assessment tools referred to are wide screening tools that do not give enough diagnostic information about why students are not progressing in reading and writing. More work needs to be put into assessment tool reviews by MOE based on latest evidence-based research rather than endorsing products in which

they have already invested large amounts of money. MOE will need to produce some kind of template that asks for specific measurements and then schools can decide which assessment tools give them this specific information.

Maybe one of the school goals included in the planning and reporting requirement should relate to findings from assessment against the standards. Or—set goals for each area and report using an analysis of variance approach (this would give a more comprehensive coverage and would provide schools with the opportunity to contextualise the results).

Schools could produce a summary for the Ministry outlining their strengths and areas for development at each level and across the school with supporting assessment information and how they plan to meet identified needs, e.g. 85% of our Year 1 students are above expectations in Reading. 20% of our Year 1 students are below expectations in Maths. We are addressing this by...

Reporting needs to be discreet and the information the Ministry receives needs to be handled in such a manner that does not allow local schools to be misrepresented. Multicultural schools will clearly be at a disadvantage. Information will easily be able to be misinterpreted and schools that are in real terms achieving may be misrepresented.

From the material I've reviewed and the information presented at the sector consultation meeting, it is clear to me that there is no focus at all on the provision of support to students identified as not achieving, so I am surprised to see the targeting of resources mentioned here. If the goal really is 'achievement for every student' and not comparing and contrasting schools, then I question the need for reporting to the Ministry—this opens the door to 'league tables' and provides no value to the school.

This could be reported in place of the current Analysis of Variance or alongside it. It could be collected by ERO in the review cycle. The danger for schools is what the Ministry of Education chooses to do with it. If you develop trust, then you are likely to get better data and we will have a stronger education system. If schools are untrusting the data will be less useful and the focus in schools will be narrowed.

Simple formats needed that can be easily compiled on SMS. Examples needed for consistency across schools. Could form part of schools' annual reporting—currently we report in May. A number of assessments such as PATs are administered in term 1—not end of year. Manageability needs to be taken into account. Will all aspects in each year group's standards in writing, reading, mathematics need to be gathered and reported on annually or could it be managed over a cycle? E.g. gathering end of year data on all year groups at one time will be an issue. Currently we stagger assessment testing and data analysis across the year to fit in with when some strands are taught over the year—e.g. measurement. School wide reading data in June, writing October etc. This works for manageability and allows us year to year school comparison of a cohort's progress but does not provide all 'end of a year' data that the standards refer to. Schools will have to review their assessment cycle for the year. It is important national standards don't become a huge time component in the teaching year.

I still have reservations and am sceptical about reporting student achievement against the standards to the Ministry, despite assurances it will only be used to support learning and not used as an accountability tool that compares schools. While the Ministry may not produce

league tables the fact aggregated information is centralised in one place makes it easy for others to do so. I believe the Ministry should be looking at other ways of collecting information to inform policy and resource provision. National Standards are, then, more likely to be genuinely perceived by the education sector as a tool whose primary purpose is to 'show how teachers need to support students so they can move forward toward the standard if they're not meeting it, and how teachers can challenge and extend children who are achieving the standard' (Anne Tolley, 2009) rather than an accountability tool that will be used to compare the performance of schools. While I appreciate that Reading, Writing and Mathematics provide a foundation to the curriculum I would also suggest that information associated with National Standards only gives a very narrow picture of issues associated with NZ education and would only inform a very narrow set of policies and resource provision. In particular I question the fact that oral language does not form part of the National Standards and suggest information on levels of student engagement are just as important as reading, writing and mathematics.

This should be reported to the Board of Trustees and then the school use the data to determine targets for improvements. ERO should then check that the process around this data is robust. Unless the Minister is prepared to put through a law change to protect the data from league tabling by the media, then schools may obfuscate data when reporting.

Assessing against the standards has a high degree of subjectivity. There would be a concern about a lack of consistency of practice across schools. This brings the reliability and validity of national results into question. External moderation would be needed to produce valid data. Aggregation of data from norm referenced tests such as PAT would produce more valid results, however we are opposed to such results being published in the public domain. There is a concern that school results being published will lead to a competitive environment, whereby schools become more focused on doing well on the league table, rather than teaching to the needs of their students. It may lead to teachers 'teaching to the test' and schools 'cheating'. Standardised assessments are better used in schools to improve the learning of their particular students.

I think a standardised report would be good, but I would also like to see an area that reports about the progression that has been made, not just the achievement levels. There needs to be a separate area for students that have Special Needs, ESOL and transient students as well. Is this information confidential and used to improve learning and guide resource requirements and Professional Development to the individual schools, or will it be used to judge against other schools? I definitely do not want this to lead to teacher salary payment structures.

