



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga

Monitoring and Evaluation of the Special Education 2000 Policy: Summary Report - Phase 1 1999

Massey University College of Education,
Commissioned and funded by the Ministry of Education





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INTRODUCTION

1

A set of Special Education Policy Guidelines was introduced in 1995. These guidelines state that “Learners with a disability, learning difficulty, or behaviour difficulty may receive special education when they have been reliably identified as needing alternative or additional resources to those usually provided in regular education settings” (Special Education Policy Guidelines, 1995, 1996). Special Education in New Zealand has undergone major reform in the past three years.

The 1996 Budget brought in a new policy, Special Education 2000. The stated aim was to “achieve, over the next decade, a world class inclusive education system that provides learning opportunities of equal quality to all students” (MoE, July 1996). The policy had two major components:

- Information, education and specialist support to assist families, schools and teachers to achieve the best possible learning environment for all students with special education needs.
- A significant increase in funding to provide assured and predictable resourcing for individual students and schools (MoE, Update, July 1996).

Special Education 2000 (SE2000) restructured the way in which resources and service provision are distributed to learners with special educational needs. It changed the way all schools manage special education resources, and the way major service providers supply services to learners with specific needs.

In 1997, the MoE published further objectives for SE2000. A new phrase of “getting it right” was introduced. This later became “getting it right together”. SE2000 was intended to:

- Provide more help for children with special education needs in the early childhood and school sectors
- Develop a clear, consistent and predictable framework for resourcing special education
- Provide special education resourcing wherever the child attends school
- Enable students with special education needs to participate in and benefit from early childhood and school programmes.

Additional funding was introduced to support the policy changes. The Specialist Education Services (SES) was restructured to reflect changes in the policy and related changes to the Document of Accountability with the Ministry of Education. As a result, SES services became more focussed and specific.

Evaluating the policy

Various aspects of SE2000 were evaluated during its introduction. In October 1998, Massey University was contracted by the MoE to provide an independent evaluation and monitoring of the policy over a three year period.

This publication is a summary of the report on Phase One of the evaluation. The full report, *Special Education 2000: Monitoring and Evaluation of the Policy - Phase One Final Report*, was published in February 2000 and is available from the Ministry of Education.

This summary gives a brief account of how the research was done (the methodology). It then covers the findings for the five strands of the Special Education 2000 policy:

- initiatives for students with high to very high needs -
 - Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS)
 - Speech-Language Initiative (SLI)
 - Severe Behaviour Initiative (SBI)
- initiatives for students with moderate needs -
 - Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLb)
 - Special Education Grant (SEG).

Each section in this summary focuses on one of these strands. However, aspects of each strand appear in all the sections.

The summary also covers:

- support services
- early childhood education
- Māori issues relating to SE2000 - in English-medium schools, kura kaupapa, and kohanga reo
- professional development
- parent and caregiver issues.

The findings of the report provide the first indepth analysis of the data collected during 1999. As the policy itself is still in its final implementation phase, the findings must be read as baseline data only. They reflect the early perceptions about SE2000 of schools, principals, teachers, teacher-aides, early childhood centres, kōhanga reo, kura kaupapa Māori and parents.

METHODOLOGY

The Ministry of Education set out 126 questions for the full research contract to cover. A total of 61 questions were dealt with in Phase One. These questions covered the following general research issues:

- How do schools, and who within the schools, define, identify, and assess special education needs?
- What is the incidence of special needs in the schools studied?
- What obstacles to positive outcomes have been identified by schools for the existing programmes/provisions?
- What gaps do they perceive in existing provision/programmes for their students with special needs?
- What is the range of service providers now, and how is it changing in response to SE2000?
- Are phases of SE2000 or other policy implementation evident in changing needs for early childhood intervention?
- Are the specific needs of Māori being addressed adequately by SE2000? If not, what challenges need to be addressed and which methods are appropriate?

The aim of Phase One was to collect baseline data for comparison in later phases. The data were collected during March-June 1999. Data were collected in two ways:

- through a national survey of schools and early childhood centres (quantitative)
- through interviews in early childhood centres, primary schools and secondary schools (qualitative), in four geographical areas of New Zealand.

As many of the resourcing components of the SE2000 policy had only recently been introduced or implemented in schools and early childhood centres, it was expected that respondents would have only limited experience of the changes. This was reflected in the rate of responses to the survey questionnaires, particularly from early childhood centres, and to questions about individual policy initiatives in both the questionnaires and the interviews.

National survey

A comprehensive questionnaire was developed and piloted with 150 schools at the beginning of February 1999. It was then sent to 1,198 primary and secondary schools and 300 early childhood centres, and was returned by 743 schools and 115 early childhood centres. The final response rate from schools was 62%, and from early childhood centres it was 39%.

Interviews

A total of 67 teacher fieldworkers were trained to interview over 1100 educators in 320 schools, including 7 kura kaupapa Maori, and in 78 early childhood centres, including 7 kōhanga reo.

In the schools, principals were asked questions on the Special Education Grant, Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour, professional development, residential special schools, Speech-Language Initiative, Ongoing Resourcing Scheme and Māori issues.

Teachers were asked questions on the Special Education Grant, Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour, professional development, Speech-Language Initiative, Ongoing Resourcing Scheme and Māori issues.

Teacher-aides were asked general questions about their background and role in the school and also about Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour, professional development, Speech-Language Initiative, Ongoing Resourcing Scheme and Māori issues.

In the early childhood centres, interviews were conducted with the educators as a group, to reflect the way these educators work in the centres. They were asked general questions, and then specific questions relating to education support workers, transition, professional development, Speech-Language Initiative and Māori issues.

Additional interviews

Key informants interviewed at a national level included personnel from the Ministry of Education, Specialist Education Services (SES) and organisations which provide support services to learners with special education needs. Group managers from the SES were interviewed as a team. For this report, the key informant interviews were used only to clarify issues for the researchers. Reports for the later phase of the study will cover the results of these interviews, and also of follow-up interviews with individual SES group managers.

Two researchers visited all six state funded residential special schools, and Homai Vision Education Centre. They interviewed the principals informally, and later interviewed teaching and residential staff, students and parents.

Parent forums took place in four centres, and some parents completed an initial informal pilot survey questionnaire.



SPECIAL NEEDS IN THE SCHOOLS: AN OVERVIEW

3

Applications for funding or support

During a 12-month period (1998-1999), 5,772 requests for support were made by the surveyed schools: 43% for ORS (2,481 applications), of which 24% were for Maori students; 8% for SBI, of which 39% were for Maori students; 14% for SLI, of which 21% were for Maori students; and 35% for RTLB, of which 33% were for Maori students. Only 3,842 requests were successful: 57% of ORS applications, 54% of SBI requests, 79% of SLI and 81% of RTLB applications. However, on review, another 195 ORS applications were successful, raising the ORS success rate to 61%.

Students receiving support

A total of 4,836 students received funding or support from the initiatives. Most received support either from ORS or from RTLB. This is an indication of the fact that when the research was done, other initiatives of SE2000 were still at early stages. Of the students in this study who were receiving support through the high-very high needs initiatives, 76% received ORS funding, 8% received support through SBI and 16% received support through SLI.

There was a clear gender difference among those receiving support: overall, 31% were female and 69% were male. Only 13% of those receiving support through the SBI were female.

Over a quarter of the students in this study receiving support through the four initiatives were Māori. For ORS, 26% of those receiving support were Maori; for the SBI, 37%; for the SLI, 16%; and for the RTLB service, 26%.

Suspension

The schools in this study reported that 22% of the 2,305 students they suspended during 1998 were receiving funding or support from SE2000 initiatives (ORS, SBI and SEG). Of these students, 50% were Māori, 6% Pacific peoples, 43% NZ European/Pākehā and 1% other. A total of 12 ORS students were reportedly suspended by the surveyed schools, that is, 0.5% of their ORS students. National data indicate that 0.77% of ORS students were suspended over the same period (MoE statistics, 1999).

Overall satisfaction with SE2000 initiatives

Schools were asked to express their satisfaction with a range of SE2000 initiatives both in principle and in practice, on a 4-point scale from 1 (“very satisfied”) to 4 (“very dissatisfied”).

There was general satisfaction with RTLB, ORS and SEG in both principle and practice. There was less satisfaction with SBI, although with a non-response of nearly 60%, it is too early to draw conclusions. However, among those who did respond, more were dissatisfied (25%) than satisfied (16%) with SBI in practice.

	In principle			In practice		
	Very Satisfied/ Satisfied %	Very Dissatisfied/ Dissatisfied %	Non Response %	Very Satisfied/ Satisfied %	Very Dissatisfied/ Dissatisfied %	Non Response %
RTLB	64	15	21	49	23	28
ORS	57	24	19	39	34	27
SEG	52	25	23	37	34	29
SLI	34	14	52	22	19	59
Prof.Dev	44	22	34	32	28	40
SBI	36	17	47	16	25	59
Support Services	45	23	32	32	31	37

Priorities behind SE2000

Schools were also asked to identify what they believed were the government priorities behind SE2000. The results are outlined in Table 4.8. The items ranked first to sixth were all generally regarded as high priority.

Descriptor	Mean	Rank
Promoting inclusion	1.86	1
Reducing expenditure	2.13	2
Achieving more equitable resource distribution	2.51	3=
Achieving greater equity	2.51	3=
Increasing local decision making	2.53	5
Improving educational outcomes	2.54	6
Increasing expenditure	4.04	7

PROVISION FOR STUDENTS WITH HIGH/VERY HIGH NEEDS: SEVERE BEHAVIOUR INITIATIVE (SBI)

This section summarises the results of the initial research undertaken on the Severe Behaviour Initiative (SBI), including the Behaviour and Education Support Teams (BEST). As this is a new initiative, and the SES needed time to establish the service, case studies will be conducted later.

What is the Severe Behaviour Initiative?

