Chapter 6

The Programmes that Schools Provided for their NESB Students
CHAPTER 6: THE PROGRAMMES THAT SCHOOLS PROVIDED FOR THEIR NESB STUDENTS
Key Points

The list within this box comprises a summary of major elements that participants mentioned when discussing the programmes that their schools provided for NESB students. These elements are then elaborated on throughout the remainder of this chapter.

- Care is taken to ensure that new NESB students — and their families — feel welcome on arrival at the school and that they are introduced to the most important aspects of the day-to-day life of the school from the outset.
- The school has an open-door policy for parents and community, and questions and participation in school life are encouraged.
- The student’s class, and the school in general, makes a point of celebrating cultural diversity.
- There is a strongly ‘inclusive’ philosophy both in class and the school as a whole whereby all students are encouraged to get involved in activities in a way which suits their personality and particular strengths and skills.
- There is a policy of steadily reducing out-of-class support (‘withdrawal’) time for NESB students, with a corresponding increase in the amount of time spent in the regular classroom.
- There is a positive working relationship between classroom teachers and the school’s ESOL coordinator to develop a cohesive approach to meeting the learning needs of the NESB student and easing their transition into a New Zealand school and into New Zealand society.
- Where necessary and possible, bilingual tutors and interpreters are used to facilitate communication between teacher and student, and between school staff and the student’s parents/family.
- NESB students are encouraged to retain and/or improve or build on their first language.
- Students already in the classroom are ‘prepared’ by their teacher for the arrival of NESB students by being given information about the child’s country of origin and, where appropriate or relevant, details about why the child has come to New Zealand (eg, because of war in a child’s homeland) to enable them to have some insight into and understanding of their new classmate’s situation.
- Peer tutoring was found to be a valuable teaching strategy in programmes of support for NESB students.
- In-class helpers — such as teacher aides, parents, bilingual tutors — are a vital resource for many teachers.
- As much as possible, students are provided with [age-appropriate] materials with which to work which help them learn about, and adjust to, day-to-day life in New Zealand; they are also given assignments which allow opportunities to talk, write, or read about their own country and life experiences.
Key Points — continued

- ‘Pastoral care’ is an important aspect of any programme provided for NESB students and their families.

Introduction

It was not within the scope of the present study to obtain and present detailed ‘technical’ information about each of the programmes participating schools provided for their NESB students. Nor would it have been possible to do justice within a report of this kind to the intricacies and work involved in the programmes which participating schools had developed.1 Instead, however, this chapter outlines what seemed to emerge as the major or most salient elements of the programmes and support which we learned about in our visits to the schools.

On the basis of material presented in the previous chapter and reinforced again throughout the present chapter, it is clear that the chief goal of all participating schools’ programmes and support for NESB students was to provide these students with equality of educational opportunities to enable them to make the best of their individual interests and abilities.

Introducing NESB Students to the School

“... To step into the world of the ... school is often an overwhelming experience. Students and their families have to deal with school systems which by necessity operate for maximum efficiency, and which generally reflect a Pakeha culture.

“For NESB families, it is especially important that the initial encounter with the ... school is welcoming and sensitive. The student’s individuality and identification within a particular group need to be recognised and valued.” 2

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1 Exhibits 10 and 11 (pp. 126–129), however, provide examples of programme outlines and objectives for form 3 and ‘intermediate level’ NESB students at a participating secondary school, while Exhibit 9 (pp. 122-125) contains professionally developed suggestions for teachers helping NESB students understand the language of instructions and directions (including subject-specific directions), mastery of which is an essential step for effective learning in the classroom.

TWO VIEWS OF SCHOOLS PROVIDING FOR NESB STUDENTS

“I think the main way [to support teachers working with NESB students] really is [for government] to provide the resources, in the form of financial resource, so that we can then allocate that the best way we can for our school. Because [the programmes that you provide] depend so much on your staff and the make-up of your school and on how your community sees it working, and all that sort of thing. We have reached a formula here that works for our school in the way that we approach these kids. Now it may not work in a school, say, five kilometres down the road, or at a rural school or somewhere else, but it does work for us here. And the community is happy with what we are doing.”

[Deputy principal, intermediate school.]

“I get the feeling with ESOL generally speaking, and sort of on a global basis, that every school out there is doing their own little thing, there is no coordinated programme or anything that everyone can tune into. Everyone seems to sort of have this ESOL element to their school and they develop their own little programme according to how they see fit, and I suppose that’s good but on the other hand sometimes you tend to feel as if you are working in a bit of a vacuum and you don’t know if you are doing the right thing — we think we are doing the right thing, but who is to tell you if you’re not? We don’t quite know. We work out our programmes ... and everyone seems to know what they are doing within the school but we think, ‘What is everybody else out there doing?’ No one seems to know what anybody else is doing and it all seems very ad hoc. You have documents and [so on] on all other areas of the curriculum and I know this is a relatively new area of learning, or [at least] has become more obvious in the last five years or so, but I still feel as though a lot of us are working on our own in our own little area without quite knowing whether we are on the right track.”

[ESOL coordinator, primary school.]
A characteristic of the schools which took part in the study was their emphasis on ensuring that NESB students — and their families — were made to feel welcome right from their initial contact with the school.

“[When] I do the enrolments, I speak with the parents or the caregivers, and then I try, if I can, to make a home visit or get the parents to come and see me with another member of their community, so they’re not threatened and so they can speak to me, and so that I can find out what schooling the child has had prior to coming here, where they have lived, what their background has been, and where they fit in with the other [NESB families at the school] — a lot of our NESB children are related to each other or [the families] have come in groups, so although they’re not necessarily related, they know each other. So I like to see where they all fit in together. That’s useful. ... [I like to gather as much information as I can] about their previous background [so I can work out] my approach to them, what their needs might be. As I say, a lot of them [here] are refugees and have had quite traumatic experiences — I need to know about those, so that I’m not upsetting them or approaching things in the wrong way. The more you know about that sort of thing, the easier it is. So being in touch with members of their family is helpful. The older [NESB] children that we have here at school [from the same community] are very useful as well in that regard — both for providing information and interpreting. A lot of our children arrive with no English at all, so they rely on interpreters a lot.” [ESOL coordinator, primary school.]

In the passage which follows a teacher stresses the importance of being available to the students, and of forging strong links between the school and the students’ families in order to keep lines of communication open, thereby helping to minimise any problems or worries which could impact on the students’ learning.

“I think just making sure that the line of communication between the home and the school is [open is vital] — I have parents who ring me quite often or come into school and see me. A lot of the parents, especially of the Somali children, are at the polytech learning English themselves, and it’s kind of on the way, so school’s a bit of a stop-off point. They’ll bring children to school and then go to polytech, quite often come in to see me — for no particular reason, they’ll just come in and visit — or they ring me. [Also], quite a few pupils will ring me at night just to chat. And I find that quite useful, because if I think something is going on at school that I’m not sure about, or if there’s something going on at home, I can mention it, and say to them, ‘Come and see me at school if you’re worried about something.’ They don’t abuse [their ability to ring me] either, which is good. They’ll phone me every now and then just to say ‘Hello’ but more often than not it’s to tell me about something, and that way I get to hear about it before it becomes too much of a worry for them. ... The pastoral care of them is very important, because if you’re going to have them settling down and mixing in well at school, you can’t just say, ‘When you’re at school, do this’, and then forget about

A welcoming experience for NESB students and their families on arrival at school provides a sound basis for subsequent interactions.
them. I really do feel you’ve got to be accountable to them and be available to them, outside school as well, because it helps build trust.” [ESOL coordinator, primary school.]

Some participants in the study, however, indicated that ability to successfully welcome students was not always straightforward and that the process often had to be developed through ‘trial and error’. Some schools admitted that when they first had NESB students on their rolls they had been at a loss to know how to deal with them and, as a result, had not handled the introduction process well. However, over time, they had gained valuable experience and insights into how best to introduce new students and their families into the school.

“[When we first began to have NESB students] what we found was happening was that the best teacher in the world would get a sinking feeling when on a Monday morning the DP comes walking down with this [NESB] kid in tow — you know, ‘Hello, here is the new student.’ The kid was feeling isolated right from the start anyway because they were coming into a new language environment, and they were treated as an interruption basically right from the time they arrived. The office didn’t really have time to deal with them so thrust forms at them and they didn’t even usually see me [deputy principal]. And then they were fired down to the teacher who was busy teaching, and then the teacher had to say [to her class], ‘Hang on kids, get out a book and read it quietly’. It just wasn’t positive from the moment they walked in the door really. So we have now set up a system so that when [the new student and his or her family] come to the school our receptionist at the office gives them our standard enrolment form and a questionnaire [ie, the appropriate version of the bilingual information form produced by the Education Advisory Service, Auckland3]. We use this [questionnaire] a lot because it gives us everything we need, it is superb. We give them the school information booklet and we give them the dental forms. And they are asked to bring in whatever documents they have, too, from overseas, like school reports. We check their eligibility for enrolment, in other words, are they living in the zone, they must provide proof of that. Now all that can be done in the space of about ten minutes by [our receptionist] and then she makes an appointment for them with me for the following Tuesday. My Tuesday mornings are kept clear in case there is an enrolment coming in through that week. So if they come into the school on Wednesday, they are not seen by me until the following Tuesday morning. That means there is a specific time allocated and I’ll spend around 45 minutes with them at that time. It also gives them time if they need to, to get an interpreter, or if they feel that they need it, we will get one for them. We have a Mandarin speaker on the staff here as one of our ESOL resource people. We also have parents who we can call in for other languages if we need to. [During the interview] I will go through the information in the school handbook with them and check that they are fully familiar with what is happening with the school and if they have got any questions. And then what

3 A version of this form is reproduced in Exhibit 8 on pages 94-99 of this report.
happens is I use all that information to then place the child in a class. But they do not start in that class until the following Monday. So it is quite a long process but it means that they have come in some time during the [previous] week, I’ve seen them on a Tuesday morning, by the Wednesday I have them placed in a class. That gives time for the office to be notified of which class the student is going into, there is time for the class teacher, the syndicate leader, all the technicraft and specialist area teachers to be notified that this child is arriving. The teacher can then say to the kids [in his or her class] on the Wednesday that there is a child arriving the following Monday from Korea, this is their name, organise them a desk and a chair, and so on. So by the time they walk in on Monday, the class knows their name, who they are. So even though the delay is there, it is much better. We’ve had very, very positive responses from the community on this.” [Deputy principal, intermediate school.]