Any other comments

I really like them. It makes the teaching focused and it is a good idea to have some clear guidance and indication of what is expected of students at different ages.

It is very difficult, even with the support of AtoL to get consistency within a school. How will there be consistency across schools'. This is a much bigger issue to address.

The idea of national standards is good. The simple reporting to parents is also good. The problem will be when the media gets hold of the information and ranks schools, which they will! This will create winner and loser schools and has the potential to destroy our education

system as we know it. The Ministry must support national standards by supplying schools with the ICT tools (like Enrol) to make reporting to parents and the Ministry easy. Teachers need to be left to teach the children and the reporting should be kept as manageable as possible.

Mostly the indications are that the standards are in line with what we are already doing. My greatest concerns relate to the possibility of schools like mine—smaller lower decile, being further disadvantaged by unfair comparisons of data. Many of our students start very slowly. Many of them have very little, if any, pre-school experience. Hence the standards for reading, writing and maths for Year 1 and Year 4 in the draft are set too high for them. Our student achievement would look quite poor alongside those. However by the end of Year 8, the students at our school are performing very well, especially for writing and reading. Our Māori student achievement compares very well against national figures at Year 8, also. We have other factors impacting on our younger students as well. We have students that transfer from Kura Kaupapa with no English instruction having occurred, which also impacts hugely, and disproportionately on our data at lower levels. Hence I have real concerns about those levels and the concept of students seeing themselves as failing. Another reason I felt the reading levels are too high, is that the Year 4 draft material readability is for 8.5–10 years, whereas the chronological age of students at the end of Year 4 is only 8.5–9.5 years to start with. This is an error that needs to be addressed. That text would not be used until Year 5 (Camping down the Line). Some questions... Is it possible to make better links between current NZ texts on teaching practice, such as the Effective Literacy handbooks, Literacy progressions etc.)? These seem to be lacking. Having some sort of cross-referenced system between standards and these would not only seem helpful, but also logical, as these are the current good tools we use to help enhance teaching and learning practices. Also some sort of professional development would be needed to support the correct and appropriate implementation of these standards, otherwise it will be too difficult for schools to manage effectively, and consistently.

Create National Standards for all learning areas. By focusing on reading, writing and numeracy, we risk continuing to marginalise those students whose talent lies in other curriculum areas—such as the arts or PE. We just aren't growing scientists any more and we certainly need to be developing technology. We will broaden the number of young people succeeding at school if we as a nation broaden our view of success at school! Develop a bank of rich assessment tasks for each year level in maths. Continue to develop exemplars of high quality for writing (better than AsTTle ones). Please continue to develop a community of trust and professionalism in education. Do not publically publish and compare schools—those that wish to partake in such things can already do so through reading through ERO reports and at least they tell more of the story. To just publish results would be detrimental to education in NZ because it would lead to teaching to the test, blame, fear, and a very narrow curriculum focus. To develop the kind of young citizens that will thrive in the world requires a broader focus of what intelligence and success really is.

Very concerned that this could work against good teaching and learning practice such as effective pedagogy, elearning, children's learning styles, supportive learning environments, use of inquiry learning, enhancing the relevance of new learning. Teacher will teach to tests. The implementation of National Standards will not be adequately funded to enable PD for

teachers to raise teaching effectiveness if required. National Standard implementation did not effectively raise standards in the UK and was detrimental to good teaching practices.

These standards should be a guide only for what the students should know, not what they HAVE to know. We want to avoid teaching to the standard as opposed to teaching to their learning needs. We would not like to think that there will be public comparisons of school achievement in the media (no League Tables). We hope that the information will be used to target resources to schools that need it to support their students' learning.

I find the language used is not particularly helpful. In recent times we have adopted 'above expected level', 'within expected level', 'within expected level, but cause for concern' and 'at risk'. We are now using 'well below standard'. How long are we going to keep a student present, participating and engaged when we use 'well below standard' continually?

I am concerned that: a) schools are going to begin to teach to the test; b) schools will be accountable for lower standards; c) teachers will be pressured to achieve above the standard so they cannot be in trouble OR get less funding OR ...; d) all teaching in class will be to the standard test rather than allowing rich learning and skills. MANY MANY parents are going to be outraged that their children are below standard. Primary schools, in my opinion, have been too PC and parents are only truly told their children are battling at college when it is too late.

I am a principal of a school in which we have been working diligently for the past 3 years to develop a school-based curriculum. We have been aiming to implement this in 2010. I am very unimpressed that the Ministry has put this significant new piece of compliance onto schools at the same time as we are expected to implement the new curriculum. We have not been given enough time for consultation and, even if we are provided with PD workshops in the coming months we will now have to focus on these and put aside other PD or curriculum development work that was planned during this time. It is easy to say that these National Standards complement the new curriculum, but developing an understanding, not only of the standards, but how they will fit into our systems of assessment and reporting is an add-on to the workload we are already immersed in. What is more, it seems that this is being driven by politicians, not educators, by government policy, not for genuine educational purposes. I am not opposed to National Standards philosophically, but mainly upset by the timeframe.