The Severe Behaviour Initiative (SBI) is designed to serve the estimated 1% of the student population - that is, approximately 7,000 students nationwide - who show the most extreme behaviour difficulties in the school and the classroom. This programme recognises the difficulty and past history of students with extreme behaviour. It is designed to provide assessment and intervention which will make an ongoing positive difference in their behaviour.

The criteria for students identified as requiring support through this initiative were defined as behaviour of such intensity, frequency or duration that it:

- Jeopardises the physical safety of the student or others
- Threatens to cause or causes significant property damage
- Severely limits the student's access to ordinary settings and interferes with social acceptance, sense of personal well-being and their educational performance (MoE Update, February 1998).

By May 1998, the Behaviour Education Support Teams (BEST) were introduced as the support for students with severe behaviour needs. BEST are multidisciplinary teams from the Specialist Education Services. Each team was to provide “intensive in-class and in-school support, and ... liaison with home and appropriate community agencies” (MoE Update, May 1998).

Key informant interviews

The National Project Manager Behaviour and Learning and the Group Manager Service Performance from the SES were interviewed to get an overview of what was in place, what was working, how the BEST operated, and how many students were being served through the initiative.

Number of students served

The Institute of Applied Behaviour Analysis (IABA) “multielement” model framework first adopted by BEST required them to spend a great amount of time on each student. This minimised the number of students who could receive help.

The SES respondent indicated that BEST teams, fully operationalised, would probably be capable of providing intense level intervention to approximately 2,500 to 3,500 students per annum. This is approximately one third of the 1% of students who will need BEST intervention every year.

In 1999, there were 75 staff working on the Severe Behaviour Initiative. These staff could work with between 750 and 1,125 students per year. At the low end of the range, one out of every 10 students with severe behaviour difficulties could receive help from BEST. At the high end of the range, one out of every 7 students with severe behaviour difficulties could receive help from BEST.

Because of the significant shortfall between the estimated 7,000 students with severe behaviour problems and the targeted number for support, schools may access BEST service by phoning SES.

Questionnaire results

In the questionnaire, four questions asked about the effectiveness, speed, quality, and importance of support for students exhibiting severe behaviour in school.

Only one third of questionnaire respondents replied to the questions about BEST. Clearly, if the school had not received any support services from BEST for severe behaviour, it could not respond. It is reasonable to conclude that many schools and students with severe behaviour were not receiving any support through SBI during the period of the fieldwork for this report.

Schools were asked to rate the effectiveness of the support they were receiving. The responses consistently showed a mixed pattern of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Speed of support was ranked as the most important factor in service delivery. While 18% considered BEST’s speed of response to referrals to be “immediate” or “satisfactory”, another 18% said the speed of response was “unsatisfactory” or “too slow to be useful”. The most important factor schools looked for from an alternative service provider was the ability to receive support when needed.

In terms of positively changing students’ behaviour, at this early stage BEST was rated “very effective” or “effective” by only 4% of respondents, and “not at all effective” by 8%. Almost half of those schools in the study who were receiving BEST services rated them as not at all effective in positively changing behaviour. Half rated the quality of support from BEST as poor or very poor.

These results came from the one third of responding schools who said they were able to access support. The high percentage who gave no response or said it was “too early to tell” highlights the possibility that the critical issues and responses reported may be implementation problems. The time needed to fully implement the programme and to achieve its maximum potential may be greater than anticipated.

▲▲▲ PROVISION FOR STUDENTS WITH HIGH OR VERY HIGH NEEDS: SPEECH-LANGUAGE INITIATIVE (SLI)

This section summarises the results of the research undertaken on the Speech-Language Initiative (SLI).

What is the Speech-Language Initiative?

Under Phase Two of SE2000, the Ministry of Education allocated an additional \$3.48 million to assist students with speech language difficulties. The new funding was to “provide an increase in speech-language therapy on average per student; professional development for teachers; and support and guidance for students with moderate speech-language difficulties” (MoE, November 1997, p.3). These services were to be provided by SES, contracted by the Ministry of Education.

New funding was also provided to help teachers identify problems and develop programmes to support children within school. Such training would also help teachers to know when to refer students to SES. Later a training programme for teachers of Māori was announced. Further information on a national training programme for teachers of years 0 to 3 children with speech-language difficulties in decile 1 to 3 schools was announced in May 1998.

Results

It is clear that the national training programme in speech-language therapy assessment and intervention has not yet been offered to many schools. Of the principals interviewed, only 13% reported that their teachers had been through the national training programme. These principals were evenly divided about its effectiveness. However, the great majority of principals surveyed said the training did not apply to them (18%), or had not occurred (46%), or they knew nothing about it (16%).

When asked about how well the needs of schools had been met through SE2000 professional development programmes, of the schools that responded, only 16% considered their needs in this area had been addressed well, while 84% said their needs had been only “partially addressed” or “not addressed”.

Training for teacher-aides

Teacher-aides have traditionally been employed by schools to assist with the instruction and supervision of students with special needs, including those with speech-language difficulties. However, little formal training has been available to prepare teacher-aides for working with students with speech-language difficulties.

Of the teacher-aides interviewed, 48% performed some speech-language therapy tasks as part of their work. These tasks ranged from working on exercises to improve tongue movement, to following through tasks set by speech-language therapists (SLTs) and assisting with specialist speech-language programmes.

Although 25% of teacher-aides considered that they had been well trained for this work, the standard of their training was unclear. Nearly half the teacher-aides interviewed (48%) indicated that they were either poorly trained or not trained at all.

Specialist Education Services (SES)

For further professional guidance and support, teachers and teacher-aides frequently look to speech-language therapists (SLTs) from specialist services, especially (SES). However, they gave SES rather mixed ratings. Interviewed about the effectiveness of the speech-language therapy service currently offered by SES, 39% of teachers considered the service delivery ineffective, while only 20% of teachers considered it effective.

Overall levels of satisfaction

When questioned about their overall satisfaction with the SLI in principle, slightly more schools were “satisfied” than “dissatisfied”. When asked how the SLI worked in practice, schools were very slightly less satisfied. Asked how well the SLI met the needs of Māori students in particular, satisfaction levels were slightly higher for both “in principle” (39%) and “in practice” (28%).

Although schools were moderately satisfied with the SLI both in principle and in practice, 29% of schools thought the services had actually deteriorated since SE2000, and only 19% thought they had improved. For Māori students, only 8% and for non-Māori students only 11% considered they were better off under SE2000. In those questions surveying all five strands of SE2000, the SLI received the lowest rating, along with the Severe Behaviour Initiative.

When asked to identify which factors were most important in the SES delivery of a speech-language service, schools rated “responsiveness to requests for service”, “support when needed” and “accessibility” particularly highly. Other factors such as “cost”, “level of expertise”, “similarity of ethnicity” or “level of rapport between provider and student” were seen as less important.



PROVISION FOR STUDENTS WITH HIGH OR VERY HIGH NEEDS: ONGOING AND TRANSITIONAL RESOURCING SCHEME (ORS)

This section summarises the results of the research undertaken on the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS).

What is the Ongoing and Transitional Resourcing Scheme?

The Ongoing and Transitional Resourcing Scheme (ORS) aims to support students with high or very high education needs throughout their school years. The scheme aims to provide students with guaranteed continuity of support, and schools with appropriate assistance in developing effective programmes to meet their educational needs.

There are approximately 6,960 students currently funded through ORS.

This includes approximately 529 on the Transitional Resourcing Scheme, which was introduced for children in the 5-7 year age group with high levels of need that are not necessarily ongoing (MoE Communication 23/8/99). The objectives of both these schemes include:

- Provision of appropriate specialist support, therapy, teaching and paraprofessional support to meet the individual needs of students
- Assistance for schools to develop effective programmes for this group of students
- Increased participation of students with high or very high needs in classroom programmes.

Schools apply for ORS on an application form setting out specific criteria. Requests for an application form to be reviewed can be sent to the Chief Verifier at any time.

Students verified under the ORS get a staffing entitlement of 0.1 (high needs) or 0.2 (very high needs) full-time teacher equivalent per ORS student. ORS funding is in addition to the funding which the school receives for all enrolled students. Funding to cover paraprofessional time (such as teacher-aides), therapy, and specialist support is delivered as a cash amount to fundholders. This is based on an average of \$7,250 for each ORS student with high needs and \$12,500 for each student with very high needs (MoE Update, November 1998).

Specialist Education Services (SES) is currently the main fundholder for students verified for the ORS. Schools, or clusters of schools with 20 or more students on the ORS, can also apply to be fundholders.

Interview results

On the whole, principals reported negative experiences with the transition to the Ongoing and Transitional Resourcing Scheme (49%) and with the verification process (44%). Only 15% reported positive experiences, and 12% responded “not applicable”. Several principals, however, said “it is getting better”.

Principals were able to identify a number of positive attributes of ORS, including continuity of support, funding tagged to the child, satisfactory staffing allocation (0.1 and 0.2 staffing entitlement) and no need to keep re-applying.

Concerns about ORS centred on the belief that too few students were being funded for ORS, that criteria were too stringent, and that there was too much form filling. Those students who were “marginally excluded from ORS” were being a drain on other funding sources.

Teachers’ responses to changes in educational outcomes for students as a result of ORS funding were generally positive. When “not applicable” responses are removed from the total, the percentage of positive comments is 80%.

The responses from teacher-aides were quite clear-cut: 52% said they were working with ORS funded students and 62% said that there had been no changes in their role since ORS began.

Questionnaire results

Students who had had their ORS application declined

The overall success rate for ORS applications was 61%. The questionnaire asked about changes in educational provisions for those students who had their ORS application declined: 41% of respondents reported changes for the worse, 16% reported no change, and 11% reported changes for the better.

ORS funded students and the ORS system

The questionnaire asked about satisfaction with the present system for the management of funds for ORS. A total of 57% of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied. Preferred fundholders were (1) individual schools, (2) SES and (3) school clusters.

Schools were asked about how they used the additional 0.1 or 0.2 full-time teacher equivalent provided through ORS funding. The responses matched the reality of classroom practice. The top three ways of using this entitlement were (1) teachers working with students on a one-to-one basis; (2) developing, managing and implementing Individual Education Programmes for students; (3) employing teacher-aides.