The approach one school took was to have an initial meeting with the student and his or her family and then to advise the family to spend a while getting used to their new surroundings before sending their child to school. It was felt that taking time to learn about the wider community first would ease the transition process into the school.

“We won’t let the kids start immediately [they arrive in New Zealand]. [After they enrol, I say to parents], ‘In the meantime, take them shopping, or to the park, let them experience New Zealand, let them start getting some vocabulary and start building that up’. Bringing them to school with a welcoming experience and at least with a [basic] vocabulary knowledge is so much more helpful than arriving off the plane and straight into the school and they haven’t got a clue what’s going on.” [Principal, primary school.]

Another participant expressed a similar view to that inherent in the previous passage.

“I feel for many of these children it’s a big jump straight into the school system. ... It’s pretty daunting for them, arriving at school on Monday and then straight into a class. Ideally, and this is a personal view, I feel that when they arrive in New Zealand, they need to spend some time [elsewhere] where they are given a basic education to give them time to adjust before they come to school. ... They often come from a formal situation where there might be very large classes or the teachers speak very quietly and [by comparison] they find our classes disruptive and noisy with naughty children — children speaking out of turn, which is true, but they think it’s very bad and awful, and the way the children swear or the way they speak to the teacher they find that really bad.” [Classroom teacher, primary school.]

However, as it appears to be the case that NESB students do begin school shortly after their arrival in New Zealand, most schools are in a position of having to do the best they can to ease their transition into school. The following illustrates a practical strategy being pursued by one school to help new NESB students settle in a strange, and potentially very alarming, new environment.
“We are developing, and it is very much still in the developing stage, what we call ‘ethnic boxes’ so that if you are from Hong Kong, when you are welcomed into the classroom, the teacher can get you the ethnic box from Hong Kong full of things from Hong Kong — maps, little souvenirs — just to make you feel happy. There is also [a box] on New Zealand coming up so they can feel part of [their new country]. So we are trying to develop those for a range of countries. The emphasis is on making the child feel comfortable in the classroom. It must be a very terrifying experience and we just try to give them a sense of having a wee bit of power there, that they are not totally out of it.” [ESOL coordinator, intermediate school.]

Learning About and Celebrating Cultural Diversity within the School

Many of the teachers who were interviewed stressed that an emphasis on appreciating everybody’s culture is a vital step towards helping everyone in a school get along well together. They felt that learning about each other’s cultures, through, for example, music, dance, food, and by listening to people speak their own, first language, can be both informative and an enjoyable, positive experience for all participants.

“I sought help with the Sri Lankan children because our cultures are so different. I got one of the mothers in who had been a school teacher in Sri Lanka. And she taught them some songs, with me there, and we taped them and we got the music and they [the Sri Lankan children] did a performance in front of the school. They were dressed in their national costume. That was lovely, just to make them feel special. They don’t have to bury their culture just because they have come to New Zealand. I did that simply to let them know that their culture has some good value [here], that we don’t expect that: ‘Now you are in New Zealand you have to look like us, dress like us, and you are going to have to talk like us.’ That’s bad enough, learning English. It was more to show the school that they had a valuable culture and a [special] way of singing, and we had a big map out [to show the school] where [the Sri Lankan] children came from. One of the little boys [also] made a little speech. He said that their families came to New Zealand because of the fighting between the Tamils and the Singhalese. [Until then], the other children didn’t know why the Sri Lankan children suddenly turned up in class. ... Another day, we had a wonderful time making kites and we learnt to say ‘kite’ in many different languages. So we try to do lots of activities [to show] that we value [everyone’s] culture.” [ESOL coordinator, primary school.]

“The school always promoting different cultures [is very important for ensuring that NESB students feel welcome and included], for instance, always promoting that coming from a different culture and speaking a different language is really neat. There are still schools

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4 This school obtained the idea for developing ‘ethnic boxes’ through participation in a professional development contract for assisting NESB students.
where English is the main medium of instruction and that’s the way it should be, but the [NESB] child feels that they are not allowed to in any way reveal that they actually speak another language. And it is not until you actually open it up with a group and say, ‘If you speak Samoan, [for example], it is really neat if you could speak Samoan to these children who speak Samoan as well.’ A lot of the times the children will say, ‘Can we do that!’ The difference is in the environment and the attitude as well. Like, at assemblies, we always greet the whole group with different greetings which is one way of showing them that we are not just always going to use English.” [AP and class teacher, primary school.]

“[A strength of our school’s programmes and support for NESB students is that] I think we are more culturally aware now. We celebrate cultures a lot more now than when [NESB students] first started coming [to the school]. [Classroom teacher, intermediate school.]

“We have special times. If there are special cultural events within a particular culture within the school, we either talk about them, or have topics on them, things like that. We also have an ethnic dinner once a year where parents can bring along particular dishes that relate to their country. ... Sometimes the multicultural teachers in the school or the parents will wear their national costumes.” [Special needs coordinator, primary school.]

Many of those we spoke to referred, in a variety of different contexts over the course of their interviews, to the importance of gaining and imparting knowledge about other cultures (eg, in relation to personal space, style of interaction, approaches to teaching and learning) and life experiences in order to facilitate understanding, reduce conflict and tensions, and improve the conditions for student learning. For example:

“I think having information regarding each ethnic group helps a lot but it’s also valuable to gain an understanding of where they’ve come from and why they’re here. Most of our [NESB] children are immigrants, or perhaps have been refugees, so we get that end of it, but in other schools I’d imagine that there are lots of [children of] migrants, business migrants, who haven’t had the trauma that a lot of our children have had, but there needs to be understanding given for whatever reason they’re here. I think that’s important. And also just knowing how to approach [the different NESB students] and how to approach their learning [is important] — they’re all different, but I suppose experience in being with them gives you that [understanding] to a degree.” [ESOL coordinator, primary school.]

“Children in Asia [are often] in a class of 50-60 children. It is very quiet. Quietness is expected. Here, [by comparison], it is very noisy [in the classroom]. Cultural differences must be learnt. In Asia, pushing arms means ‘Hello’; in New Zealand it means hitting. Teaching customs is very important. If small problems are explained it can stop fighting. Asian children can’t see what they do wrong as it means something different at home and back in Asia. Very confusing — learning new but living with old customs.” [Bilingual teacher aide (ESOL), primary school.]
ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY

“The school curriculum will encourage students to understand and respect the different cultures which make up New Zealand society. It will ensure that the experiences, cultural traditions, histories and languages of all New Zealanders are recognised and valued. It will acknowledge the place of Pacific Islands communities in New Zealand society, and New Zealand’s relationship with the people of Asia and the South Pacific.”


“A school-wide appreciation of cultural diversity which is acknowledged and celebrated visibly and regularly throughout the various activities of the school gives the message that cultural diversity is a positive aspect of the school community, and something in which every individual has a part of which they can be proud. A combination of opportunities for students to learn about their own culture, and cultures other than their own, and interact with members of different groups, breaks down the barriers and beliefs which support racist attitudes and behaviours. These opportunities can be provided within the formal curriculum, in the strategies which are employed in the classroom, and in the non-formal or pastoral care functions of the school. For teachers, this support comes through clear commitment on the part of the school leadership to staff development opportunities which focus on culture and communication, and through the provision of the support necessary for teachers to work effectively with students from cultures other than their own.”


“One thing about the variety concert which has been good is actually getting [the Asian] kids to perform their national dances — fan dances, bamboo dances, and drum dances. It’s a recognition that they’ve got a strong culture of their own. In my [ESOL] room, I’ve put up greetings in all the languages, and what happens is other kids come and say, “What language is that?” We get discussions, for example, based on Arabic and the fact that Arabic goes from right to left and it’s structured differently. And [they say] things like, “Wow, I don’t know how I’d ever learn that language”. That’s a good starting point.”