The National Standards have adopted a 'one size fits all' approach. This does not reflect the diagram on p. 45 of the *New Zealand Curriculum* document which shows how curriculum levels typically relate to years at school. This diagram acknowledges that students achieve at different rates and some attaining mastery of a curriculum level before the expected year level, while others do not attain mastery until after the expected year level. National Standards implementation will narrow our curriculum learning experience for children. Human nature is such that we tend to focus on the areas where we are judged. Schools are no different to this in that we will focus on our literacy and numeracy results as these will be in the public arena and judgements will be made accordingly. This will be to the detriment of the child in that other learning areas, key competencies and related values will receive less emphasis by schools. Public perception of a school will be swayed by these results thus influencing school reputation, public expectation and the school roll which in turn is linked closely to school staffing. The new curriculum is about rich learning experiences and educating the whole child. We stand to lose all of this. From 2010, parents will receive

regular reports showing their child's progress against National Standards. Where does the *New Zealand Curriculum* fit into these National Standards? Do the National Standards replace reporting of progress against the *NZC*?

We are concerned about: -the use of assessment data in national league tables and the effect that this may have on low decile schools; -for the first 2 to 3 years most of our students will not be successful against Nat.St.; -some students will not attain achievement against standards for their whole school life—where's the joy in that? -increase in teacher and student time required for assessment and teacher time for analysis of data; -pressure and competition within and between schools to attain good results and—the need for moderation within schools concerning analysis of data; -the increased emphasis in assessment in primary schools detracts from the strength within the sector for creativity and response to incidental learning opportunities and; -the speed in which the National Standards are being implemented along with a new *NZC*. If teachers are to manage the Standards well and educate community there will need to be more time for implementation.

Excellent idea for reporting to parents and Boards, with a good progression through the levels which you can then use the exemplars for other levels. It needs to be made clear to teachers that this is not extra work, it should be consolidating what we already do with our assessment information from Star, PAT, PM and Probe etc. Does there need to be a set type of assessment we all do when measuring a national standard? Because all teachers assess and understand assessment in their own way, is this fair? Also Ministry should not be making any adjustments to teacher pay based on the achievement of their students. We must keep in mind that there are many children with learning difficulties and/or unsupportive home environments especially in certain areas of New Zealand which contribute to achievement levels. For the Ministry to target resources effectively, it is imperative this is taken into consideration.

In my travels as RT Lit, I see and hear schools in a panic re: comparative element of it, and wonder re the true picture they will give. Rather than seeing this as a way to be accountable for moving students on, they see it as a way people will judge their school. I think the 'rate of progress' is an area some are forgetting, they just say 'can't possibly get our kids there, they started way down here' ... but I am thinking that MOE is aware all students aren't equal, but 'progress' needs to be seen to be happening, otherwise change what you do. The Year 3 or 4 students still at emergent (pink) level is NOT good enough—after all that time at school. There is obviously a need to come and do something different for that child, and as professionals I think we have to take on that responsibility and not keep doing 'the same old same old' if it not working for that individual. People are also thinking they have to now carry out all the tests suggested I do not see that is the message being given! Maybe clarifying that would be good. On the other hand, giving some suggestions to those schools that are obviously stuck in a bog of assessment may need to see things a little more clearly, with clarity and some guidance may be a good thing. E.g. one school I work in hasn't started reading programmes as they are still assessing and analysing—6 months into the year—ridiculous—they need some guidance in terms of cutting back on assessment and seeing what assessment is for! Decile 10 school by the way! What a waste of time.

A giant step backwards, we have gone well beyond this. The essence of the revised *New Zealand Curriculum* is the development of confident, creative, lifelong learners. As a forward thinking, reflective school, which constantly reviews and implements best practice

for our learners we are appalled that a so called enlightened society could be considering standards which demean our young people and do not honour the dignity of each child's individual learning path. These standards go against the whole philosophy of self managing schools that can design the curriculum to meet the needs of their community. This model is a one size fits all model. Eric Jensen, world renowned neuroscientist says 'Brains have individual timetables of development and so it is normal for any group of age-categorised children to have a developmental variance of at least 3 years.' 'We urge you to reconsider the standards and the implications that these will have for New Zealand society. We suggest the funding be redirected to finding out why the identified children are not reaching their potential. This educational issue is impacted upon by societal situations e.g. poverty. We are a decile 10, high achieving school, with high expectations of our children, but would never consider labelling a child as 'well below' standard, it broaches the ethos of our values system. Refer to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The whole process has been rushed, without consulting those at the chalk face. We do not believe that this feedback form is consultation. It is not a possibility to implement ANY National Standards in 2010, currently schools do not have the time and resources to implement this.