Schools were also asked about satisfaction with the level of professional support provided to meet the individual needs of ORS funded students. The highest level of satisfaction was assigned to teacher-aides and paraprofessionals. Next came specialist teachers, and third came Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour. Speech-language therapists, special education advisors and psychologists were ranked 6th, 7th and 8th respectively. This result reflects the “hands on”, one-to-one help that teachers stress as important for this group of students with high or very high needs, if there is to be a noticeable improvement in their educational outcomes.

In answer to a question about the degree of satisfaction with the level of support services provided by SES for ORS funded students, approximately 46% of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied.



PROVISION FOR STUDENTS WITH MODERATE NEEDS: RESOURCE TEACHERS: LEARNING AND BEHAVIOUR (RTLBS)

7

What is the role of Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLBS)?

The main function of Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLBS) is to work with teachers to help support students with moderate learning and behaviour difficulties. They can also work with individual students. Many special education teachers and Guidance Learning Unit (GLU) teachers were appointed to these newly designated RTLBS positions. To help ensure that support is provided in culturally appropriate ways, a selected number of Māori RTLBS were appointed to work within kura kaupapa Māori and bilingual settings.

From the first school term 1999, virtually all schools in New Zealand had access to an RTLBS. Schools have been organised into clusters (groups of schools working together to share the RTLBS resourcing). RTLBS are employed by a board of trustees who have responsibility for the clusters.

The establishment of the RTLBS initiative brought a number of concerns. Most were practical, relating to such aspects as the balance between training and support service, direct versus indirect classroom support, coordination of the RTLBS initiative, and equitable access by schools to support staff who were not based on site at individual schools. There was also widespread concern among teachers and administrators that the RTLBS service might not be adequate for meeting the relatively large proportion of students with moderate learning and behaviour needs.

Principals and teachers were asked to rate the effectiveness of RTLBS and give their perceptions of the role of RTLBS. Teacher-aides were also interviewed to find out whether they worked with RTLBS.

Interview results

Primary principals

While many principals commented extensively on what is happening in their own schools, they did not really address the question concerning satisfaction with current practices. A significant number of respondents indicated that they were unable or unwilling to provide a rating on satisfaction or effectiveness at this point. It is notable, however, that approximately one third of the responses to this question indicated satisfaction with RTLBS service delivery, clusters and functions. The level of satisfaction with the RTLBS service appears to be consistent across the four geographical areas where the interviews took place.

Many principals also raised concerns about the high ratio of students to RTLBs, and about training, transition and policy issues. Several principals raised concerns about direct versus indirect support for teachers, as well as the difficulties of meeting both behaviour and learning needs.

A few principals expressed a lack of satisfaction about the appointment process. Mention was made of the fact that not all those teachers “rolled over” from positions that had been disestablished had the expertise or credibility to perform the role of RTLB. It was reported that there were some controversial appointments and in some cases, appointments were not made because the calibre of applicants was not high enough. The latter impacts on the service delivery and has implications for overload on those appointed.

The predominant view among principals is that the RTLB service should be needs-based and school-based. There is a preference for more hands-on interventions with students and freedom to provide flexible support that matches the needs of the school. Many respondents expressed the view that it was early days yet and that the role of RTLBs was continuing to evolve. This is reflected also in the number of missing responses to this question, indicating that principals were unwilling or did not want to make judgements at this early stage.

Secondary school principals

Secondary school respondents appeared to be less satisfied than primary school respondents. They also had some concerns about the appropriateness of the RTLB service to the secondary school situation.

Teachers

The majority of primary teachers saw the RTLBs as liaison teachers, specialists, or advisers in support of classroom teachers. However, many teachers indicated that they were uncertain of the function and roles of RTLBs and that it was too early to comment. Teachers were roughly equally divided on the question of emphasis on behaviour versus emphasis on learning support.

There were several mentions of dissatisfaction with, and reservations about, the role and function of RTLBs. This may reflect the fact that the RTLB service is at an early point and that many teachers were unsure about the function and role of RTLBs or considered that it was too early to say.

Referrals

Referrals of students indicate that similar numbers are being referred for behaviour and for learning. However, many responses did not specify why referrals had been made.

Teachers identified a large number of students with learning and behaviour difficulties who were not receiving support. However, it is unclear whether these students had in fact been referred and had not received support, or were simply on the teachers’ “wish list”.

Questionnaire results

Between 27% and 44% of respondents to the questionnaire indicated that it was “too early to tell” how effective the RTLBs were with support in various problem areas and types of support for teachers.

Schools were also asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with the process used to set up cluster arrangements for RTLBs. A third, 33%, were very satisfied, and 41% were fairly satisfied. About a fifth, 19%, were not satisfied, and 7% gave no response.

When asked if they were receiving equitable support from the RTLB service operating in their cluster, 70% of the respondents answered “yes”, 16% said “no”, and 14% did not respond.

Summary

Overall, the interview and survey data provided a useful baseline of information on the perceptions of teachers and principals at an early point in the development of the RTLB service. It appears that there is a reasonable level of satisfaction with the RTLB service in terms of clusters and ratios. There are, however, many issues that need to be dealt with concerning training, service demands, transition and policy issues. It is important to recognise that a significant number of respondents indicated that they were unable or unwilling at this point to provide a rating on satisfaction or effectiveness.

The majority of respondents indicated that the RTLBs work within a support or specialist consultant role. There is a concern that more hands-on support and school-based services should be provided. These concerns may reflect a lack of experience and involvement with the RTLB service.

The relationship between the classroom teacher and the RTLB is crucial, in terms of support for students with special needs who are located in inclusive classroom settings. The point was made by several respondents that classroom teachers (especially at secondary level) need training and professional development,

▲▲▲ PROVISION FOR STUDENTS WITH MODERATE NEEDS: SPECIAL EDUCATION GRANT (SEG)

What is the Special Education Grant?

The Special Education Grant (SEG) was introduced to support learners with moderate special education needs, such as learning and behaviour. These were estimated at 4-6% of the school population (MoE Update, July 1996). The funds were provided directly to all state and state integrated schools, because “schools and parents/caregivers are best able to make resourcing decisions about their students” (MoE Update, February 1998).

Schools received SEG from the beginning of 1997, based on a formula of decile ranking (the socio-economic status of the school’s community) and the total school roll. In 1996, special schools were all given a nominal ranking of 1. However, in 1999 special schools were given a ranking representing the school’s community.

SEG funding started at \$13.9 million. This was increased to \$29 million for the 1998 school year. It included a base grant of \$1,000 for all schools. The dollar amount attached to each decile ranking was also increased.

Interview Results

Decile ranking

The decile rankings of the 306 schools where interviews took place ranged from 1-10 in the Auckland, Central New Zealand and Christchurch areas. In the East Coast area, they ranged from 1-9. The East Coast had the largest percentage of low decile schools (66%), and only 12% ranked 8 or 9. Auckland had the largest percentage of high decile schools (33%). Overall, 38% of schools were low decile (1-3), 36% middle decile (4-7), and 26% high decile (8-10).

Agreement with decile ranking

Principals were asked whether they agreed with the decile rank of the school. Overall, more than half the schools (54%) agreed that their decile rank was appropriate, fair and representative of the school community, but 46% disagreed.

Of the principals who disagreed, 99.7% did so because they believed their decile ranking unfairly represented the student population. Almost all of these principals strongly felt that their decile ranking was too high for the actual socio-economic circumstances of the school community. Disagreement with decile rankings affected the principals’ responses to the question on their level of satisfaction

with SEG and the funding formula.

Some principals agreed with their school's ranking, but disagreed with using it as the basis for the SEG. They argued that ranking did not necessarily reflect the proportion of special needs students in the school.

How schools use SEG

The majority of schools used a team approach in allocating the Special Education Grant. Most principals talked about a Special Needs Committee or a Special Education Team which prioritised student needs within the school. In all primary schools, the principal appeared to make the ultimate decision in the way the funding was apportioned, but in secondary schools this decision was often devolved to the Head of Department Special Needs.

All but one school stated that they did not use SEG for anything other than meeting moderate needs. Most of the schools (98%) were using funding from other sources (usually the operational grant) to increase the amount available to students with moderate needs through SEG, because it was not sufficient to help all the students with moderate needs in the school.

Positive responses

Principals were asked to give three positive responses to SEG. The three major responses are summarised below.

1. Autonomy/flexibility:

Principals liked the autonomy to make decisions about how the Special Education Grant was spent, and the local control in being able to prioritise special needs within the school. On the whole principals reported that the flexibility in the use of the grant allowed schools to help meet the needs of the students with moderate needs through purchasing additional support, particularly teacher-aides. Some schools reported that while there were clear guidelines from the Ministry of Education in how it could be used, the ultimate decision lay with the school.

2. Raised awareness of student needs:

The SEG raised a general awareness of students with special educational needs. Principals reported that special needs were now being acknowledged by government and by school staff, and were brought to the attention of the board of trustees. Schools now prioritise which students receive support, and this has heightened awareness of special needs within schools. Through the SEG, principals reported being able to develop and provide additional programmes to help meet the individual child's needs.

3. More funding:

While most principals reported not having enough funding to meet student needs, they all reported that the extra money was appreciated. Principals in general were aware that SEG provided additional support which was not available prior to SE2000. In general, they appreciated that it was "money up front", and that it localised the funding. There was acknowledgment that there was an attempt by government to address equity and that this was an "attempt to be fair". Schools reported that long range planning was possible with the funding, and that there was less paper work and form filling, and less bureaucracy with the SES.

Concerns

Principals were also asked to give three concerns about SEG. Their three major concerns are summarised below.

1. Expectations of SEG too wide:

Principals were concerned that SEG was being used as a general panacea for the special education needs of students who were not receiving funding or support through other SE2000 resourcing components. Many principals reported that they now had to pay for SES services, including having students tested, and that "SES won't help now" or "there is lack of SES support". The SES now target high to very high needs, so schools who want SES support for their learners with moderate needs do have to pay for them. As one principal reported, "Our SEG won't go far if we have to use this to purchase other services usually provided free by SES".