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5 The quote is an excerpt from an interview with an ESOL coordinator/teacher in a New Zealand secondary school. The ESOL coordinator, from a bilingual background, and who has had extensive training in the ESOL area and many years of experience in working with NESB students, was interviewed for the study *Promoting Positive Race Relations in New Zealand Schools: Me Mahi Tahi Tatou* (referred to above).
What Schools were Doing: Some Aspects of the Programmes that were being Provided for NESB Students

Schools — both as a whole, and specific individuals within those schools — in the study had developed a variety of approaches for working with their NESB students. Some schools, for example, especially at the secondary level, had developed orientation courses specifically for NESB students. One major purpose of these orientation courses was to ensure that the new students felt welcome at the school and had the opportunity to learn about school systems and about the school’s expectations of students, prior to joining the particular class to which they had been, or would be, assigned. Other major purposes of the orientation courses were to provide these students with a preliminary grounding in English vocabulary, (especially subject-specific vocabulary), and to provide a support network within the school. One ESOL coordinator had this to say about the importance of knowing someone is available to talk to:

“I think that the good thing about the orientation programme is that they [the NESB students] see us as a friend. If they’ve got a problem, a lot of them will come to the ESOL teachers, someone they trust. And I think that’s a very important role for us.” [ESOL coordinator, secondary school.]  

A major feature of all approaches used by schools for working with NESB students, however, seemed to be that of ensuring that students were exposed to a combination of out-of-class support (withdrawal group) time, working alongside classmates with the help of a support person (eg, bilingual tutor, teacher aide, parent, peer tutor), and fully integrated in-class participation. Examples of various combinations of these approaches are given after the following two passages regarding orientation programmes.

Orientation Programmes

The following are brief accounts of aspects of the orientation programmes for NESB students run in two of the secondary schools which participated in the study.

“We’ve got an orientation programme — it’s a full-time course. And that’s for all new NESB students to the school. We hope to establish routines and procedures and gain the students’ trust — that’s probably the most important thing. And then we give them specific language for maths, science, and social studies. We’re really wanting to give them confident English language skills before they enter the mainstream, and before that time, we do lots of testing. And the time in the orientation programme can vary from two to three weeks at least to a year, really depending on the student and their needs. ... We only started [the orientation] programme at the end of May and there are some there that, even though they’ve been there for four or five months, we’ll really have to give them two or three weeks at the beginning of next year [too] before I feel they’re really ready to go [into the mainstream
classroom] and [even] then I’m still not certain [about some of them]. ... [The students in question] are young [secondary school] students who had very little English when they came here, so for the first six weeks they were absorbing very, very little. So within the orientation programme, we’ve really got two classes: one [class] of students who have got reasonable ability with English — reasonable, but still not enough to go into the classes; and then some who really are absolute beginners, so they’re going through their own little programme, which we’ve set up, and when they’ve gone through that, when we think they’re ready, then we let them join the main body [of students in the school]. ... It’s been a big thing to [get the orientation programme up and running], but I’ve been quite happy with what we’re doing. They get [a minimum of] eight hours of English, six hours of social studies, four hours of maths, four of science, two hours of phys-ed, and there’s an hour of self-access studies. ... [However, because] they don’t go to any classes at all [during the orientation course], the disadvantage, I guess, is that they’re not mixing with Kiwi students. But I don’t see how we can do that when they don’t have any English. It’s really very difficult. But that’s sort of the best that we can do at the moment.” [ESOL coordinator, secondary school.]

“Within the orientation programme, I teach them four hours of maths vocabulary [for example]. I don’t [often] have to teach them the maths because they actually know the maths, but if they’re reading a maths problem and they’re asked to find the gradient of something and they don’t know what ‘gradient’ is, [or] even words like ‘solve’ and ‘find’ — you know, absolutely basic things that a New Zealand native [English] speaker will have no problems working out — these students will be diving into their dictionaries for every second word, because they don’t understand. That’s an endless task too. One of the things, I guess, is to try and teach the students that there are words that they don’t understand and that they’ve really got to knuckle down and [learn] vocabulary — vocabulary is the most important thing that I can teach them. I probably don’t teach them as much grammar as some people would, but I see English as a tool that they can use, and it’s my job to show them how to use it to their advantage.” [HOD ESOL, secondary school.]

Out-of-Class Support and In-Class Participation

Most of those interviewed in the course of the study agreed that a combination of out-of-class support [withdrawal] time and in-class time was the best approach with NESB students, with time spent in a ‘withdrawal’ situation steadily decreasing as the student becomes more comfortable in the school and in the classroom and more comfortable with using English. Decisions about the amount of out-of-class support time that should be devoted to each student can depend upon background data collected at enrolment as well as on early assessment of the student’s knowledge and skills. For example, one participant stated:

“Once we’ve got that [background] information, we then decide what the child’s needs are. Does the child need to be removed from the classroom on a regular basis or be [taught] on a
one-to-one basis in an intensive programme! Or does the child have enough language to be able to be sustained in the classroom with support from other children in the classroom?" [Special needs coordinator, primary school.]

Other factors such as age, English language skills, behaviour, how they are coping in the general classroom environment, class size, teacher skills and experience, resourcing, the availability of support people (such as bilingual tutors) for both teachers and students, and whether students have peers from their own culture with whom to socialise, also often play a large part in decisions about what type of support is best suited to the student. The following excerpts from interviews conducted for the study illustrate some of the participants’ views and experiences of NESB students being taught in out-of-class support or ‘withdrawal’ groups, learning in the classroom with support from a tutor, and being a fully participating member of the regular classroom.

The next several passages make reference to situations where withdrawal time was considered the best option for the teaching and learning of NESB students.

“They [the NESB students] have got to be in a situation where they can feel confident and relaxed and I think that the small [withdrawal] groups help them tremendously. A lot of the other children in the group are the same ability as themselves, [so] they get that [sense of] confidence when they are together and I found doing the work that the teacher is covering in the classroom [with them in the withdrawal group] is helping a lot because then they go back into the main classroom and they think, ‘Oh, I’ve heard that’. Yes, working in a small group where the teacher has time to speak to them slowly and they can work at a pace that is suitable for them [helps them a great deal]. In the first couple of months most children tend to want to be left a little bit while they tune their ear into the language and adjust themselves. I think it’s not necessary to rush them into a programme straight away. I feel they need a settling in period first but then after two to six weeks, perhaps, I think they are ready to start [because they have had a chance] to tune into the language.” [Teacher aide (ESOL), primary school.]

“When a [new NESB] student arrives, they’ll often say nothing and do nothing for quite a long while, and then I find that they’re not saying anything in the classroom, they’re [just] watching and starting to join in [in other ways] but then I get some words out of them when they’re with me on my own, because I think they feel secure and nobody’s going to laugh at them. In fact, one of the children that’s here now had very little English at the beginning of term [but] I think there was stuff stored away in there and [now] with me [on our own] she’s coming out with all sorts of wonderful things. And trying to use the structure from sentences, and I can throw it back at her and then I can hear her sometimes come out with it right. So it’s really lovely.” [Teacher aide, special needs, primary school.]
“Through the contract [on assisting NESB students] we’ve encouraged scaffolded learning. We try to integrate the students as soon as possible, encouraging them to do as much of the class programme as possible, and this requires a lot of building up [in small withdrawal groups] to begin with.” [ESOL teacher/classroom teacher, intermediate school.]

“[The students] are removed for different subjects and at different times — some of my students, particularly the younger ones, are removed for language and maths needs, in particular, which is quite essential really because they need quite different programmes [from the rest of the class]. I’ve three new [NESB] boys who have maths concepts, but don’t have the maths language, so to put them in a lower maths group would serve no purpose because they have the concepts, and you can’t put them in a higher maths group [either] because they don’t have the maths language, which is vital. So [they go out of the class] for those kinds of programmes, and [also] for writing and for oral language [because] I just can’t cater for them in that way.” [Classroom teacher, primary school.]

“I have a class of standards 3 and 4 children and within that class at the moment there are six NESB children. As they get to about nine- and ten-years-of-age they tend to prefer to go out of class for extra help although we like the [ESOL] teachers to come into the class and work with the class so she can help them doing what they do in the classroom situation. That’s the way we would prefer but as they get older, especially the forms 1 and 2, they become a bit self-conscious about someone coming to work with them and so at this school we have set up a room where they go to [our ESOL coordinator] and get the extra help they need. The younger ones don’t mind, they don’t think [anything] about someone coming [into the classroom] and working with them. ... [Our ESOL coordinator] comes into the classroom as much as she can but [sometimes] if she wants to do reading and writing on a one-to-one basis with a student and we might be doing maths she will take that student out [to the withdrawal room] and work with them there — sometimes she does this for more practical reasons too, like [it] being quieter.” [Classroom teacher, primary school.]

“[As well as the orientation programme which] is part of our programme, we have third formers come to us [in the ESOL Department] for three hours of ESOL in place of language studies, fourth formers come to us in place of one option class, fifth and sixth formers come for three or four hours of ESOL in place of mainstream English, fulfilling the English requirement of their studies, and next year we’re going to start doing a seventh form course so that they can study for IELTS — International English Language Testing System — which some of the university and polytechnics are requiring fee-paying students in particular to pass before they can get entry, and I’ve a very strong suspicion that all non-English-speaking students, whether they’re PRs [permanent residents] or fee-payers, will be required to have an English proficiency [certificate] before they can go to university. I think it’s because the problem that secondary
schools have had for the last few years is now filtering through to university, and the universities are finding that they’re getting students [whose] English is really not good enough for going to university.” [ESOL coordinator, secondary school.]