Appendix B: Summary of General submissions

In these summaries, we have used NS to refer to National Standards, and NZC to refer to the *New Zealand Curriculum*. School and individual names are not used in the summary.

Schools—whole staff

Source	Main themes
Intermediate	<p>Better to have value-added approach, within strategic planning context.</p> <p>School comparisons unfair otherwise and particularly related to English language learners, students with special needs (learning & behaviour), those without ECE.</p> <p>Difficulty attracting staff to schools at bottom of any league tables.</p> <p>NS data best used through national sampling approach.</p> <p>Principles of NZC (focus on individual learner needs, community needs) at odds with principle of uniform NS.</p>
Primary School	<p>Standards should use existing learning progressions (literacy, ELLP).</p> <p>Value-added approach is fairer (students enter school at different levels).</p> <p>League tables have negative effects on schools and their communities, with no gain for educational standards.</p> <p>Better use of money spent on NS would be to target schools struggling with assessment and existing student data below “expected standards”.</p>
Primary school	<p>Will undermine NZ approach, NZC, authentic learning.</p> <p>Teachers in school from countries with standards say they do not work, and lead to student stress and poorer teacher–student relationships.</p>
Primary school	<p>No evidence that practising teachers included in development of standards—should be.</p> <p>Standards should be developed carefully, through trial and review, with assessment tools to be used identified, and include Years 9 and 10 to provide a “complete package”.</p> <p>An action plan for properly funded support for schools to implement NS, including professional development.</p> <p>Will undermine NZ approach, New Zealand Curriculum.</p> <p>Should be based on value-added, report on progress; otherwise negative impact on those who do make progress but do not meet standards.</p> <p>If schools are expected to have their students meet standards, then students should be at a minimum level before they are allowed to start school—a “level playing field”.</p> <p>Need to be clear whether <i>all</i> students are included in school reporting.</p> <p>What happens for home-schooled students?</p> <p>Planning and reporting—too much work to cover both NS targets and school-specific achievement targets—schools need more support, esp teaching principals .</p>

Source	Main themes
Intermediate	<p>Evidence from overseas shows negative impacts on effective teaching practice from NS.</p> <p>Standards have not been developed with sufficient evidence base, and should be developed through a proper pilot.</p> <p>Standards are aspirational, and do not match NZC expectations.</p> <p>Should use value-added approach.</p> <p>Will lead to league tables.</p>
Primary school (senior leadership team)	<p>Will lead to league tables—these have been detrimental overseas.</p> <p>Should use ELLP for English Language students—need professional development for all schools to use.</p> <p>Prefer value-added approaches (avoids negative effects for students not reaching the standard).</p> <p>Conflict between principles of NS and NZC.</p>
Primary school	Strongly oppose NS.
Primary school	<p>Conflict between NS and NZC.</p> <p>NS would undermine creativity and students' active learning, will lead to teaching to the test, uniformity of approach rather than meeting individual and community needs, and not improve achievement.</p> <p>ERO already collect data on student achievement.</p> <p>NS would undermine collegiality and sharing of ideas and resources.</p>
Primary school	<p>League tables have had negative effects overseas (e.g., student anxiety, narrowed curriculum, less enjoyment in teaching).</p> <p>Staff willing to include NS when refined in its reporting etc., but fear that NS assessment tools will be privileged, and that this will undermine NZC.</p> <p>Claims for NS are overstated; schools already know which students need additional support but cannot provide it for all these students.</p> <p>Children's entrance levels and patterns of progress in Years 1–8 are not uniform.</p> <p>Our current reporting is already in understandable but not watered down language, covers both progress and cohort comparisons, wider than literacy and numeracy and includes students.</p>
Primary school	<p>League tables will result in teaching to the test, undermining NZC, formative assessment, rich curriculum providing different routes for children's learning: "Schools need to focus on teaching to need, not to a test".</p> <p>NS examples imply more 1–1 assessment, with resource implications.</p> <p>Children start school at different levels, so progressions are not standard.</p>
Primary school	<p>Conflict between NS and NZC.</p> <p>Focus on value-added, rather than whether children "fit the box". Danger that teachers will focus on "the middle ground" rather than individual needs.</p> <p>Negative effects if children are judged as failing at the end of Year 1, and later.</p> <p>Will eventually lead to mandated tests; "winner and loser" schools.</p> <p>Overseas experience is negative.</p> <p>More likely to improve student achievement through quality teacher training and professional development on assessment than NS.</p> <p>Use ERO reviews to identify schools "failing their children" and allocate resources for</p>