Other support services, such as the RTLB service, were also mentioned as creating expectations for the use of SEG. Some schools reported that they used SEG to support the programmes developed by RTLBs. Many parents were reported to be requesting information from schools on how the SEG was being used for their child.

2. Insufficient funding to meet needs:

All schools except one reported insufficient funds. In addition, one of the perceived drawbacks of the SEG was the formula used to allocate the funds. Many schools reported it as inequitable (even schools from low decile ranking 1-3).

3. Formula does not allow for equity:

Overwhelmingly, schools wanted a “needs based” component in the formula. Arguments were put forward that this would address issues of inequity, such as:

- the gap arising between ORS funded students and students with high needs who have missed out on funding
- issues arising from increased enrolment of children with special needs in some schools (particularly when these schools were also high decile schools)
- rural issues, and difficulties associated with transient students.

Accountability

In addition, many schools in all regions were concerned that some schools were not accountable and that the use of SEG was open to abuse. This was mentioned by a number of primary schools in particular, but always in relation to other schools.

Staffing

Principals reported finding it difficult to attract qualified people as part-time staff. One school reported that they had replaced qualified staff with less qualified staff. Schools were finding that employment contract rates were changing, but SEG was not. Some schools reported not being able to hire teachers and that “Because of the low pay rates you lose the experienced specialised teachers”. Many schools reported an inability to hire specialists using SEG, particularly through the SES, where they would usually go for support.

Questionnaire Results

Use of SEG

Schools were asked in the questionnaire whether they were part of a cluster sharing SEG resources. A high proportion of schools retained their SEG within their own school.

The main context for providing support for students through SEG was individual support (89% of schools used this, and 56% ranked it as their most-used context) or small groups of up to 5 students (81% used this, and 35% ranked it as their most-used context).

Eighteen percent of the schools used SEG to develop whole-school programmes. Most bought teacher-aide hours with it, and almost half used it to train teacher-aides or purchase special education resources.

Schools were asked to rank the *main* uses of SEG from 1 (most used) to 5 (least used). The highest ranked uses were employing teacher-aides, and providing support for students who were not ORS funded. There is clearly a strong trend to move towards meeting student special needs through the use of less qualified and therefore less expensive staff. The purchase of expertise was the lowest ranked use. This is consistent with the interview results, where principals were concerned about the expense of using experts and specialists. Schools did not use them because they took up too much of the limited amount of resourcing available through the SEG.

Table 3 The main uses of SEG in schools, in rank order

	Most Used
Employing teacher-aides/paraprofessionals	1
Providing support for students not ORS funded	2
Teacher resources for Special Education	3
Specialist support for learning difficulties	4
Training for teacher-aides/paraprofessionals	5
Providing teaching support for ORS funded students	6
Gifted and talented students	7
Teacher Development programmes	8
Specialist support for behaviour management	9
Specialist support for speech-language programmes	10
Computer equipment	11

Summary

The SEG is an SE2000 initiative that received favourable support from all schools. In both the questionnaires and the interviews, the majority of schools said they preferred to receive a grant of this type that was specifically targeted to meet special educational needs in the school. Schools enjoyed the autonomy and flexibility that SEG provided, and the lack of stringent guidelines for its use. However, some schools were concerned about the lack of accountability for other schools’ use of the grant. Principals reported that the SEG highlighted the area of special education in schools, and raised an awareness of special education needs generally.

The SEG is mainly used in schools for identified individuals or small groups of students. The support is mainly provided through the funding of teacher-aides within the school, and the main curriculum areas of support provided are in literacy and numeracy. The SEG is primarily used for learning rather than behaviour difficulties.

While schools expressed satisfaction for SEG in principle, there was strong concern about the SEG funding formula and the amount schools were getting through it. However, all schools reported an inadequate funding level, and most schools topped up the SEG through their operational funds, as SEG was inadequate to meet the special educational needs in their school. Some groups of children who reportedly miss out on educational support include those from rural schools, gifted children, those with severe behaviour difficulties, and foreign students. However, the data do not indicate whether other targeted funding was coming in to the needs of those particular groups of students.

Expectations for the use of SEG by organisations and groups outside the school have added to pressures on principals. The high cost of support from Specialist Education Services and other organisations have prohibited schools from buying it or from developing in-school programmes. Instead there is a clear trend to using the lower cost alternative of less qualified or untrained paraprofessionals, such as teacher aides.



MĀORI ISSUES: MĀORI ISSUES IN ENGLISH-MEDIUM SCHOOLS

The Special Education 2000 Conference in February 1999 highlighted “the need to ensure Māori children with special needs receive the benefits of the Special Education 2000 Policy” (MoE, Gazette, March 1999). Advocacy for Māori families and “improved consultation and communication with Māori to make the policy framework less monocultural and easier to access” (MoE, Update, May 1999) were areas of particular concern.

Results

The ethnicity of the respondents who provided data for this section on Māori issues in English-medium schools was not recorded. Because information was collected from schools with relatively small numbers of Māori teachers, it is likely that a predominantly Pākehā perspective is given here.

Part A of the Results section lists the specific needs of Māori learners with special needs. Although no quantitative data was gathered for comparison, the comprehensive nature of the list makes it a useful starting point in any consideration of provisions for Māori learners with special educational needs. Part B gives different assessments of the adequacy of SE 2000 initiatives in catering for Māori learners with special needs. Part C looks at challenges to be addressed, and Part D puts forward some ways of meeting these challenges.

A. WHAT ARE THE SPECIFIC NEEDS OF MĀORI LEARNERS?

Interview results

Interview data identified 33 categories of need for Māori learners with special educational needs. Many reflect culturally-specific needs, while others are more general. Table 11.1 shows the categories ranked 1-10, in order of ranking.

Table 4 Requirements for Māori learners with special educational needs - top 10 categories as ranked by respondents

Rank Order	No. of Respondents	
1	170	Programmes and services that take home background into account. This includes parents' socio-economic circumstances, the extent of their cultural identification, the amount of Māori spoken in the home and the extent and nature of children's language and home experiences. There was a particular concern about the potentially adverse affects of poverty on students' health and learning.
2	143	Culturally appropriate programmes. These refer to programmes that include Māori content, incorporate Māori values, protocols and practices and use appropriate teaching methods and activities. Particular mention was made of practices such as starting IEP meetings with a karakia.
3	112	Parental/whanau involvement in special education. The involvement mentioned included consultation, programme planning, implementation and evaluation.
4	109	Support for parents/whanau. It was believed that many Māori parents lacked the confidence, skills and knowledge needed for their children to access and make the most of general and special educational opportunities. Programmes and advocacy services that would upskill and support parents and whanau were considered an integral part of meeting the learners' special needs.
5	99	Support from parents/whanau. This refers to parental/whanau support of learners and their education. Concern was expressed about a low valuing of education amongst some Māori and about the negative effect this has on the motivation and progress of Māori learners with special needs.
6	86	Teacher-aides with cultural and te reo knowledge.
7	81	Māori teachers and teacher-aides. It was believed that learners with special needs responded well to people of the same ethnicity.
8	80	Teachers with cultural and te reo knowledge.
9	63	Opportunities for students to learn te reo.
10	61	Extra help in reading and language.

B. ARE THE SPECIFIC NEEDS OF MĀORI CHILDREN BEING ADDRESSED ADEQUATELY BY SPECIAL EDUCATION 2000 INITIATIVES?

Interview results

Of the 369 responses to this question, 170 said “yes”, and 110 said “no”. Another 89 gave an equivocal “yes”, which included two kinds of response: those who answered yes, but said there were no Māori learners with special needs in their school; and those who stated that there was no difference between Māori and Pākehā learners with special needs, and that in terms of teaching and services, no differentiation was made between the two groups.

Overall, 40 principals, 50 teachers and 24 teacher-aides stated that their school did not differentiate between Māori and Pākehā learners. A total of 60 principals, 36 teachers and 21 teacher-aides stated that the specific needs of Māori and Pākehā learners were the same.

Of the 30% who said that the specific needs of Māori were not being addressed adequately, the most frequent complaint was that funding in the various initiatives was insufficient to meet needs specific to Māori learners. The next three most frequent complaints were about culturally inappropriate services, insufficient Māori staff in the RTLB initiative, and insufficient staffing in the BEST and RTLB initiatives. However, there were more positive than negative comments for each initiative.

Questionnaire results

The questionnaire data is based on survey returns from 743 schools. Respondents were asked about their overall satisfaction with SE2000 initiatives in relation to how they were meeting the specific needs of Māori learners, both in principle and in practice. The number of responses to individual questions ranged from a minimum of 176 (23% of the total sample) for “RTLBs in practice” to a maximum of 358 (47% of the total sample) for “ORS in practice.” Table 11.3 shows the responses for very satisfied/satisfied, compared with dissatisfied/very dissatisfied categories.

Table 5 Overall satisfaction with Special Education 2000 initiatives and related services in catering for Māori learners with special educational needs

	In principle			In practice		
	Very Satisfied/ Satisfied %	Very Dissatisfied/ Dissatisfied %	Non Response %	Very Satisfied/ Satisfied %	Very Dissatisfied/ Dissatisfied %	Non Response %
ORS	22	7	71	34	15	51
SBI	21	10	68	31	11	58
Support Services	26	18	56	30	12	58
SLI	39	8	53	28	11	61
Prof. Dev.	20	15	65	18	15	67
RTLB	22	14	64	14	10	76
SEG	25	12	63	11	15	74

Respondents were also asked if Māori learners with special needs were getting a better deal now than before SE2000, for each SE2000 initiative. Overall, 16% said “mostly/always”, 29% said “in some cases”, 14% said “seldom” and 1% didn’t know. The highest “mostly/always” responses were for RTL (27%) and SEG (26%), and the lowest for SLI and SBI (both 8%). The highest “seldom” responses were for SEG and SLI (both 16%), ranging down to 11% for ORS. The non-responses ranged from 35% to 65%.