An interesting observation contributed by one participant suggests the need to exercise careful judgement (as much as possible within the constraints of timetable requirements) about when to leave the student in the classroom and when to withdraw them:

“Sometimes it’s time for a group to come to me and they might not want to leave what they are doing in the classroom to come here. It might be that they are doing something really exciting in their room and they think, ‘I’m not quite ready to go’. However, that is a very rare occurrence [and], in fact, the converse is [usually] the case — what actually happens is that all sorts of kids say, ‘When am I going to come to you, when am I going to come to Room 4?’ The children here are very responsive to anything that they see is being done for them.” [ESOL coordinator, primary school.]

The following comment on out-of-class support or ‘withdrawal’ time also reiterates the point that not all strategies are successful in all situations, and that individual schools often have to establish what works best in their particular circumstances.

“Withdrawal programmes didn’t work three years ago because the children felt as though they were being pulled from one thing to another and the teachers didn’t feel as though they had ownership of their classroom. So we’ve gone back to the teacher spending most of their day with the children, with as little withdrawal as possible.” [Principal, primary school.]

Another participant also cautioned that ‘withdrawal’ time should be for the right reasons — that is, to best enhance the student’s learning opportunities — and not as a means to remove a ‘problem’ from the classroom.

“You will find [in] some schools there are teachers who regard NESB children as a pest in the class, and they favour withdrawal, but mostly because it gets them out of their hair for half-an-hour. It is not always to do with the learning situation.” [Special needs coordinator, primary school.]

As illustrated below, there were other participants who were particular advocates for keeping NESB students in the regular classroom most, if not all, of the time, rather than having them go into a withdrawal situation, although these participants generally also cautioned that extra care needed to be taken to ensure that the students were helped to feel that they were part of the class as soon as possible, doing work that they could cope with, in order that they did not feel overwhelmed.

“We prefer to keep [NESB students] in their [regular] classrooms. We feel it is important to maintain continuity in their rooms.” [Classroom teacher, primary school.]
Exhibit 9: Suggestions for Helping NESB Students Participate Fully in the Classroom by Providing them with the Language of Instructions/Directions

The Language of Instructions and Directions

For a new learner of English (NLOE), one of the first ‘leading-to-independence’ strategies within the classroom which will help him/her is to understand aurally, and in written form, the instructions, directions and commands of class language and texts/materials. Here are some simple but important ways to help the new learner of English be more able to respond fully and participate.

**General/classroom, day-to-day patterns/routines**

Example commands:

- ‘Put your pens down and listen.’
- ‘Stop what you’re doing and come and sit on the mat.’

What are your most commonly used commands and instructions to the children in your classroom? List these. Brainstorm with your class to make this list.

**Choose one or more of the following strategies with your class and the NLOE:**

- Teacher says the command once. A child in the class says it again, and another child repeats it yet again, etc — to give more repetition of the command and allow time for the NLOE to absorb the actual language before the action.

- Repeat commands as above but, this time, a child writes it on the blackboard while someone else says it — read, listen, repeat, point to it, while everyone says, does. Say it and point to it again — mime and point, etc. It can be fun if it’s not too drawn out.

- Teacher puts instruction on the blackboard. All students read it silently, then,
  - say it to a partner,
  - do it,
  - say it another way.

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6 These notes were prepared by Jannie van Hees, New Settlers and Multicultural Education Coordinator, Education Advisory Service, Auckland, 1995.

7 These notes use the term ‘new learner of English’ (NLOE) rather than ‘NESB’.
Exhibit 9: Suggestions for Helping NESB Students Participate Fully in the Classroom by Providing them with the Language of Instructions/Directions — continued

The Language of Instructions and Directions — continued

- Stop the class just before the bell, for example — ask a student to say the instruction you might have practised already today or to think of any command commonly used in the classroom: mime it, say it, write it — a quick challenge. Always ensure the NLOE is alert to what is going on and keeping up.

- Use a known game format. For example:
  - ‘Whispers’. Whisper the instruction to the first child. He/she has to write the instruction down. [The instruction] is whispered on to another child, etc. The NLOE might be the first child in the process and the teacher might have the instruction on a piece of paper in order to give more support.
  - Role play — act out. Who can guess the instruction? Write up or say.
  - The ‘blind’ game. Blindfold a child who has a ‘minder’ partner. Someone else gives the pair an instruction. They do it together, while the ‘minder’ keeps saying it over and over.

Use other creative ideas to get mileage in classroom commands and instructions, with:

- lots of repetition
- oral and written and action support
- small dollops at a time

while at the same time [making sure] it is fun and snappy.

Remember, a NLOE needs to get bite-size pieces, feel involved, yet not be embarrassed.
Exhibit 9: Suggestions for Helping NESB Students Participate Fully in the Classroom by Providing them with the Language of Instructions/Directions — continued

Curriculum Directional Language

Instructions in subject areas, in oral and written language, are often a sticking point for NLOE. If we can assist understanding and unpacking of this, he/she can often do what might otherwise be an inaccessible task.

General Ideas:

• Help the student to find key words in an instruction and to understand these words.

• Help the student to differentiate between instructions that:
  - seem to be the same, but are not
  - appear not to be the same, but are
  and to link these to the actual task.

• Examine the use of imperatives as a feature of directional/instructional language, especially when the imperative does not occur in first position:
  - ‘Mark all the ... ‘ compared to
  - ‘On the skeleton, mark ... ‘

• Provide opportunities to manipulate and analyse the language of instructions in curriculum areas;
  - cut up strips into chunks or words; reassemble
  - give a written instruction for underlining key words
  - identify significant and insignificant words in an instruction; explain what helps us to know this
  - explain to another what an instruction means: justify from clues in the text; have verified by another student, by the class, by the teacher.

• Dictate a direction or instruction — self-check — explain and discuss.

• Allow students to make up an instruction, or set of directions, needed for a forthcoming task, or for an imaginary one.
Exhibit 9: Suggestions for Helping NESB Students Participate Fully in the Classroom by Providing them with the Language of Instructions/Directions — continued

Curriculum Directional Language — continued

Further possibilities:
An in-depth study of the language of instructions and directions.

Study [for example]:
- food products and their instructions
- a variety of other products’ directions
- the directives in a telephone booth, shops, etc
- signs on the street
- instructions accompanying science investigations
- instructions and directives in mathematics
- the language of instructions in recipes
- etc

Examine:
- the words and arrangement of these [instructions/directions]
- the sentence structure
- the actual meaning (often needs ‘reading between the lines’, or very fine differentiation, or context knowledge)
- how one could rewrite a more clearly- or simply-worded version.

Label places and things in the class:
[Pair] the word with an accompanying instruction. For example:
- ‘The door.’
- ‘Shut the door! ’
- ‘Stop, don’t slam the door!’
- ‘Shut the door quietly, please.’

You will have many more ideas. Use ones, in particular, that are supported by visuals and actions, with enough in-built re-encountering and analysis by everyone.

Understanding the language of instructions is always significant for NLOE, and is increasingly important as the student gets older and needs to cope with more formal requirements in this.
Exhibit 10: A Programme Outline for Form 3 NESB Students at a Participating Secondary School

Form 3 ESOL Teaching Programme

Objectives

• To improve English language skills
• To develop/introduce cross-curricula skills
• To support students’ acclimatisation into [the school] and the local community.

Lesson Format

Lessons are divided into three sections. The first two sections are short, 10 minute segments covering four or five basic areas of literacy in a rotating format. For example:

Week 1 — writing then listening
Week 2 — vocabulary then reading/speaking.

Mix and match them as the term progresses. A combination of one active and one passive works best.

Writing

Ten minutes writing using Correspondence School list or similar. Don’t mark this as such, instead respond to the content and model correct English.

Listening

Dictated, drawing-type activities. Results can be graphed.

Vocabulary

Use the school word-list booklet. Choose a starting level appropriate to your class — work through A-Z in the level, then go back to the other levels. This allows students to progress through the book.

Work through the words orally, putting unfamiliar words on the board. After 10 minutes, or when you have one word per person, look the words up in the dictionary, one word per

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8 The wording in this exhibit is quoted directly from the document supplied by the school in question.
Exhibit 10: A Programme Outline for Form 3 NESB Students at a Participating Secondary School — *continued*

**Form 3 ESOL Teaching Programme — *continued***

**Vocabulary — *continued***

person. Share meanings. No written work. This is the first introduction of the word: the aim is that they will recognise it next time. [Literature identifies a process of]:

- Introduce
- Recognise
- Use correctly

**Reading**


The third segment of the lesson focuses on:

- Comprehension
- Writing skills
- Cross-curricula: following instructions, mapping, graphs, timeliness, sequencing.

The main resources are:

- School Journals
- Photocopied sets (eg, ‘Headworks’)
- Cross-curricula units.

LAC [Learning across the curriculum] techniques are used whenever possible. Language points are taught as they arise in oral or written work.

**Conclusion**

The programme is very much student-driven, beginning with their needs and moving at a pace they are comfortable with. ESOL may be the only subject where students are experiencing success so it is important that the lesson be:

- Focused
- Relaxed
- Varied
- Fun
Exhibit 11: A Programme Outline for ‘Intermediate’ Level NESB Students at a Participating Secondary School

Intermediate ESOL 1995

Aim

- To improve students’ written and spoken English so that they feel happy, safe, confident and able to pursue their subjects to the best of their ability.

The programme is flexible and responds essentially to the wants and needs of the class itself.