Source	Main themes
	teacher & programme development and support.
Primary school	<p>Conflict between NS and NZC.</p> <p>Children start school at different levels, so NS will label some as failures from early on, creating stress for children and parents, encouraging children to give up early on.</p> <p>Makes a mockery of differentiated instruction (meeting individual needs).</p> <p>Use NS funding to assist schools whose existing assessment data seen by ERO identify them as being in need.</p> <p>Overseas experience is negative—does not improve learning.</p>

Principals (and some teachers)

Source	Main themes
Primary school	<p>Negative effects if children are judged as failing at the end of Year 1.</p> <p>Will undermine current differentiation—individualised programmes and learning goals.</p> <p>Schools do not have reliable assessment practices and reporting tools—difficulty getting consistency will lead to a national test.</p> <p>League tables overseas have negative impacts on schools and learning.</p> <p>NS will have negative effect for low-decile schools.</p> <p>Schools will need additional support and resourcing to implement .</p> <p>Schools have developed good systems for reporting to parents, and parent reporting should not be prescribed .</p>
Primary school	<p>Conflict between NS & NZC; fear that NS will win at expense of NZC.</p> <p>Most schools already using standardised tests to report comparative achievement to parents and identify individual student need—NS will not add to this.</p> <p>Better to use ERO to improve schools that do not have good assessment practice.</p> <p>NS have negative effects overseas.</p>
Primary school	<p>Target the schools/students in need.</p> <p>NS undermines school responsibility to assess student need, respond to it, set targets.</p> <p>NS will not improve student learning.</p> <p>NS should be a set of principles requiring every school to report against their own standards, and monitored by ERO.</p>
Primary school	<p>NS likely to occur at expense of NZC.</p> <p>Positive about concept of standards; but targets should be realistic and achievable by all—notes allowance made for students with special needs and English language learners, wonders if this means different standards for these groups—and therefore is it necessary to have “national” standards.</p> <p>NS on their own cannot provide teachers with pedagogical guidance.</p> <p>Need for substantial professional development if NS to support learning. Need for more models, e.g. TLRI. Need for ongoing support if NS to really change teaching and learning.</p> <p>NS are not necessary for teachers to use assessment to improve student learning.</p> <p>Will lead to league tables.</p>
Primary school	<p>Conflict between principles of NS and NZC—schools will need professional development and a moderation process.</p> <p>Concerns about morality where students not achieving the standards see themselves as failures.</p> <p>Unfair comparisons between schools and students.</p> <p>Need protection of data collected by Ministry of Education.</p>

Source	Main themes
<i>Teachers</i>	
Primary school	<p>Positive view of NS, but need to be supported with professional development.</p> <p>Students with special needs should be exempt.</p> <p>Standards language should be clear to students.</p> <p>No league tables.</p>
Primary school	<p>ERO already identifies failing schools; schools know which students are struggling; better to use funds to target these schools for support.</p> <p>Effective professional development will raise achievement levels, not NS.</p> <p>Need to also address social issues, e.g. poverty.</p> <p>Need to directly involve successful current teachers in the establishment of NS.</p>
Primary school	<p>Will narrow the curriculum.</p> <p>Standards are too aspirational.</p> <p>Need professional development, including for BOTs and parents.</p> <p>League tables.</p>
Primary school	<p>Need more support and time to develop school-based NZC before can focus on NS.</p>
Teacher	<p>NS too narrow.</p> <p>Should not judge teachers by their students' performance on NS.</p> <p>Will add to already heavy teacher workload.</p> <p>League tables; parents and media need education on how to interpret NS data.</p>
Teacher	<p>Overseas experience of NS negative, divisive, adds to admin load at cost of teaching.</p> <p>Reporting and communication with parents already good.</p> <p>Negative impact on student motivation and parents for those who do not reach the standard.</p>
Teacher	<p>Concern that schools will be judged on NS performance—does not take into account differences between schools, e.g. decile, ECE experience.</p>
(also commented as parent)	<p>NS will need support, including Ministry of Education communication to community.</p> <p>NS will help teachers in small schools with moderating their judgements.</p>