When asked how SE2000 initiatives had affected parental/whanau involvement in their children’s education, approximately one third of respondents said it had no effect, one third did not reply, and the remaining third were spread over the “more involved”, “less involved”, “don’t know” and “not applicable” categories.

C. WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED?

A range of challenges were mentioned. These are outlined below.

1. School, teacher and special education service factors

Shortages of: School staff with cultural and te reo expertise and knowledge specific to teaching Māori learners; Māori staff; board of trustee members with Māori-relevant knowledge; culturally relevant and appropriate resources, including resources in te reo; preservice and inservice training for working with Māori learners with special needs; Māori-relevant school policies and procedures; teaching time to incorporate cultural content; funding to provide teacher release time, to employ teacher-aides or to provide other means of catering for Māori learners with special needs; special education professionals who are Māori and who have cultural and te reo knowledge and knowledge specific to servicing Māori learners with special needs; special education programmes and services in te reo for Māori-speaking learners; effective, readily available, well coordinated services and programmes; services and resources in rural areas.

Other difficulties: Lack of staff willing to acknowledge or accommodate cultural needs; inappropriate identification measures, processes or personnel; inability to cater for bilingual learners, e.g. lack of reading recovery provision in Māori; inappropriate teacher expectations for Māori learners with special needs - both too high and too low; extra demands on Māori staff who are regularly called on for advice and to deal with Māori learners with special needs, especially those with behaviour problems; large numbers of new entrants without preschool experience; large numbers of Māori learners with special needs; low retention of Māori students in secondary schools; problems establishing effective home-school communication and accommodating whanau involvement; problems catering for kōhanga reo and kura kaupapa Māori students entering English-medium schools; coping with differing

home-school standards, priorities and expectations, for example, in behaviour, discipline and dress; coping with transience, irregular attendance and truancy; culturally inappropriate special education programmes and services; ineffective information dissemination relating to all special education provisions.

2. Parental, whanau and socio-economic factors

Lack of: Parental knowledge in areas that impinge on their children’s development, for example parenting and budgeting skills and accessing services; involvement in, valuing and support of education; financial resources, impinging on the health and learning of children, limiting parents’ ability to support their child’s education, and affecting children’s access to special education assistance beyond that provided by schools.

Other difficulties: Single parent families, limited language experiences, limited or unrealistic educational expectations.

D. WHAT ARE SOME APPROPRIATE WAYS OF ADDRESSING THESE CHALLENGES?

Interview results

Teachers and teacher-aides were asked how Māori learners with special needs were being catered for appropriately and successfully. Principals were asked about ways in which SE2000 initiatives were meeting the special needs of Māori learners. Most of the strategies described fall into three categories:

1. Improving the quantity and quality of the teaching given to Māori learners with special educational needs.
2. Improving home-school-community communication and collaboration.
3. Making learners’ programmes more culturally appropriate.

1. Quality education

The extra staffing needed to provide small group and one-to-one teaching for Māori learners with special needs was obtained by reorganising staffing schedules, enlisting the help of parents, whanau and volunteers from the community, and employing extra teachers or teacher-aides. The required funding came from general school funds, SEG, Māori language grants and outside contributions, such as money from the Ngai Tahu Trust Board. Additional input was gained through dual enrolment with the Correspondence School, peer tutors and mentors, and after school homework classes and recreational activities for students at risk.

To improve the quality of teaching programmes, people who had expertise and experience in Special and Māori Education were consulted. Whole school planning and participation were also effective. One teacher in a predominantly Māori school

described a school-based early literacy programme targeted at new entrants who had no preschool experience. She reported that the children involved in the 10 week intensive programme were making “significant gains.”

A frequently mentioned strategy was to make sure Māori learners with special needs were placed in the “right” class with the “right” person. More often than not this was explained as being placed with a Māori teacher, but placement with supportive peers was also mentioned.

2. Home-school-community communication and collaboration

A number of schools employed a Māori liaison person to act as a go-between, or a Māori social worker to work with families where children presented with behaviour problems. Where financial hardship was an issue, some schools provided meals, in one case SEG money was used to pay for an eye test and in another, a free doctor’s consultation was provided in school one day a week. Teachers reported making home visits, acting as advocates and supporting parents by attending out-of-school special needs-related meetings with them. School-based programmes were run to teach parents computer and budgeting skills and how to hear reading at home. Parents were also invited to complete their study at after school homework classes provided initially for their children. Community workers, Māori organisations and personnel were all used. Respondents emphasised the importance of culturally appropriate, jargon-free information to parents, and a school environment that valued Māori culture and welcomed parents and whanau.

3. Cultural input

Many schools said kapa haka was of great benefit to their Māori learners with special needs. School-wide taha Māori programmes, lessons that contained Māori content and used culturally appropriate teaching strategies, programmes based on Māori values and incorporating te reo and cultural experiences, whanau grouping, and the inclusion of whanau and Māori protocols in school activities and meetings, especially IEP meetings, were all said to be effective. Providing opportunities to learn te reo with staff modelling this were also important. One teacher-aide said, “I studied Māori with him. It was something we could share and I was proud to do so”.

Summary

Overall, 70% of the school respondents believe that SE2000 initiatives are adequately addressing Māori needs and 30% believe they are not. The “in practice” satisfaction rate ranges from 11% to 34%, the dissatisfaction rate from 10% to 15%.

RTLBs and SEG received the greatest number of positive comments in the qualitative data and were the highest rated initiatives with regard to Māori students getting a better deal now than before SE2000. But they were two of the three lowest rated initiatives in overall satisfaction in catering for Māori learners with special education needs. This suggests that while Māori learners with special needs are better off now than they were before RTLBs and SEG were introduced, what is being provided in these initiatives is still considered far from adequate.

Overall, the results suggest that SE2000 provisions are of some benefit to Māori learners with special educational needs in English-medium schools, but the extent and adequacy of that benefit is open to debate.

Parent and child related factors were rated as the top four major challenges, while factors related to special education and schools were rated as the bottom four. Financial hardship of parents/whanau is rated No.1 in the list of specific needs of Māori learners with special needs. It is also rated the No.1 challenge in catering for Māori learners with special needs.

Providing culturally appropriate services is No.2 on the list of specific needs, but is seen as a considerable challenge in only 51 schools. The 412 schools where the provision of culturally appropriate services is seen as only a minor problem, or no problem at all, might simply contain very few, if any, Māori children with special needs. Alternatively, they might be staffed by teachers who do not see the need for culturally appropriate programmes for Māori learners. This is a challenge in itself.

A wide variety of interesting and successful strategies were reported in the questionnaire results for this section. Positive reinforcement and self-esteem strategies were rated the most effective. It can be argued that they are also the easiest to implement.

A number of schools indicated that they had never used the strategies listed. This is worrying. For example, respondents rated parental/whanau involvement No.3 in the list of specific needs of Māori learners with special needs. Yet 147 schools reported that they had never used this strategy.

Comparing this section with other sections, the results of Phase One of this research project back up the concern that one of the major challenges to the provision of culturally appropriate services to Māori learners with special needs is the number of teachers who do not see the need for such services.



MĀORI ISSUES: KURA KAUPAPA MĀORI

10

For SE2000 initiatives to cater adequately for all Māori learners, the demands and requirements of their particular learning context must be taken into consideration. Māori students with special needs in kura kaupapa Māori have specific needs that are different from those of students in English-medium education.

Quantitative data is being collected in a national survey of the 59 official kura kaupapa Māori and their 13 satellites. This survey was written in conjunction with kura kaupapa whanau. The results will be presented in a later report.

This section covers the results of interviews in seven kura kaupapa Māori. The interview schedule prepared for English-medium schools was translated into Māori and interviews in Māori and English were conducted in five kura kaupapa Māori on the East Coast, one in the Tauranga area and one in the Wanganui District. A total of 14 people were interviewed. These included seven teaching principals, three teachers, three teacher-aides, and one board of trustees chairperson.

Interview results

Identifying children with special educational needs

The most frequently mentioned ways of identifying children were observation of the child's social and learning behaviours, curriculum based assessment, norm referenced comparison of achievement, discussion with whanau, and prior assessment. Also mentioned was student and teacher feedback and "by their ahua." The literal translation of "ahua" is form, character or appearance. It also has a spiritual dimension.

The principal was the most frequently mentioned person to decide who needed special education support. Other people involved were teachers, whanau, board of trustees and SES staff.

Decile ranking and Special Education Grant (SEG)

The five kura with a decile ranking of 1 agreed with their ranking. However, the two ranked 2 both believed they should be ranked 1. One of these schools stated that they had only one parent in the entire kura who was employed. The other had been upgraded from a 1 to a 2 and could not understand why.

Four schools were not affected by annual variation of SEG funding, two were, and one did not know. Three people said they did not know enough about the SEG funding formula to comment on it. Two believed that kura kaupapa Māori status should be a part of the formula to meet the extra resourcing needs of kura. Another praised the formula's recognition of socio-economic factors.

Access to SEG funds was generally based on need at both a school-wide and individual level. Assessment of learning, socio-economic circumstances, staff discussion, parent input via Individual Education Programme (IEP) and board of trustee consultation were all reported as integral to this process. Two people mentioned SEG being used for those learners who missed out on ORS funding.

Some comments showed that some people had a muddled or a limited understanding of the nature and intent of SEG. For example, one person talked about the arduous process of having SES personnel assess students in order to be eligible for SEG, while another talked of not applying for the grant this year.

Summary

The interview results show that while SE2000 initiatives, particularly SEG, are having some beneficial impact on Māori students with special needs in kura kaupapa Māori, this impact is only limited. Progress has been hindered by three major areas of concern:

1. A lack of knowledge about SE2000 initiatives, especially among kura kaupapa Māori on the East Coast.
2. The lack of culturally appropriate resources, professional development, services and personnel with te reo and tikanga expertise needed to cater for Māori learners with special needs in kura kaupapa Māori.
3. The lack of acknowledgement of and provision for "special needs" associated with total immersion Māori education.

Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour: RTLBs have just recently been appointed on the East Coast. Six people said it was too early to comment on the effectiveness of their services. The four who had experience with RTLBs ranged from being very satisfied with their services to being very unhappy. Five people expressed a concern about RTLBs not having the cultural and te reo expertise to work in kura kaupapa Māori. People gave a wide variety of suggestions when asked how they would like RTLBs to work within their schools.

Professional Development: When asked "What difference has SE2000 made to your school?" three said none at all. The benefits mentioned by others included increased funding, accountability, awareness of children's learning and behavioural needs, improved assessment, and more informed and committed whanau.

Three kura believed there was a real need for comprehensive board training about SE2000. It was suggested that RTLB and/or Māori could deliver this training and that people be supported to attend. There was some criticism of previous BoT training lacking depth or excluding kura kaupapa Māori.

Five people mentioned the lack of training, specialist support and resources as negatively affecting their confidence in catering for students with special needs. On the other hand, three said training and specialist support had boosted their confidence.

Five teachers and teacher-aides reported wanting training. This included education about SE2000, skills to identify and support students with special needs, training on ADD and mirimiri (massage). Two teacher-aides reported that their kura paid for training for them, while a third said she had not received any.

Residential Schools: None of the seven kura involved in these interviews had used residential schools.

Speech-Language Initiative: Four kura reported having no experience of the SLI professional development programme for teachers with year 1-3 classes. Most people were unaware of this programme. Yet many challenges in helping students with speech language difficulties were reported. These included the lack of culturally appropriate resources, services and professionals with the cultural knowledge and te reo expertise to help students with speech language problems in the kura kaupapa Māori environment, and the wide variation in children's te reo ability at school entry. Where te reo support from home was lacking, progress was slow. Many parents were simply not able to support their children in this area. A further language problem was reported in the Form 1 and 2 area where some kura are introducing English.

No kura reported receiving speech-language services from SES. Two teacher-aides recorded helping students who were having problems enunciating words, using “common sense”.

Ongoing and Transitional Resourcing Scheme: Five kura reported no experience of ORS, and three had no knowledge of it. The other two kura had one ORS funded student each. The first of these described “excellent results”; the second was pleased with their student’s assessment, but stated that there was no one available with the expertise needed to provide ongoing management. Four kura reported no experience of the verification process and two people stated that they had no knowledge of it. One kura reported that “quite a few” of their ORS applications were turned down. No noticeable academic learning had occurred for these students, who were also slipping back socially. The speed and nature of the verification process was criticised.

Specific needs of Māori learners with special needs

Responses focused on the need to have teachers, teacher-aides and other professionals competent in te reo, tikanga and special education expertise. The services provided should be culturally appropriate. They should be in te reo, be based on Māori values, use Māori resources and techniques such as mirimiri, affirm the student’s cultural identity and be positively focused.

The need to involve and support parents and whanau was a high priority, along with taking home background, geographic and socioeconomic circumstances into account. There was a preference for having services provided for Māori by Māori, especially Māori of the same iwi and hapū as the students involved. The benefits mentioned were awareness of iwi and hapū issues, aspirations and tikanga, educators with Māori cognition and potential role models for students.

There was unanimous agreement that the specific needs of Māori students with special education needs were not being met by SE2000, although three people reported that the situation was improving. In particular, positive comments were expressed about SEG funding, more Māori being employed in special education, greater cognizance of “our way of doing things” and the provision of friendlier, more accessible services.

Māori students were missing out because of the lack of culturally appropriate services, resources and professionals with cultural and te reo expertise. This placed added stress and demands on teachers in kura kaupapa Māori, who reported consulting with principals and kaumatua to help them handle the challenges they encountered. One person reported truancy as an additional barrier to student progress.

Teacher-aide issues

The three teacher-aides interviewed had wide and varied employment and life experiences. They were all competent in te reo and tikanga and used this knowledge when working with students with special needs. None of the teacher-aides felt knowledgeable about SE2000, although everyone expressed a wish to be informed and upskilled.

Other concerns

These generally centred around the lack of culturally appropriate resources, services and personnel with te reo and tikanga, the specific Māori language-related problems faced by kura kaupapa Māori and the lack of information about SE2000.

Summary

While SE2000 initiatives, especially SEG, are having some beneficial effect on Maori students with special needs in kura kaupapa Maori, this impact is limited. Progress is being hindered by a lack of knowledge about SE2000, the lack of culturally appropriate resources, professional development, services and personnel with te reo and tikanga expertise, and the lack of acknowledgement of and provision for “special needs” associated with total immersion education.



MAORI ISSUES: KOHANGA REO

The particular concerns of Maori children with special needs in kohanga reo have been absent from SE2000 literature. SE2000 research (ACNielsen 1998, Cullen & Bevan-Brown 1999) has identified a lack of culturally appropriate special education services available to kohanga reo, limited special education expertise amongst kohanga reo staff, and few SES referrals coming from kohanga reo.

The early childhood interview schedule was translated into Māori and interviews were held in both Māori and English in seven kohanga reo in the East Coast and Opotiki regions. Sixteen people were involved: seven kaiako, five kaiawhina, three whanau members and one kohanga reo administrator. One of the kaiawhina was also the chairperson of a board of trustees.

Results

When asked how it was known whether a child had special needs, people in six kohanga reo reported that they used observation of the child's behaviour, communication skills and ability to perform tasks. Children were compared with their peers and against standards considered appropriate for their age.

Only two of the 16 people interviewed had heard of SE2000, and their understanding was minimal. Two kaiako mentioned that the first time they had heard the words "Special Education 2000" was when they were approached by the researchers.

In terms of specific assistance under SE2000, only one kohanga reo had received the services of an Education Support Worker (ESW). That was some time ago and they were unaware of how the ESW was funded. Most did not know what the role of an ESW was. Four kohanga reo did not know what ORS funding was. Five kohanga reo reported having no contact with a speech-language therapist, despite the fact that three of these five had children with speech-language problems.

There are particular problems associated with identifying speech defects in te reo, because many letters of the alphabet and their associated sounds do not exist in Māori. Therefore a child who cannot pronounce **s**, **b** or **g**, for instance, would not be identified in a totally Māori-speaking environment.

The general consensus was that SE2000 policies were not, at this stage, having an impact on kohanga reo. This was because of a lack of knowledge, funding, time and services, not because of a lack of children with special needs. A definite need for special education assistance was identified, especially in the area of children with behaviour problems. The hope for increased access to special education services

in the future was expressed.

Six out of the seven kōhanga reo had encountered challenges in catering for children with special needs. A range of people were consulted and involved in meeting these challenges: parents, whanau including kaumatua, other kōhanga reo personnel, SES and the health section of the Runanga. While one kōhanga reported managing well, others cited a range of frustrations including lack of support, skills, time and access to resources. On the whole it was considered that Māori children with special needs were missing out.

Lack of training was the most frequently mentioned factor contributing to people's lack of confidence in the special needs area. Also mentioned was parents' need for training in identification, managing and coping with children with special needs.

Summary

The interview results show that Māori children with special needs in kōhanga reo are not being adequately catered for by SE2000 initiatives. Three main challenges have been identified:

1. Overcoming a limited understanding of SE2000 provisions amongst kōhanga reo staff and whanau

A definite need for specialist services in kōhanga reo was identified. However, there was widespread ignorance of what help was available, who was eligible to receive it and how it could be accessed. People believed that a face-to-face approach was the most appropriate and successful means of disseminating information. Suggestions for hui and visits by the "right" people to explain SE2000 provisions should be seriously considered. These people could be kōhanga reo employees who have the required cultural, te reo and special education expertise.

2. Lack of special education training

This was a major concern of most kōhanga reo. Training in identification, teaching and management skills was wanted not only for kaiako but also for parents and whanau members.

3. Provision of culturally appropriate services to kōhanga reo

Special education professionals with expertise in te reo and tikanga were few and far between. People reported frustration in finding professionals able to use te reo in helping children and able to provide staff and whanau with culturally appropriate guidance and support.

▲▲▲ SUPPORT SERVICES

In this study, "support" includes information, advice, advocacy, assessment or direct work by specialist staff with students with special needs, and/or their families. This support may be provided by the Ministry of Education, Specialist Education Services (SES), or a wide range of commercial or voluntary providers.

Special education policy takes place in a context influenced by other government education, health and social policy initiatives. Boundaries of interest and contractual responsibility for the provision of support to students with special education needs may be blurred as a consequence. Parents, caregivers and whanau may look to groups such as Citizens Advice Bureaux for information and advocacy.

The way in which distribution of resources is organised through SE2000 has made many support services contestable. In principle, devolution of funding allows educational facilities to use alternative providers. However, their availability varies considerably by region.

Data were gathered on the range of and satisfaction with support services provided under contract by SES, alternative support services, and issues arising. A major objective was to monitor and evaluate the ways in which Vote Education resources are operationalised as support services, and the effectiveness of the links between support services across the separate resourcing components.

Interview results

Although the majority of the comments in the 304 responses were negative, the most numerous single response was from 52 school principals who made a point of endorsing the principles underlying the introduction of SE2000, as did 24 teachers and 10 teacher-aides. However, 31 principals thought the policy changes had been introduced too hurriedly, while 24 principals, along with 24 teachers and 14 teacher-aides, argued that elements of the centrally resourced support structures should have been retained.

Other issues raised included the need for additional administration support/ concerns about bureaucracy (82 people); concerns about class size/stress/ workload/challenges of inclusion (79); and poor relationships with/service from SES (72, including 44 principals).

A much smaller number commented favourably on the support services historically provided by SES; and a total of 28 principals reported positive experience as fundholders, or wanting to become fundholders.

Substantially more negative (43) than positive (3) comments were made about the specific use of teacher-aides in classrooms by principals and teachers. Some said it increased their workloads, because of the need to prepare and monitor programmes for teacher-aides to deliver.

