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Media release: Insights into the impact of National Standards in schools

Findings from a new survey of primary and intermediate schools provide insights into the impact in schools of National Standards.

NZCER conducted a national survey of primary and intermediate schools in mid-2013, drawing responses from principals (total: 180), teachers (713), members of board of trustees (277) and parents (684). NZCER chief researcher Dr Cathy Wylie presented on findings from the National Standards questions in the survey at the New Zealand Association for Research in Education (NZARE) conference in Dunedin on Thursday 28 November. The full survey results will be published early in 2014.

After three years, few principals (7 percent) think of the standards themselves as robust or as providing a valuable record of student learning (14 percent). Teachers are more positive than principals about their ability to understand the standards and make judgements against them but only 15 percent rate the standards as robust.

Trustees and to a lesser extent parents feel they have a good understanding of the standards and they're more likely than the teaching profession to support the standards in principle.

Dr Wylie says the survey suggests some aspects of teaching and assessment practice have shifted in many schools as a result of National Standards. For example, teachers reported increased professional learning around assessment use and interpretation of results. Moderation, which involves teachers working together to provide consistent assessment of students' work, has become more common and is valued by teachers.

However, 60 percent of teachers and 70 percent of principals say National Standards have meant more work for little gain. Dr Wylie says there has been no marked difference in student achievement since the standards were introduced and no evidence that standards have spurred parents of low performing students to become more engaged in their children's learning

“The survey results suggest some things need to be done differently. National Standards need to sit within the wider context of the curriculum, learning and assessment, rather than being an end in themselves.”

Cathy Wylie is available to be interviewed. Please contact NZCER communications coordinator MaiLynn Stormon-Trinh on 04-802 1434, or email mailynn.stormon-trinh@nzcer.org.nz More details about the sampling for the survey are available from NZCER.