Principals' associations

Source	Main themes
Auckland Primary Principals' Association	<p>Insufficient involvement of current teachers in development of standards and insufficient time for them to provide feedback on initial information.</p> <p>Unrealistic to implement NZC, NS and new reporting to parents in 2010.</p> <p>Development of NS from NCEA Level 2 implies uniform developmental path.</p> <p>Conflict with NZC, differentiated and scaffolded learning, co-construction of curriculum with community.</p> <p>Labelling students and schools does not improve educational achievement.</p> <p>Underachievement is also related to poverty.</p> <p>League tables harm schools and students, particularly in low-income areas. Likely to exacerbate existing difficulty of low-decile schools attracting and retaining high-quality teachers.</p> <p>ERO reports provide information to parents and the community.</p> <p>ERO reports and current school annual reports also identify schools in need of additional Ministry of Education support—better for the MOE to work proactively with these schools; other schools do not need NS in order to use assessment data to improve student learning.</p> <p>National sampling is preferable to every school reporting its NS data.</p> <p>Value-added approach is preferable, to support formative use of assessment in strategic planning context.</p> <p>Students with special needs and English language learners already need more support than is funded.</p>
Waitomo Principals Cluster	<p>Could narrow curriculum to numeracy and literacy.</p> <p>Could result in teaching to test, not to student needs.</p> <p>Queries re appropriateness of NS for English language learners and students with special needs; re including transient and truant students.</p> <p>New teachers need to be ready to use the assessments.</p> <p>Positive about value of “standardising expectations” within and across schools, but not labelling children.</p> <p>Students arrive at schools at different levels, so cannot all reach same standard after one year at school.</p> <p>Fear parents will blame teachers if child does not reach standard, regardless of progress made.</p> <p>NS not necessary to have high achievement levels, e.g. Finland.</p> <p>League tables not helpful; could damage low-decile schools. Schools will make changes through “supportive attitudes around progress, not competition”.</p>

Source	Main themes
Manurewa Association	Principals' NZC will be undermined by NS. NS on their own will not improve underachievement. Negative effect for low-decile schools, including teacher supply, white flight, higher achiever flight: "ghettoism". Include value-added reporting.
Wellington Regional Principals' Association	Primary Standards are aspirational rather than achievable. Negative effects for low-decile schools. Negative effects for low-achieving students. No league tables. ERO has identified schools struggling with analysing and using assessment data for student achievement—why not spend funding on those schools? Difficult to tackle NZC, NS and revision of NEGs/NAGs all at same time. Concerns with practicality of formal assessment in first three years of school. Should be standards at years 9 and 10. Should be leeway for different methods of reporting to parents. Concern that will result in teaching to standard rather than individual student learning goals.

BOT and parents

Source	Main themes
Primary school BOT	Benefits from NS for teaching and parent information. Concern about league tables and media use, subsequent pressure to teach to standard at expense of “the real adventure of learning”.
Primary school BOT	Concern at short timeframe, and no direct communication or consultation with BOTs. Concern that their BOT work to integrate reporting and SMS will need to be changed. See no need for NS given school’s current use of standardised tests and use of data in reporting. NS work will detract from NZC implementation.
Primary school BOT	NS implementation will detract from NZC implementation. Parent community expectations of kind of simple graphical reporting included in NS draft unable to be met with current SMS. Ensuring consistency in teacher judgements will increase teacher workload (based on school experience with writing asTTle).
Primary school BOT	Not convinced that NS will add anything beyond current school use of standardised assessments and use of these in school planning and reporting. ERO already assesses school performance. Concern about league tables, and negative effects for low-performing schools. Concern about use of student performance data for teacher remuneration. Concern that competition between schools will erode collegiality. Concern about teaching to the test, at expense of NZC. Parents want information about their child’s progress as a whole, not just literacy and numeracy. No uniform reporting system. Consultation standards examples are vague.
Primary school chair	Consultation method and timeframe contrary to NZC values of excellence, community and participation for common good. NS also contrary to NZC values of equity (students enter school with different competency levels, therefore cannot be at same standard at age 6) and integrity (schools will massage data to reduce proportion of students below standard). Positive about existing standards information and formative use by teachers in his school. Standards <i>per se</i> will not improve student learning Schools should not be judged by what their students bring to their schooling (e.g. existing high performance, or home difficulties). One positive use would be to target significant funding increases to lower achieving schools and students. Students learning should be individualised, not standardised. Concern with labelling of children and demotivation. Important that every student keeps learning, whether or not they meet the standard. Would reduce school self-management. Need to bring teachers on board.
Primary school BOT	Concern at short timeframe for consultation and implementation. Schools should decide their own reporting formats—criticism of samples as being “lowest