1. Work covered includes, initially, revision of the alphabet and formation of letters, setting out and paragraphing, numbers, months, days, etc, as required. Basic punctuation, sentence structure, identification of main parts of speech and exercises on various common errors such as ‘their, there’, ‘it’s, its’, etc, are completed.

2. Much emphasis is placed on reading in English and class time is allowed for this. Students are urged strongly to read for pleasure in their own time and as a means of increasing and improving vocabulary. [Reading material] may be magazines, newspapers, novels, school texts, etc. Students read silently, aloud to the class, and individually to me [as ESOL teacher]. Pronunciation is corrected.

3. Students are encouraged to speak about their homes, families, likes and dislikes, hobbies, school subjects, etc, and questions are asked by other class members. This can be impromptu or prepared and delivered within the lesson. Students are encouraged to be an appreciative and courteous audience. The atmosphere is always non-threatening.

Spontaneous discussions about various issues and topics often take place where whoever wishes to, takes the floor.

4. Listening exercises can be structured and formal in that students follow a set of instructions. Dictations are also used.

5. Students’ written language capabilities can vary a great deal within the class so the same [assignment] can produce a couple of lines or half a page of writing.

The wording in this exhibit is quoted directly from the document supplied by the school in question.
Exhibit 11: A Programme Outline for ‘Intermediate’ Level NESB Students at a Participating Secondary School — *continued*

**Intermediate ESOL 1995 — *continued***

A wide range of resources are used [at different difficulty levels], including comprehension and sequencing exercises, Cloze exercises, and vocabulary, definition, and spelling, etc, exercises. Games such as ‘Hangman’ and ‘Scrabble’ and memory games with food are also played.

The same school also ran programmes for NESB students who had more advanced skills in English.

The stated **aims** of the programme for these students were:

- To improve the level of achievement in the full range of language skills.
- To provide skills needed for academic tasks.
- To provide information-retrieval skills in a variety of settings.
- To base work on a range of social issues relating to living in New Zealand.

Within the programme, students undertook a major research project [which] integrated all the skills [they had covered]. This [project] was done in class and at home and provided clear indication of levels [of achievement].
“Our focus is to shift kids from the withdrawal situation into the classroom as quickly as we can. Once that happens there has to be a support framework within that classroom.”

“I try to have [the NESB students that I work with] doing as much of the classroom programme as possible because they have Kiwi buddy tutors, plus peer tutors of their own race. We try to group them together in their ethnic groups in the classroom.” [ESOL teacher/classroom teacher, primary school.]

“We operate on a sort of inclusion principle that the best place for the kids to learn English is in the classroom with other kids. So part of the ESOL focus is to try and shift kids from the withdrawal situation into the classroom as quickly as we can. And then once that happens there has to be a support framework within that classroom. So that’s the support teacher’s role — that involves a collaborative, cooperative sort of planning model for the classroom teacher and support teacher. There is a good deal of work that we have to do to maximise the advantages of that sort of model. And that has taken a fair amount of time.” [Principal, secondary school.]

The following two comments represent variations of the concept of keeping NESB students in the regular classroom. The first example illustrates some schools’ practice of keeping NESB students in the classroom but at the same time ensuring that they get the extra help they need via withdrawal groups within the class itself. The second example describes one primary school’s practice of sometimes putting NESB students in a regular classroom but with slightly younger peers so that they have an opportunity to gain sufficient English in, it was felt, less intimidating circumstances, to enable them to better cope when moved into a classroom with their age peers.

“The school [ensures it] has the ability [via support staff and volunteers] to support NESB students [in the regular classroom] by allowing them to work in small groups and not feel overcrowded by other students. They need to feel comfortable and gain the confidence to work in a large classroom [with the rest of their class].” [ESOL coordinator, secondary school.]

“Some of the [NESB] children are put in a class [with slightly younger children] because they have so little English but we want them to gain enough [English] language as quickly as they can [so that, as soon as possible], they can go up a class and be more with their peers.” [Classroom teacher, primary school.]

Finally, in this section, however, the following quote sums up what many we spoke to felt was the best method for helping NESB students until they were able to cope as well as their classmates — that is, a parallel, ongoing system of out-of-class and in-class programmes and support.

“I like my programme: the dual [approach] of going into the classes and withdrawal — having a room I can bring them [the NESB students] to. This [withdrawal] room is always
available, so it’s being able to do both. I like it. I had two children from different classes but they both reached the same level and so I am working with them together now and being able to withdraw them like that is part of the good working relationship with the other teachers; they don’t mind me doing that. So that is the dual thing, being able to have a room to withdraw children to and help them with their grammar [etc] or being able to work in the class and work in with the teachers with their programmes. It’s really good being able to do that.” [ESOL coordinator, primary school.]

Peer Tutoring as a Teaching Strategy with NESB Students

Peer tutoring was said to be an effective technique, with both tutor and tutored benefiting. Participants in the study (see also the interview excerpt on page 134) felt that peer tutoring was a good way of helping integrate the new NESB student into the classroom and of giving the students who act as tutors an important role — one which gives them a sense of pride and achievement in helping a fellow student and which, as well, often enhances their own learning and achievement.

“I have a supportive environment, a non-threatening classroom atmosphere. I will put [new NESB students] with a child who speaks their own language if that’s possible — buddy system. ... For instance, in maths, I’ve teamed my [new NESB student] up with M. who is a Hindi speaker, he’s Fijian, and that’s the language that he speaks. If there is a problem or there is something that he [the new student] doesn’t understand, M. can explain what I am saying. Otherwise, he will ask, and I’ll just go back to more simplified language. I use this buddy system for most subjects but I don’t sit him next to M. all the time. I think he needs to get support from others as well and feel comfortable in the classroom. But M. is there if need be.” [Classroom teacher, primary school.]

“We’ve set up a peer tutoring programme [for one Samoan child] so the child doesn’t need to come out [of the classroom] — we’ve worked with two other Samoan children who can help him, can support him. So we’ve actually gone through reading, written language with them [the peer tutors], so that they can work with him. So the teacher then doesn’t feel that she needs to sit with him while he’s writing a story or doing his reading. These boys have helped him and they’ve done a good job of it.” [Special needs coordinator, primary school.]

“The work with the ‘self-pacing boxes’ [which contain activities designed to build a sound knowledge of basic English sounds and words] can be very effective. One of the benefits of that is that [NESB students] work with an English buddy, so they have contact with an English speaker as well as a buddy who speaks their first language. Classroom teachers are

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10 See footnote 2 on page 170 for a fuller explanation of self-pacing boxes.
ON BUDDYING

[In the classroom] each child will buddy with:

• another of own culture and language;
• another of other culture and English.

Buddies will ensure that the child:

• is shown around the school with explanations;
• has necessities explained — eg, toilets, vital rules, where to go for help;
• is gradually introduced to people around the place;
• knows about lunch, play-lunch;
• gradually comes to know the names of others in the class.

Teachers ALWAYS need to check that each child is getting and understanding the necessary information about instructions, work, trips, visitors, etc.

From a ‘policy development’ document relating to new learners of English supplied by a participating primary school.
asked to set up English buddies with each new immigrant child.” [ESOL coordinator/Deputy Principal, intermediate school.]

“We are lucky having children in our school who speak more than one language and they help their peers. Quite often you’ll get a five-year-old at school who doesn’t really understand commands or greetings, so you’ll say to one of [the bilingual children], ‘Can you tell [them what is being said]!’” [Reading Recovery teacher, primary school.]

“When [the students] first arrive here they are going to need different work from the rest of the class, the basics. I begin by giving mine a picture dictionary where they have to translate it. They need a lot of extra help at first. [Our ESOL coordinator] has made up booklets for them to do. But once they are up and running they prefer to do what the rest of the class is doing. Sure, they still need assistance, but that can often be peer assistance.” [Classroom teacher, intermediate school.]

Despite the many advantages cited of peer tutoring and buddying, some participants also sounded a note of caution: that, in order not to jeopardise their own forward progress in learning, it is important not to over-use peer tutors. For example:

“In the senior school we have had [NESB students] working with their peers in the classroom and that seems to have worked well [although] I don’t think that should be done too often. I mean, they can do that a little while in the classroom but it can’t be done too much because the other students [the peer tutors] have got to get on with their work as well. [But] that has been [an approach] that has worked well up in the senior school.” [Teacher aide (ESOL), primary school.]

“Maths is moving more to language now. So they need the language [for maths]. Having someone to translate is useful. It could be an older child, but you don’t want to do that too much, because it detracts from their own education.” [Classroom teacher, primary school.]

Other strategies closely related to peer tutoring that teachers used to facilitate the learning and a feeling of belonging of their NESB, and other, students were those of small group work (see, for example, the excerpt from an interview with an ESOL coordinator/teacher presented on page 135) and buddying. Exhibit 12 on page 136 outlines suggested procedures for establishing a buddy system, developed in 1993 by the New Settlers and Multicultural Education Coordinator at the Education Advisory Service, Auckland.
ON PEER TUTORING

“The year we set up the ESOL unit I had five hours for the whole school and I had to do ESOL and special needs and there was just no way I could do it and that’s when I first set up the peer tutoring. And I just see such positive results from their work. For example, when the NESB students first come in and they are looking at their readers there might be, say, twenty words they’ve never heard of. So we’d pick out the key, high interest, high-user, words out of that and put them on cards in a folder. And the peer tutor goes through those words with them every day with a variety of techniques. And I know the NESB students go home and show their parents. Often I have the selected words written in their own language on the back of the cards. Often, though, the [refugee] parents are illiterate in their first language. There’s no one to help them at home. Whereas if my daughter comes home and says, ‘Oh, mummy, I don’t understand this word, what does it mean?’, I can explain to her. Say the word was ‘mediation’, for example, and I explained to her what it meant. Then she might hear it on the telly, or she might read it in the paper or hear her mum and dad talking about it. So the word returns to her in various forms. But although I’ll tell the NESB students, ‘Oh, that word means ‘x’, they might never hear it at home, so they lose it. It’s called redundancy. Unless you hear the word over and over — fifty times they reckon in a week — they won’t retain it.