Teacher-aides themselves gave far more negative than positive responses on hours worked/tenure (28 negative to 7 positive), information and training (38 to 3), and pay (29 to 1). However, responses on expertise, status, acknowledgement and feeling valued were much more evenly split, with 18 positive and 19 negative.

Questionnaire results

Schools were asked about overall levels of satisfaction with support services provided by SES in each of the high/very high needs components. For SBI, 16% of schools were satisfied or very satisfied, but 23% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied and for 14% it was too early to tell. For ORS, the respective results were 45%, 25% and 6%. For SLI they were 35%, 26% and 7%. However, non-responses were high too: 23% for SBI, 13% for ORS and 18% for SLI.

In terms of whether the level of support services had improved under SE2000, RTLB and ORS were judged to have improved by 45% of schools and ORS by 31%, compared with 17% for both SBI and SLI. Again, the non-responses were high, reaching 39% for SBI.

At this stage of policy implementation, fewer than 10% of schools had reportedly used a non-SES provider in SBI, ORS and SLI.

Summary

SE2000 is a complex policy which allocates funds for support service structures at school, local cluster and regional fundholder levels, through a range of different mechanisms over which schools have differing levels of direct control. Each of the five SE2000 resourcing components is separately managed and has been separately introduced. Most were being implemented as this research was being done. The role of SES has also changed markedly.

So it is not surprising that the proportion of negative responses was high.

Frustration consistently focused on the perceived lack of resources delivered at site level. Where dissatisfaction levels with the quality of support provided become acute, schools may explore other administrative options.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The majority of young children with special needs are educated in regular early childhood programmes. A small minority attend specialized early intervention services. SES is the lead service provider for the early childhood sector. Increasing special education services for this sector is known to be cost effective in the medium and long term (MoE Update, May 1997).

In 1997, the Ministry of Education said it would increase special education services for the early childhood sector by extending the provision of coordinated specialist advice and support, teaching and paraprofessional support to children up to the age of five years. The aim was to:

- identify infants and young children with special education needs and provide appropriate support as early as possible
- provide a sound education in the early years for future learning and achievement through programmes which include support for parents (MoE Update, May 1997).

Late in 1997, the government announced new funding of \$19.5 million over the next two and a half years for children with special education needs in the early childhood sector. This would allow early childhood learners to receive co-ordinated specialist teaching, other specialist services (including speech-language therapy), and paraprofessional support.

From July 1998, increased specialist services were intended to provide teaching advice and support (including speech-language therapy). Physiotherapy and occupational therapy have been provided through health or disability support services funding (MoE Update, February 1998). In May 1998, the new funding figure of \$19 million was announced. This was to be provided over three years for children with special education needs in early childhood centres. There was to be a national moderation system for allocating these funds (MoE Update, May 1998).

National contracts are currently being let for providing services to children in the early childhood and school sectors who are deaf or hearing impaired or blind or visually impaired, and who are not included in the Ongoing and Transitional Resourcing Scheme (MoE Update, October 1998). But in 1999 current arrangements remain in place for deaf children in the early childhood and school sectors (MoE Update for Families, February 1999).

The Ministry is has worked with ACC and the Ministry of Health to identify where there are overlaps in the provision of services to learners in schools and early childhood settings. The aim is to ensure that a seamless, integrated resourcing mechanism is in place for these learners (MoE Update for Families, February 1999).

Results

In this section, results are reported from two sources: the national survey of early childhood centres, and interviews with early childhood educators.

As the Methodology section showed, the early childhood sector response rate to the national survey questionnaire was only 39% (115 returned, out of 300 distributed). Several items in the questionnaire were not completed by a substantial number of those who did respond - up to 61% for some general items. This low response rate means that the questionnaire results may not be valid. Interviews with early childhood educators were conducted in four areas: Auckland, Coromandel, East Coast, Central, South Island. There seems to be a general lack of information about SE2000 in the early childhood sector.

Questionnaire results

The 115 centres which responded to the questionnaire stated that a total of 191 children were receiving early intervention services for special needs. Among these children, 75% were NZ European/Pakeha, and 20% were Māori. Only 4 Pacific children (all girls) were identified as receiving these services.

Perceptions of government priorities

“Promoting inclusion” was seen as a high government priority for introducing SE2000, followed by improving education outcomes and reducing expenditure. Increasing expenditure was seen as the lowest priority.

Getting a better deal

Of the 107 responses to the question about whether children with special needs were getting a better deal than before SE2000, 50% said “in some cases”, 16% said “seldom” and 10% said “mostly”. However, 23% did not know.

Information about SE2000

The results given above indicate that early childhood educators cautiously acknowledge some positive aspects of SE2000 initiatives. However, almost half the respondents said they had either not heard about SE2000, or had little knowledge of it.

The vast majority of centres - 91% - believed they were poorly informed about SE2000 policy. The only centres reporting that they were well informed were the three centres in the sample that catered specifically for children with special needs.

Educators were asked how they would like to be informed. They suggested:

- Copy of policy, newsletter or brochures
- Seminars, workshops and cluster meetings
- Face-to-face contact with SES personnel/professionals.

Changes since SE2000

Overall, 64% said SE2000 policy was not affecting their centre, 14% mentioned positive changes to services (e.g. “more hours for support worker”) and 13% referred to service provision problems (e.g. “bigger need than services available”).

Funding issues were identified in 37% of the 81 responses to the question “Are there any other points you would like to raise about SE2000?” These were mainly concerned with children who did not fit the funding criteria - for example, mild to moderate needs, behaviour needs, and children with English as a second language. Concerns were also raised about some schools not accepting children with identified needs, and that funding did not accompany the child to school.

Meeting the needs of Māori children

Only 38 Māori children were identified as receiving intervention services for special needs. Several challenges in meeting such children’s needs in regular early childhood services were listed. The main challenges seen as “a considerable problem” were parent/whanau financial hardship (37%), irregular child attendance, low parental expectations, and shortage of special education professionals with knowledge of Māori culture and te reo.

Fifty of the 115 respondents did not respond to the question about how SE2000 had affected the involvement of Māori parents/whanau, and another 20 to 25 responded “not applicable”. Among those who did reply, most thought that involvement had stayed the same.

Only 70 responded to the question on rating eight strategies for helpfulness to young Māori children with special education needs, on the basis of the educator’s experience. A high proportion said they had never used these strategies, ranging from 32% for self-esteem strategies to 80% for a Māori teacher-aide. Those who did use the listed strategies mostly considered them to be effective.

Interview respondents were asked “What factors need to be considered in catering for young Māori children who require special educational assistance in the centre?” From 134 educator responses, four main factors were identified:

- Cultural sensitivity and knowledge of protocols and customs
- Whanau involvement, including use of marae
- Māori staff; culturally appropriate materials, teaching styles, service delivery; staff with cultural sensitivity
- Collaborative partnerships and open communication (among home/centre/specialists)

Ten educators (7%) stated that Māori children should not be treated differently, while 20 (15%) referred to problems (socioeconomic factors, transience, language issues, and gaps in services such as lack of SLTs and funding).

A total of 35 educators said they had not encountered any challenges in catering for young Māori children with special needs in their centre. This group was asked how Māori children with special education needs were being catered for. Seven responses referred to cultural sensitivity and use of Māoritanga and te reo in curriculum, and six referred to staff qualifications and ongoing professional development. Three responses indicated that it was not an issue as there was a choice of kōhanga reo available, and nine that all children were treated equally whatever their culture. Another three responses referred to individual needs being well catered for through the Individual Development Programme (IDP) process, and seven referred to parent-whanau support and open lines of communication.

Speech-language services

Survey respondents were asked to state the number of children in the centre with speech-language difficulties during 1998 to 1999. The reported numbers are higher than the numbers reported as having special needs.

The results for the speech-language services questions indicate that there are still significant gaps in speech-language services delivery (i.e. speech-language therapy time in some areas). This matches the gaps identified in the 1998 survey of baseline data on young children receiving early intervention services through SES (ACNielsen, 1998).

Given the low response rate for the survey, the questionnaire results should be treated with caution. However, the interview responses do confirm that a significant number of educators believe that SLT services are ineffective or non-existent.

Altogether, 18% of centres reported no or little contact with SLTs. In another question, 22% referred to problems with contact, such as delays with referrals and difficulties with accessing SLTs. In terms of the level of support services provided for young children with speech-language difficulties since the introduction of SE2000, 19% thought the level had improved, 26% thought it had deteriorated and 26% thought it had remained the same. Another 13% said it was too early to tell.

Educators were also asked how well trained they felt to carry out speech-language tasks themselves. The responses were almost equally divided between those who said they were well-trained, or could carry out speech-language tasks with guidance from the SLT, and those who said they were not well trained enough, or would like more training or professional development.

Professional development

Education support workers (ESWs) were considered to be better prepared than newly trained teachers for working with young children with special needs, although the same proportions of teachers and ESWs (42%) were reported to be “quite well” prepared.

Different groups of professional development needs were said to be required for educator and ESW roles. Centre staff highlighted professional development or training in special needs. Education support workers highlighted specific information about the child’s condition, and general background on child development, early childhood education (ECE) and teaching.

Parental involvement

As a result of SE2000 implementation, most responses said that parent/whanau involvement had remained the same, although a significant minority (26-27%) reported an increase in parent/whanau involvement in decision making.

Support services

Survey respondents were asked how well a range of specific needs are met by SES personnel. For all SES roles, the combined “very well” and “quite well” responses exceeded “not very well” responses. However, “not very well” was chosen by 20% to 30%.

Transition

The questionnaire asked about the transition from health services to education, and the continuity of support services between early intervention services and school. For both transitions, most said these areas had “remained the same” since SE2000, although more than 20% thought they had “improved slightly”. The detailed responses to the health-education transition question suggest that these may not always have been based on recent experience.

The main issues raised were to do with resourcing and co-ordination. A major resourcing issue was that health support services are not always available to support children once they have moved into the education sector. A co-ordination issue is that lack of co-ordination can result in educators receiving insufficient information about the child’s disabilities when the child enrolls at the centre.