Source	Main themes
	<p>common denominator” and next steps as being “condescending”.</p> <p>School has worked hard to improve student achievement and develop assessment and reporting framework that meets its needs—does not want to lose this for a “prescriptive one-size-fits-all” system. Evidence given of gains and system.</p> <p>NS labelling could demoralise children, narrow teaching.</p>
<p>Primary school BoT and staff</p>	<p>Conflict between NS and NZC.</p> <p>Focus on value-added, rather than whether children “fit the box”. Danger that teachers will focus on “the middle ground” rather than individual needs.</p> <p>Negative effects if children are judged as failing at the end of year 1, and later.</p> <p>Will eventually lead to mandated tests; “winner & loser” schools.</p> <p>Overseas experience is negative.</p> <p>More likely to improve student achievement through quality teacher training & professional development on assessment than NS.</p> <p>Use ERO reviews to identify schools “failing their children” and allocate resources for teacher and programme development and support.</p>
<p>Primary school trustee</p>	<p>Supports nationally compatible standards to identify student needs and resource to keep them “on track.”</p> <p>Competition between schools will lead to inconsistent reporting by schools.</p> <p>League tables based on deciles will be exacerbated by league tables based on standards—so reduction in range of students at each school, reduction in social cohesion.</p> <p>No league tables—only purpose of NS should be to support teaching and learning.</p> <p>Need consistent teacher judgements—some form of “mediation”.</p>
<p>Primary school trustee</p>	<p>NS is counter to student learning.</p> <p>Schooling Strategy more student and home–school partnership focused, fits better with NZC.</p> <p>NS inconsistent with NZC.</p> <p>NS will have negative effects for students, parents, teachers.</p> <p>Concern about league tables, damage to collegiality.</p> <p>Resourcing and ongoing school support and professional development more useful.</p>

Source	Main themes
parent	Inadequate consultation. Concern with negative effects for children's motivation if labelled "below standard". Concern with narrowed curriculum.
parent (also commented as teacher)	Positive about parents knowing how their child's performance compares with national levels. Standards will close gaps between schools in teacher expectations of students.

Advisers, academics and consultants

Source	Main themes
Education consultant	<p>Based on teachers' views in cross-decile range of NZ schools, green level in reading is too high a benchmark at end of Year 1; students who reach blue level then "almost always become competent readers by Year 3".</p> <p>Concern with increase in summative assessments if NS reporting done at specified times.</p> <p>Experience from role as Manager Literacy Strategy, Hackney, England for eight years—negative effects on national testing for students, teachers, communities.</p> <p>Concern that NZ teachers' "unique" ability to assess current level for individuals, plan their next steps and teach so they progress will be lost in system based on age-expected outcomes.</p> <p>Many NZ schools already reporting appropriately to parents and "making student achievement and their current level explicit"; focus should be on supporting other schools to do so.</p>
Unnamed cluster	<p>Writing exemplar given is for end Year 2, not end first school year.</p> <p>Funding should go to close gaps, based on student data.</p> <p>Cluster meetings need to provide teachers with content knowledge on how to moderate writing if they are to use standards.</p>
National Reading Recovery team	<p>Technical issues raised with administration of assessments after first school year to ensure consistency.</p> <p>Recommend professional development to ensure consistency in assessment administration.</p> <p>Writing: exemplar seems too low for child after one year at school; need clarity around task; key aspects of writing not mentioned.</p> <p>Query emphasis on text; suggest other measures for comprehension.</p> <p>Concern that literacy progressions will be treated as assessment tasks, prefer that standards are referenced to NZC Level 1.</p> <p>In their experience, English Language learners do not need two years of English-medium instruction to be assessed using tools developed for native speakers; they find the Observation Survey, Clay's Record of Oral Language and Biks and Gutches effective, as is Reading Recovery for these students after one year at school.</p> <p>Queries around resourcing for at risk students, whether resources will be directed to whole class or school rather than targeted individuals; guidance to schools in choosing effective interventions, guidance to parents to help their child improve,</p>
Auckland Reading Recovery teacher	<p>Current use of some tests that give reading ages already tell some students they are failures. These tests do not have a robust method for assessing reading age. Fear that such tools will be used to judge standards.</p> <p>Tools designed as formative (e.g., the Observation Survey) are being used for summative purposes rather than to inform teaching practice.</p>

Source	Main themes
ESOL lecturer	<p>Positive about making children's progress in literacy and numeracy clearer to parents.</p> <p>Concerns from overseas experience with NS—high stakes testing distorts teaching and learning; children will be miscategorised, with long-term impacts.</p> <p>Concerns that one-size-fits-all approach being taken to English Language learners, when their needs are very wide ranging. Doubts that all ELL will be ready to move into NS in literacy after only two years, and if this is followed, will have long-term negative impacts for ELL student achievement.</p> <p>Recommends use of ELL progressions.</p>
Extra Lesson provider—working with children with learning and behavioural problems	<p>Development of motor-neurological system ready for academic learning (midlines integrated, left and right hemispheres able to work in unity) not complete till six to seven years old. NS does not allow for this, and will put great pressure on children who are not ready for acceleration of academic side of learning.</p>
Remedial spelling consultant	<p>Concern that standard and progression definition needs to be supported by strategies that lift student performance.</p> <p>Recommends use of NZCER Supplementary spelling test at Year 4 to identify low-scoring students for “spelling recovery” (estimating this to be 20% nationwide, and up to 40–45% at some schools). However, believes there is no longer system-wide expertise to teach remedial spelling; commercial programmes lack evidence of their efficacy, and are often too complex. Offers his expertise to work with the Ministry of Education and professional development providers.</p>