“So the peer tutors go back and go over the same words every day until the NESB child can identify the word, use it in a sentence, and can give a synonym in their own language. So I might give them, say, ten words one week and after working with their peer tutors they come back the next week and probably eight of those they can already identify and in another two weeks they can put them all in sentences and in another three weeks they can spell them. But if I just saw the NESB students once a week that wouldn’t happen. So the peer tutors are an invaluable resource.

“I have the peer tutors banging on my door [they’re so enthusiastic to take part] and I feel so frustrated that I have so little time to work with them. But the peer tutors come to me and they say, ‘I need some more books’, ‘I need this, I need that’, [but] it’s really hard to get time to supervise them. So they’ve really had to struggle without as much support as [I’d like to give them]. But they’re good kids. But what I do as a way of monitoring them is I often bring them in when I come in to work with one of the NESB children and I just sit there and observe them [the peer tutors] and I encourage them when I think they’re doing really well and offer them suggestions.”

From an interview with an ESOL coordinator/teacher described in a report (unpublished) by Sharon Dewar and Shelley Kennedy entitled The Resettlement Family Support Unit: Mairehau Primary School, Christchurch, Research Section, Ministry of Education, Wellington, March 1995 (pp. 19-20). This report was prepared in relation to the report Promoting Positive Race Relations in New Zealand Schools: Me Mahi Tahi Tatou, by Mary Donn and Ruth Schick (ibid).
ON STUDENTS WORKING IN GROUPS AND PEER TUTORING

“I’m a great proponent of group work. I would propose it all the time. It’s one of the things that we reinforce in this school, working with groups rather than with a whole class environment. I think the concept of teaching a whole class is actually quite difficult — I mean you can present information on a class level ... but I think it’s irrational to expect the whole class to be working at the same level. So my feeling is in groups there’s a lot of peer teaching going on as well and peer interaction if the groups are well set up.

“I believe it’s advantageous for everybody. The mainstream New Zealand students learn that a lot of these Asian students are so gifted at maths and science. They can help New Zealand students with the content. They [can help each other with] the language. In some classes that works. But you have to redo it every year.

“Group work allows kids to talk. One of the problems for these [NESB] kids — and I’ve been through this because I have a bicultural background — for a long time you’re thinking in your own language all the time. You’re taking things in in English and translating them in your head into your mother tongue. You think about your answer in your mother tongue, then translate it back into English, and by the time all this has gone on, you’ve lost what has gone on in between. So group work lets them practise talking; and they write the way they talk, so the more chance they have to speak, the stronger becomes their control of the language; and they’re also listening to other kids thrashing out issues ... [talking about issues helps them form opinions on things].

“I have also [specifically] set up and run a peer assisted learning [PAL] tutoring programme. In the first year the idea of that was to get mainstream students to help [NESB] students, but we ended up with [NESB] students being tutors [as well] which was great, wonderful. So that mixes them up.”


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11 The quote is an excerpt from an interview with an ESOL coordinator/teacher in a New Zealand secondary school. The ESOL coordinator, from a bilingual background, and who has had extensive training in the ESOL area and many years of experience in working with NESB students, was interviewed for the study *Promoting Positive Race Relations in New Zealand Schools: Me Mahi Tahi Tatou* (referred to above).
Exhibit 12: Notes for Teachers for Setting Up a Buddy System

**Being Teachers and Learners — Setting Up a Buddy System**

This is a very important first step for all new arrivals/NLOE.

**A process to set it up:**

1. Brainstorm with the class the idea ‘How many teachers in this classroom?’

   ‘They’ll tell you ‘One — you, Miss.’

   Say ‘Can you teach?’, ‘Do you learn?’

   ... Thus, we have 30+ teachers here.

   We all can teach. We all learn.

2. Discuss further:

   **If you are an NLOE/new arrival:** ‘What does (1) above mean! — ‘There’s only one teacher here to help me!’ [or] ‘Could it be — 30 teachers are here to help me!’

3. Discuss further:

   ‘How could we [the class] help ‘x’ [the new arrival]?’

   Put students into pairs to come up with two ideas on:

   ‘What might they [new arrivals/NLOE] need to learn?’

   Round-robin onto a brainstorm list.

   Brainstorm with the kids on all the things that are important to learn in a new language in this classroom and school.

   **Examples:**

   • the names of things in this room [spoken and written]
   • the names of things in other classrooms [spoken and written]
   • the letters/sounds of the alphabet

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12 These notes were prepared by Jannie van Hees, New Settlers and Multicultural Education Coordinator, Education Advisory Service, Auckland, March 1993. They were supplied to us by one of the participating schools, which used the ideas contained in the notes as part of its programme of support for NESB students.

13 In these notes, the term NLOE (new learners of English) has been used rather than ‘NESB’.
Exhibit 12: Notes for Teachers for Setting Up a Buddy System — continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Being Teachers and Learners — Setting Up a Buddy System — continued</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• all the instructions you give us (e.g., ‘sit down and listen’, ‘stop, everyone’, ‘line up outside’, etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the colours/shapes/numbers in English (the words, and the words in sentences)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• how to say ‘hello’, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• how to ask for help, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• how to use equipment in the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• how to use a simple dictionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• to have simple books read to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• etc, etc, etc</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4. Discuss further:

If we can all teach ‘x’, then we can take turns for [teaching] these [in (3) above].

5. Discuss further:

How would it be easiest to teach and learn if the language is new?

Brainstorm this with the kids.

**Examples:**

• say it first in their language, then in English
• show/point/touch and say
• say it often — repeat it so they can see and hear clearly
• write it down so they can copy it and take it away
• write it and say it, so they can understand and/or see the spoken and written
• make it fun/interesting
• go back over it later
• be patient
• open your mouth when you speak, speak a little slowly — not too fast, but not so slowly it isn’t natural
• etc, etc, etc
Exhibit 12: Notes for Teachers for Setting Up a Buddy System — continued

6. Suggest:
   
   If we made a daily timetable, each pair could teach ‘x’ — eg, once every fortnight.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
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<th>Thursday</th>
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   **Devise a daily timetable** with a special time for each buddy — eg, half-an-hour at ... am/pm.

   Get volunteers for the first 5-8 days. Put names up/display.

7. In your class **in the morning**, and **last thing before they leave** you every day (you could keep a little notebook), identify what the pair will teach next day, and how it went for those on today. (It is a form of assessment; if necessary, go on with that again tomorrow.)

8. Identify with the kids **the ‘little’ ways all the class can teach in a day.**

   **Examples:**
   - I’ll teach him/her one word about ...
   - I’ll take him/her out with us to play
   - I’ll make a drawing and write a word underneath and show him/her
   - etc, etc, etc
   - I’ll smile at him/her especially
   - I’ll check his/her work
   - I’ll ask him/her to teach me something

   **Other hints to those teaching:**
   - At the beginning of the day, set myself the ‘mini-teaching’ task [of] ... 
   - At the end of the day, ‘How did I go?’
   - At the end of the day, ‘How did ‘x’ cope?’

   **Caution:** Monitor any pressure — **if ‘x’ feels a little overwhelmed, ease off a bit.**

   ★ Praise, praise, praise. ★

   - Work at celebrating all the progress ‘x’ makes, we [teacher/peer tutors] make.
   - Reward the [peer] tutors with your attention and support and **awards** for outstanding responsibility and initiative.
First Language Maintenance

“The acceptance of their own language [is very important] so that they feel valued, that they have something to bring along [to school]. That is very important. Because if they don’t feel valued their self-esteem plummets. We lose another point of contact.”

[Classroom teacher, primary school.]

Many participants in the study stressed that encouraging NESB students to speak, read, and write in their first language was a great help to these students in many ways: for example, it helped them cross the bridge between their ‘old and new lives’, it ensured that their facility with language was maintained until they had the opportunity to learn English, and it gave them the opportunity to communicate (with the help of translators) about their culture, and about their experiences at home and before coming to New Zealand.

“When we had our first tiny intake of Asian immigrants about six years ago, we thought, ‘Right, they need to be assimilated as quickly as possible. So we’ll spread them out all around the school and they’ll have to speak English, therefore they’re going to learn as fast as they possibly can.’ [But] we became sufficiently enlightened to realise that that wasn’t the best way to do things. That actually the support that is generated by having same language students in the same classroom is absolutely great. But we had to overcome a lot of teacher prejudices about that and as part of that we have to insist that [the students] be allowed to speak their home language in the classroom as well and that takes a bit of adjusting to for some teachers because they don’t know what’s being said obviously, and aren’t too sure what the discussion is about. Until they’ve built up a vocabulary of English language, we allow them to do all writing [in their first language], and then bilingual writing. We encourage them to do bilingual writing — they hate doing it, they want to write in English but we try to encourage them to retain their home language as well. Those three things — grouping students with others from their home country, allowing them to speak their first language, encouraging them to write in their first language — help them settle really quickly and start moving along the English way.” [ESOL coordinator/Deputy principal, intermediate school.]

