

Otaki-Kapiti Principals' Association

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By Tasha Black
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The Otaki-Kapiti Principal Association has had enough of the problems plaguing National Standards and has told the Education Minister they are recommending Otaki and Kapiti schools do not participate in National Standards training until a partnership between the minister and schools is established.

Of 23 schools in the association, which spans Paekakariki to Manakau, 21 schools support the remit, sent to Education Minister Anne Tolley, and two did not.

The remit says National Standards in their current form will not deliver the outcomes desired for New Zealand children, and the association's president, Allan Marsden, said they wanted Ms Tolley to sit down with teaching professionals and "talk about what's best for the kids in our schools".

Until that has been done, the association will recommend schools abstain from further training.

Mr Marsden said not attending the training would not impact on the schools or the Ministry of Education but was "more of a stance", and the statement they were making by not attending was more important than the training.

He said National Standards training was not compulsory but consisted of one-day workshops and night meetings covering topics including assessment and reporting for the standards.

Mr Marsden said the schools who supported the remit felt the training had been inadequate and there were a number of issues in the consistency of National Standards.

This comes after the Education Review Office released its first report last week evaluating the implementation of National Standards.

Ms Tolley welcomed the report, which evaluated 228 schools, and said it showed 80 per cent of primary and intermediate schools were making good progress with implementing National Standards.

"These findings reinforce what parents, principals and teachers have been telling me up and down the country," said Ms Tolley.

The report also found almost 60 per cent of teachers only had "some understanding" of the standards.

Principals spoken to by the Kapiti Observer said the quality of training had been hugely variable, while some had been useful, most was inadequate and trainers had not been able to answer all the questions teachers had.

Paraparaumu Beach School principal Keith Lambert said the training they received, provided by the Ministry of Education and contracted out to Wellington's Accent Learning, did not reflect on the trainers themselves, but on the inconsistencies with the standards.

Ms Tolley said teachers had asked for training to help implement the standards, and the Government set aside \$26 million in funding this year to support it.

"It's extremely encouraging that 75 per cent of schools have so far taken advantage of external support and we will ensure that tailored professional development continues to be available." Ms Tolley said she directed the Ministry of Education to closely monitor the training to make sure it met the needs of teachers and principals.

She chose not to comment directly about Otaki-Kapiti Principal Association's remit but said the majority of schools were happy getting on with implementing the standards.

It was a vocal minority who were unhappy with National Standards, she said.

New Zealand Principals' Federation president Ernie Buutveld said five other regional principal associations had boycotted training.

Northland, Auckland, Canterbury, Otago and Southland, and other regions, are meeting in coming weeks.

"There is a growing solidarity around the country to get a resolution the sector can live with." In a media release Ms Tolley said the New Zealand Principals' Federation, of which Otaki-Kapiti Principal Association is part of, had been playing "silly political games" and were against National Standards since the policy was first announced.

She said NZPF was "completely out of touch with public opinion" and had reverted to another scaremongering campaign, targeting parents and children.

Raumati South School principal Graham McDonald said the Ministry of Education needed to "go back to the drawing board".