Organisations

Source	Main themes
NZEI	<p>NZC implementation and positive use of NS at risk through speed of implementation of NS and lack of clarity around reporting and accountability.</p> <p>Need to integrate NS within the spirit and intent of NZC.</p> <p>Practitioners need to be involved in finalisation of standards.</p> <p>Concern at misuse of standards data in league tables and recommend legislative safeguards and management of data by independent research organisation.</p> <p>Concern at increased workload through additional assessment and reporting required.</p>
IHC	<p>NS will not raise educational achievement of children with intellectual disabilities; strengths-based model would work better than NS to motivate these students, and provide teachers with information they need to improve student learning.</p> <p>Continually not achieving the standards will damage self-concept of students with intellectual disabilities.</p> <p>Inclusive schools with good teaching practice for disabled students that attract large numbers will be judged unfairly because they will have lower proportions of students reaching the standards.</p> <p>Other schools will be unwilling to enrol disabled students because they will lower school performance.</p> <p>Many disabled students who currently have their needs identified through IEPs do not receive the support needed to address those needs: How would this improve with NS?</p> <p>Recommends following US experience to allow authentic assessment, through accommodation, rather than finding that disabled students are excluded from NS.</p>
Maxim Institute	<p>NS will set benchmarks for expected student achievement, identify students falling behind and give more information to parents and teachers.</p> <p>Recommends mandatory use of AsTTle because it is linked to NZC levels and can be used from Year 1 and could be used to Year 11. It would allow flexibility of timing and questions used, without leading to teaching to the test and overemphasis on school comparisons through league tables.</p> <p>Measurement of student progress in relation to required progress over year important; incentives could be provided by breaking the standards into multiple levels for each year level.</p> <p>Reporting to parents should take into account children's abilities when they start school.</p> <p>Positive about plain language reporting model; recommends use of "traffic light" colours to show individual progress in the graphs.</p> <p>Schools should be able to provide parents who enquire with information about assessments used in teacher judgements in relation to whether their child has met the standard.</p> <p>NS should be used to assess school and teacher performance, through assessing the value they add to student achievement. Main uses of this value-added analysis would be to support parent decision making about schooling by publishing contextual value-added scores; and in school and teacher decisions about professional development; and could be used in teacher remuneration.</p> <p>Reporting on NS to the Ministry of Education should complement existing reporting requirements.</p> <p>A national report on student achievement in relation to NS and progress rates should be made annually.</p> <p>Concern at pace of design and implementation of NS, since many schools would not be ready to make judgements from assessments by 2010, the time does not allow for trialling assessment and reporting against the NS in time to iron out any problems before national use; and at a time when schools are under pressure to implement NZC. Recommends Ministry of Education and ERO evaluate the NS after a year.</p> <p>Support should be targeted at schools ERO identified as not having effective assessment</p>

Source	Main themes
	<p>processes or use of assessment; and on ensuring all schools can use e=asTTle.</p>
QPEC	<p>NS on their own will not lift achievement.</p> <p>NZ schools have strengths in formative assessment, using range of NZ developed assessment tools. Formative assessment is a better way to raise standards, but will be undermined by NS.</p> <p>Danger of teaching to the test, narrowing NZC to measurable literacy and numeracy gains.</p> <p>Overseas experience suggests gains can be made, but through focus on test strategies rather than real learning.</p> <p>Danger of “one best approach” rather than student-centred, to meet diverse needs and foster diverse interests, which prepare students for subject choice in secondary school.</p> <p>Better to build on good school reporting to parents than use suggested simplistic model which narrows expectations, and may be misread as summing up the whole of a child’s learning.</p> <p>Negative impact for children who do not reach the standard.</p> <p>Overseas evidence shows that “standards and their associated testing industries serve political and bureaucratic interests much more than they help students to learn”.</p> <p>League tables entrench inequalities and increase school and community segregation, with particular negative and undeserved effects for low-decile schools.</p> <p>Need protection in relation to reporting of NS data, underpinned by ethical principles “to avoid harm to individual students, schools and communities”.</p> <p>Longer time frame needed for real consultation about the introduction of NS, because of their long-term consequences.</p> <p>More constructive approach to raising literacy and numeracy levels and provide better information on achievement to parents would focus on professional learning “to enhance the ability of teachers, parents and students to work together to better use the range of well proven and valid assessment and learning strategies”.</p>