“If we find a kid is not learning at a decent rate, [we have to consider the possibility] that they are not competent in their own first language and so we have something called a bilingual assessment. ... We get a translator in, (another teacher and I [are presently] learning how to do it — so far, we have had one session), who works with the child in their own language and gives them directions, and then that translator will assess how proficient they are in their own language. So [first language competence] does have an influence on learning.
So that is why we have got [our bilingual teacher aide in], we are trying to put the emphasis on keeping the first language going because it does seem to be crucial.” [ESOL coordinator, intermediate school.]

Exhibit 13 outlines one participating school’s views on first language maintenance as part of its overall philosophy and policy on NESB students. The issue of the importance of first language maintenance is raised again later in this report (Chapter 10).

The Working Relationship between ESOL Coordinators/Teachers and Classroom Teachers

Many of the people we spoke to over the course of the study made the point that a good working relationship between the ESOL coordinator [or equivalent] and classroom teachers helps ensure that the teachers — as well as the students that the ESOL coordinator works with — feel supported. A positive working relationship with the ESOL coordinator also means that teachers have someone close by to consult for advice as required. As well, both ESOL coordinators and classroom teachers emphasised the value of the ESOL coordinator picking up on what the teacher is already doing in the classroom rather than working with NESB students on unrelated topics. (As will be seen from the quotes included in the next section, a similar comment was made about the backup and support that many in-class helpers, such as teacher aides and parents, provide for teachers and students.)

“The teachers might say [to me], ‘This is what we are going to be working on [in class], perhaps you could work on this particular topic [in the withdrawal groups]’. I’ve found that this has been the most useful thing for the children, the students, and I’m sure for the teachers and [also] for me — following the programme happening in their normal classroom and doing all that backup work with them. Then everyone knows exactly where they are. This is obviously the most help to the students because it doesn’t seem to be much point in them coming to me to do something quite different to what was going on in their normal classroom. [This sort of] classroom support works really well.” [Teacher aide (ESOL), primary school.]

“I keep in touch with the teachers [and when I’m in the classroom I’m finding out what the programme is — [for example], the social studies theme at the moment is water so we [the NESB students and I] need to concentrate a little bit on water out here [during] withdrawal time to give them a few words linked with water to help them with their language [for studying that topic]. So I just keep in touch with the teachers and what they are doing, to help them so that they don’t have to go beside the NESB children [while trying to teach the whole class] and give them all that extra help to keep up. [As much as possible] I’m there helping them with the programme as it’s going on. I don’t give [the teachers] specific
work for their [NESB] children, I let them do their [normal programme]. I feel that I’m an extra. I’m with the teachers at morning tea time and just finding out if they have any particular needs. Like, the other week, one teacher said to me that one child [in her class] is not too good with her take-away sums so I gave [the child] a bit of help with that because she is shy and never says ‘boo’. The teachers have a notebook that I get them to write down the needs of their children in and it’s [ie, teacher support] more by word of mouth really.”

[ESOL coordinator, primary school.]

“[The ESOL coordinator] will come in [to the classroom] and [the NESB students] will be doing the work that I have set for the rest of the class and she will find out what they are doing and where they are up to and help them there and then, and other times I have set work for them in class [which builds] on work she has set for them and she will help them with that in the classroom. So it’s a two-way thing when we are both helping [the NESB students]. [The ESOL coordinator] will give me a copy of her expectations, her objectives, and where she would like me to be. And then I let her know what the class is doing in general terms — like, we are studying water at the moment and I give her a plan of what we are doing and she might see some things that she can develop further from that. Maybe from their own culture, what water means to them in Sri Lanka and what do the monsoons mean. [The ESOL coordinator] does keep a very detailed log and record of what the children are doing with her. I set up programmes for the whole class and she [ESOL coordinator] can pick things up for the [NESB students out of that]. She is good at finding out what the class is doing and joins in and then helps the [NESB children] join in also.” [Classroom teacher, primary teacher.]

“The teachers know that if they need any help they can come and ask and they will get the help that they need, whether it be resources like books in the mother tongue, or a translator. [We] have a list of translators [that schools can access], or somebody [who can come to the school] and explain the culture of that race should a problem occur. And so [I] basically share the contacts we can tap into for extra people if we need them. For instance, we have a Mandarin speaker, a parent, [we can call on and she] came in to explain to the whole school at assembly one day the rules about the cones and how you are not allowed to go on the grass when the cones are out. Because the Chinese children in particular still couldn’t understand that when the red cones were out you were not allowed on the grass. So we used the translator to explain [that and other things] to all the children, although the conversation that took place was mainly between her and the Mandarin speakers in the hall.” [ESOL coordinator, primary school.]

“If in the classroom setting the teacher observes an [NESB] child or a group of children having difficulty with gender factors like ‘he’/‘she’, ‘him’/‘her’ patterns then they might come to me for a short burst and I would give them lots of activities that would help them be able to differentiate between ‘he’/‘she’ or ‘him’/‘her’. So the need is picked up or observed in
Exhibit 13: A Primary School’s Policy in Relation to First Languages and NESB Students Generally

**Rationale**
In our multicultural school, we value the first language skills, values, knowledge and experience that each child brings to school and recognise that all children learn best through their first home language.

**Purpose**
1. To value the home languages, experiences and cultures of each child.
2. To encourage parents to maintain their first language at home.
3. To increase the children’s confidence, skills and knowledge in all aspects of the English language.

**Guidelines**
1. Every child has the right to have his/her name pronounced correctly.
2. Parents will be encouraged to discuss classroom work in their home language.
3. The use of interpreters will be actively encouraged.
4. Children’s English language skills will be assessed on entry to the school. Appropriate programmes and support will be provided, according to Ministry of Education set criteria and resources available.
5. Rich, activity-based language experiences will be provided.
6. The ESOL teacher will maintain a cultural roll and monitor and assess NESB children’s English language progress.
7. NESB students will be encouraged to take active roles in the school, including those with responsibilities.
8. Each year a budget will be established for the provision of ESOL/NESB resources to meet needs.

**Conclusion**
To the above ends, appropriate ESOL/NESB needs and resources will be identified, budgeted for and adequately met so non-English-speaking background children will be provided with the best opportunities to develop and improve English language competency within their classes.

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The wording in this exhibit is quoted directly from a document supplied by the school in question.
the classroom and then that need is recorded and passed on and strategies are developed to actually address that need. So the programmes that I do arise from the needs that are noted by the classroom teacher. There might be another group or another child who has great difficulty with plurals or with sentence structure so the teacher might then say that ‘so and so’ needs to have some input on basic sentence structure. The classroom teacher really makes the observations, determines what the child’s needs are, puts those to me, and then I work out activities or find activities that are going to address those particular needs.” [ESOL coordinator, primary school.]

“I work out a timetable with each teacher for their particular [NESB] children. I don’t always stick to it because sometimes I go in to see a child and that child is not there because the teacher has taken them out for extra PE [physical education]. But it works well: the teachers are used to me coming and going in the room. They don’t feel that I’m butting in, it’s really good. I have a folder for each child [I work with] outlining their needs, the particular things I need to focus on, and every folder has got the child’s updated goals, needs, and assessments.” [ESOL coordinator, primary school.]

“We have got a really good person in the driving seat. If our [ESOL coordinator] says, ‘Come on guys, we are going to do this’, suddenly you look up and here they [the teachers] all are doing it. They just respect her as a person; they know that she is beside them all the time supporting them. So they aren’t reluctant to cry out for assistance and therefore the child is well catered for because not only have the teachers got their own strengths as well, but when they get stuck they open their mouths and there are people who can come to their aid. We are all very committed teachers here and we will do our very best for kids. There’s always somebody here who will know [what to do] and somebody who will help.” [Principal, primary school.]

Two staff members of the ESOL Department of a participating secondary school also emphasised, firstly, that a positive working relationship between ESOL coordinators/teachers and classroom teachers needs to be worked at to ensure that it remains constructive, and, secondly, that care must be taken to become accepted by the class as a whole.

“It seems to me that in-class support works most effectively if you have got the active support of the teacher so you are involved with some of the planning and you feel free to have discussions and make suggestions.” [ESOL teacher, secondary school.]

“In-class support [can be] very variable. I’m convinced [that as support person] you have to get credibility with the entire class so that you are not this strange body that comes in. So [even though] your input may not actually be needed at a particular time, you are there [anyway] and taking part in the class, doing the activities, you are floating. It is part of that need to build credibility [not only] with the student you are targeting [but] with the class as whole.”
The assistance of interpreters and bilingual tutors eases the settling in process for NESB students and their families.

Use of Interpreters, Bilingual or Multilingual Tutors, Parents, and Other Helpers

Participants in the study reported that the assistance of interpreters and/or bilingual or multilingual tutors can greatly help to ease the settling in process for students and their families and are a great help to schools in that communication (including understanding of each other’s ways and expectations) is able to be much more effective from the outset. Teachers also frequently commented that help from parents and teacher aides was an invaluable backup and support for them in the classroom, both because of the knowledge and skills such people bring with them to the classroom but also because they enable teachers to work with the class as a whole, knowing that particular students for whom one-to-one or small group work is best are not disadvantaged.