Summary

Because of the low rate of response to the questionnaire, and the low levels of understanding of SE2000 revealed by the interview study, the results are best seen as baseline data for further research.

The interview results suggest that response patterns vary according to region or type of service. In the interviews, educators raised issues and viewpoints similar to those raised by parents, educators and SES staff in the Database and Best Practice Validation project (Cullen & Bevan-Brown, 1999). That study was based on provisions prior to SE2000. This suggests that the impact of policy changes has yet to be felt (or understood) in the early childhood sector.

▲▲▲ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Interview results

Update August 1998 states that all schools would have had opportunities to participate in special education professional development programmes by August 1998.

Differences resulting from SE2000

Principals were interviewed about the differences in their school as a result of SE2000. Around a quarter (24%) of principals indicated that there were minimal or no changes yet evident in their school as a result of national implementation of SE2000. Principals commonly indicated that their school had a philosophy or practice of “inclusion” prior to SE2000 implementation, and thus minimal changes were necessary in the school philosophy, policy or procedures.

Nevertheless, these principals often commented on finance or decision-making matters. The majority view in these comments was appreciation of the flexibility of funding through SEG. As many principals commented on receiving increased funding as on receiving reduced funding. A few principals commented on the need to supplement SEG through the Operational Grant. Other comments included varying experiences with transitional funding, financial accountability, and higher decile ranking schools receiving reduced amounts of SEG.

In terms of school climate, the most frequent response indicated no difference as a result of SE2000. Negative effects involved fear of the unknown, uncertainty as to where to source professional guidance, teachers being stressed by mainstreamed students in their classes, special ability students “missing out”, and difficulties/ambiguities in accessing professional services. Positive effects involved aspects such as guaranteed funding, identifying needs at individual school level, and increased professional reflection or discussion on individual student needs.

Training for Boards of Trustees

Most principals said boards of trustees needed either no training (33%) about SE2000, or general awareness only (38%). Where principals indicated that no training was needed, it was usually because they believed that the board of trustees was sufficiently informed by the principal or MoE circulars (47% of reasons for no training being recommended), or were concerned about governance and management issues (24%), or that it was too busy to attend training (22%). Principals were concerned about the pressures on board members to attend training on a myriad of matters, when they had their own jobs, families and related commitments as well as being board members.

When the need for training was mentioned, the most frequently mentioned area (34%) was financial obligations and accountability with SEG, especially in relation to ERO audits. Second (19%) came an overview of the policy, primarily to help support principal and staff recommendations for individual students. Several principals mentioned the value of at least one member on the board having greater knowledge or personal experience and interest in special education, to raise awareness of issues for other members. Only 5% said the board had already had training.

Teachers

Teachers generally felt positive about their confidence in dealing with students with special needs. However, lack of professional development or specific training in catering for students with special needs was mentioned as a negative factor by 25% and was the top concern in every region.

The most frequently mentioned positive factors were experience and programmes, support or collaboration with professionals outside the school, specialist training, support and collaboration within the school, and meetings and information.

Lack of professional development is clearly a factor in undermining confidence, and receiving it boosts confidence. Support from other professionals inside and outside the school was also seen as confidence building, especially when it involved some observation in the classroom. Professional sharing of information, ideas and approaches in staff meetings was mentioned by 10%. These last two do not cost much and fit well with self-management principles.

Teachers were asked, "What training would you like to receive?" The highest percentage of replies covered a wide range of specific courses. This may reflect the fact that teachers' professional development needs depend on the individual needs of the learners in their classes at the time. Next came behaviour management, information, and IEP/assessment.

Teacher-aides

Professional development and experience were the two key factors increasing teacher-aide confidence. Support or collaboration from colleagues were also highly valued, yielding similar results to those for teachers. Opportunities for professional development appear to be an important priority for teacher-aides. However, they too have varied training needs, depending mainly on the needs of the students they work with. They asked for training in behaviour management, general special needs, other courses and curriculum area courses.

Questionnaire results

The questionnaire asked, "If you have employed a newly trained teacher during the last two years, how well are they prepared for teaching students with special educational needs in the classroom?" Overall, 65% of respondents seem dissatisfied with the level to which new teachers are prepared for helping students with special educational needs. However, a combination of experience, support and collaboration both within and outside the school, and professional development courses, is likely to overcome these reported "deficiencies".

The questionnaire also asked, "How well have the needs of your school been met through SE2000 professional development programmes?" Altogether, across all the different initiatives, between 62% and 85% of respondents answered "too early to tell", "no professional development received" or gave no response.

Summary

While not all regions have received the same level of professional development, and teacher needs are clearly different, professional development is highly valued in terms of meeting student needs and building teacher confidence. In-school strategies may be easier to set up and adjust according to individual staff needs. "Outside" professional development is more likely to be successful when it is school-based. Learning to manage behaviour better concerns both teachers and teacher-aides.

Principals tend to appreciate the flexibility and autonomy the SEG brings in relation to finances and other decision-making within the school. Changes in school climate, school rolls, teaching and learning strategies as a result of SE2000 implementation are generally either minimal or too early to detect at this stage.

Teacher-aides seem enthusiastic about training in a wide range of areas related to Special Education. Yet providing them with opportunities and funding for professional development appears to be a low priority for schools.



PARENT AND CAREGIVER ISSUES

15

The Ministry of Education has repeatedly stated its commitment to parent and family choice, and to partnership in making decisions. The involvement of parents/whanau has an impact on the outcomes for children with special education needs, in both schools and early childhood services. The evaluation undertaken in this strand has aimed at partnership with parents and caregivers, so that they are not simply “informed after the event”.

Parent forums

Four parent forums were held in Christchurch, Palmerston North, Auckland and Wanganui. To advertise the forums, letters and fliers were sent to known parent or interest groups, information sheets were sent to schools, and advertisements were placed in local papers. The aims of the forums were to:

- introduce Phase One of the research project to parents (the project was also briefly described in the *Update for Families*, Issue 2)
- begin to articulate the issues as parents see them, as well as the range of responses and experiences within those issues
- develop authentic language for use in a subsequent questionnaire to parents and caregivers
- provide the outline for later in-depth qualitative interviews.

In all, over 230 parents attended these forums. Attendance ranged from approximately 130 in Auckland to about 12 in Wanganui. As the numbers were small and the forum participants were entirely self-selected, their responses cannot be seen as representative of all parent viewpoints.

Parent questionnaire

At the forums, parents were invited to complete a small questionnaire. A total of 180 questionnaires were returned. These included responses from parents who were unable to attend the forums, but asked for the questionnaire. Information was gathered from parents on the following:

Type of school or facility that their child attended: primary school dominated (53%), followed by “other” (23%) - this category included home schooling and The Correspondence School. Next came secondary school (12%), withdrawal class (8%) and early childhood centre (4%). A few answers gave more than one facility.

Involvement in decision making: Apart from ORS applications, most parents felt their involvement had remained the same or had decreased under SE2000.

Feelings about SE2000: “Cautious” (49%) and “disappointed (48%) were almost equally balanced. Only 3% were “enthusiastic”. In terms of feelings about information, 49% felt “confused”, 28% felt “poorly informed” and 23% felt “well informed”.

How well information met needs: Parents were asked to rate how well the information provided had met their needs, in terms of its quantity, quality, timeliness, usefulness and appropriateness. Less than 30% of respondents rated all these aspects of information provision as “very good” or “excellent”. Over a third rated them as “fair”. The largest percentage response for each aspect, ranging from 36% to 44%, was “poor”.

Postbox activity

The forums also involved a postbox activity based on five questions. The results are reported in narrative form only. They highlight the issues to be dealt with in greater depth (through interviews) and breadth (through a questionnaire). They also provided examples of authentic parental language to be used when designing options for responses on the questionnaire.

Sources of information about SE2000: Parents identified a wide range of sources of information:

- Informal parent and family networks
- Parent and disability organisation newsletters and meetings
- MoE publications and newsletters, public meetings, 0800 number
- SES publications and newsletters, public meetings
- School attended by child, formal and informal communication
- Voluntary agencies, e.g. Ihc, NZCCS, through publications and newsletters, public meetings
- Other advocacy networks, e.g. QPEC
- Media.

Satisfaction with information provided: Both positive and negative comments were made about the timeliness, amount, trustworthiness and quality of the information. Some participants found information easily accessible through their school or local SES, and felt that they were well informed. Others reported that they often had to ask for information or dig it out themselves, and were concerned they might miss out on something important.

Concerns about funding: Parents at the forums were concerned about the amount of funding provided; the decision making processes for allocating funding - particularly assessment and verification for ORS; SEG allocations to schools; and the ways in which SEG is used within individual schools.

Educational outcomes: Comments were made about the way in which the quality of children’s education under Special Education 2000 is affected by access to specific resources (therapies, equipment, transport), to trained personnel, to teacher-aide hours, and to support generally; and about choices regarding where and how their child will be educated.

Partnership: Some parents talked about working in partnership with school, while others did not feel they were being treated as partners, or suggested they might be in danger of being “left out of the loop”.

SE2000: Parents talked about the policy itself, and about its appropriateness, credibility, coherence, implementation.

National survey

The questionnaire to schools has allowed a preliminary comparison of some parent and professional perspectives on common questions. In the national survey, schools were asked to give their perspectives on working with parents and caregivers, and on parents' participation and access to information. They were also asked to comment on the information provided to parents and to report on the ways they included parents and caregivers in decision making.

How well has the information that has been provided to parents/whanau met their needs?

Schools were asked if the information had met needs "very well/quite well/not well/poorly", in terms of its quantity, quality, timeliness, usefulness and appropriateness. Over a third did not reply for any aspect. The majority (40%-42%) chose "quite well" for each aspect.

Summary

Comparisons of the responses to the forum questionnaire and the questionnaire to schools suggest that the perspectives of parents and professionals on participation and provision of information differ. Parents rated both much less positively than schools did.