“Sometimes there is a need for an interpreter [when meeting students and their families for the first time]. For example, when the Sri Lankan children enrolled [we contacted] a Sri Lankan-speaking girl who is up at university who can speak English very well because she has been in New Zealand for a few years. So she was the contact [between the school and the family] because she could interpret and she wrote the [enrolment] form out for the whole family and the children. If a parent can’t speak English, you can ring up the Multicultural Resource Centre for an interpreter — they have some sources of people who can help.” [ESOL coordinator, primary school.]

“We have two very good parent contacts in the community — one Taiwanese woman and one Hong Kong woman. We have used them in the past for translating and when we’ve been aware that there have been home problems and [our bilingual tutor] feels that he isn’t the best person to deal with that situation, we’ve engaged these two ladies as well. When we’ve had NESB students who have actual learning and sometimes physical disabilities, we have used parents as teacher aides to work with them. Once a week, we have a parent reading scheme which is used by a lot of our NESB students, just to get some English reading mileage. They just come up and read stories and books with these parents. And [they’re not necessarily parents of the same background as the students], it’s just parents who are prepared to put in the time. English-speaking parents come and help with that. We’ve also got one of our ex-teachers who comes in one day a week just to do spoken English with a lot of our Chinese students particularly, but other NESB students as well. She actually does conversation, a lot of going out and about in the school grounds and over to the shops, discussing the vocabulary with them.” [ESOL coordinator/deputy principal, intermediate school.]
“There’s the first language maintenance programme which we have with one of the parents coming in once a week and taking them for reading and writing in their own language. I give her the theme — I tell her what we’re working on — so she can focus on that. And that gives them a bit of a head start, then; they know what the basic concepts are in their own language, so they can transfer to the English, which is useful.” [ESOL coordinator, primary school.]

“We have a bilingual tutor who has a teaching background and speaks both Cantonese and Mandarin. He helps with intensives, assessments, testing, in-class support, counselling, running records. He’s marvellous in all of those areas. He has a whānau assigned to him for a double period each week. He works just with Chinese students. For my little Tongan girl [for example], the extra remedial reading that she needs, she gets through parent help. Parents help listen to children read and make sure they understand what they are reading.” [ESOL teacher/classroom teacher, intermediate school.]

“We rely on very willing members of the community, the English-speaking community, as well as the Chinese community, for coming into the school and providing extra support.” [ESOL coordinator/Deputy principal, intermediate school.]

“We have got a Cantonese lady from Hong Kong who comes in one day a week and she works with children in their first language. We’ve also got somebody who comes in three days a week and she works with NESB children too. She takes any totally Phase 1 kids [ie, those with very little or no English] and she would have them for about 45 minutes, three times a week. They are taken out of the class. Children are also taken out of the class, but on a far less regular basis, to work with the Hong Kong lady, but she is encouraging first language use and knowledge of their culture — trying to maintain that. So that is quite different from the English acquisition [groups].” [ESOL coordinator, intermediate school.]

“We have two people who are part-time ESOL in the school. One is a Mandarin speaker — she is a parent, plus she is [one of the] relief teachers that we use. But she also comes in and works with Mandarin speakers. Now, she’ll do things like run intensives. For instance, if we have got athletic sports coming up, she’ll run a language intensive on that and go through specific language like ‘high-jump’, ‘athletic’, ‘running’, ‘fitness’, so that they have picked up those topic words and then they’ll go through the same programme on that topic as everyone else in the classroom. [She is particularly valuable] in areas such as science — they have just done migration, so she’ll take them and do an intensive on that. Usually she does the intensive before the programme starts in the classroom, so they are brought up to speed on it and then they are ready to participate in the classroom programme as much as they can. And, as well as being paid, she also does a lot of voluntary work for us, just liaising between parents and home and if we have a problem with home, then one of the staff can ring [her] and ask if she can do a visit. And she is more than happy to do that. For some disciplinary problems and things like that, she will come in and be an interpreter for us. ... Then we
have got a fully-trained TESOL [Teacher of English for Speakers of Other Languages] person — she works outside the school as well, doing English tuition. Very highly qualified. And we use her for children who are having difficulty picking up English in the normal acquisition process we have in the classroom. She will take them out and work with them on a remedial basis.” [Deputy principal, intermediate school.]

“I have 15 NESB students, from various countries, in my class of 34 seven- and eight-year-olds. I have had the boy from Taiwan, who speaks Mandarin, work with our [Chinese teacher aide] and [another teacher aide] has worked alongside the two NESB children who need the most support. I do have a volunteer who comes in on two days [a week] and a mother who comes in one day [a week] and sometimes, not regularly, I will get them to work with a little girl from Russia who started this year. This is her first year of schooling in New Zealand so she needed to learn her alphabet and so they [the helpers] worked alongside her on the alphabet and basic words which most of the NESB students use. This is definitely a great help to me: one of the [helpers] is a trainee teacher who comes in two days a week so she is very valuable and [the little Russian] girl has been very keen to learn, which makes it easier.” [Classroom teacher, primary school.]

“I [provide] teacher support. I take small groups of children out to another area of the school and whatever topic their class is doing at the time I have a copy of the objectives and what the syllabus is for that particular topic. I give the teacher support [by working with the children] on all the vocabulary and whatever [else] they need to know for the topic that’s going on in the classroom — they have an introduction [to the topic] with me before they do it in the classroom [and then afterwards] they do the extra activities [with me on the topic that the rest of the children] are doing in the classroom. I teach them only in English. (I have worked at a language school teaching adults for a number of years and I am a primary trained teacher. I have [also participated in parts of the contract for assisting NESB students] here this year.)” [Teacher aide, primary school.]

“We have a bilingual resource teacher who works here for one day [a week]. She has a programme just for Samoan children. (This school has only one category [ethnic group] of NESB children, as opposed to a variety.) All of the Samoan children [in the school] have access to [her programme], it’s not just the special needs children or the NESB children. She does a language programme with them, and many of the children she takes on are also children who are on our NESB specific learning programme. And she does a lot of culture with them as well. She withdraws children [from their regular classrooms] in small groups and then she will work as a whole group in the latter part of the day — they come together as a big group for culture. She reinforces language in her programme — because of her Samoan, she’s really able to — but she also works on social elements as well, where she’s able to discuss problems that the children have. So it’s a bit of everything in a way. [The programme] is monitored. I go and see her, and we talk about the children she’s going to
have, which groupings they’re going to be in — she tends to take children with similar language needs together. So we work that out [together], but she’s a professional [so] we leave her to do her own evaluating. She discusses with me some of the needs of the children so we can take that [information] back and [feed it into] our [specific ESOL] programme but, other than that, we don’t formally evaluate [her programme].” [Special needs coordinator, primary school.]

“There’s a Somali woman who comes in to teach the Somali children about their own language and culture. They come back [into class] happy, they love it. It fosters their development.” [Classroom teacher, primary school.]

“At the moment we have a retired teacher [helping us]. She has been coming in Wednesdays and Thursdays for most of the year and with her help, which is unpaid, she is able to help [our ESOL coordinator] support some of our [NESB] children in the standard 2 to form 2 area. She works quite closely with [the ESOL coordinator] and the classroom teachers. She works in the classroom and also organises other things depending on the child’s needs, so she [either] withdraws a child or works [alongside] the child [during the] classroom programme — usually [when] it’s either maths or language because that is where the greatest need for support is.” [Principal, primary school.]

“(One of our part-time teachers] is from Hong Kong and speaks Cantonese. She takes six of my Asian [NESB students] for half-an-hour a week for Asian-type things; at the moment she is doing idioms and Asian geography. Then we have got another part-time teacher and she takes about six [NESB students] for one afternoon a week. They go to her [but] she will come to your class if that is what you want. Either way, you basically say to her what you want. At the moment she takes mine out. But she follows the class programme: like we’re doing a newspaper study at the moment, so she’ll spend the afternoon with them on some of the newspaper skills that I have highlighted for her.” [Classroom teacher, intermediate school.]

**Using Materials and Assignments Tailored to the Needs and Experiences of the Students**

Many of those we spoke to expressed concern about a lack, as they saw it, of a wide range of resources suitable for NESB students from many different backgrounds. Although they acknowledged that very good books and other materials were becoming more widely available for students from some countries, for students from other countries this was not yet the case. However, all of those we spoke to in the course of the study agreed that it was very important for these students’ confidence and progress to have the opportunity to read, write, and talk about things that were familiar to them, as well as to have access to suitable materials which helped them learn more about life in New Zealand. Often, participants in the study indicated that they and the NESB students developed their own resources — the
A student would tell and/or illustrate a story and the teacher or teacher aide would write it down for them, where possible, in the student’s first language as well as in English.

“With the older children, using their own written material [is very effective], so if a child is doing language with [our special needs teacher aide], he might say something in Samoan, and it will be written down, they will transpose it into English, and make up their own booklet. So, using their language, their own stories, is very important, and then they can be read in English as well. I do this with children who are having problems with reading — use their own stories, put them on the computer and make booklets out of them, so it’s their own language they’re actually reading.” [Special needs coordinator, primary school.]

“Often [our ESOL teacher] gets the children to make their own experienced-based readers, so they can be made in [their first language] and then translated into English, so that the [first language] is maintained for as long as it’s needed, particularly in things like reading, because without that the child would be totally lost, I think.” [Special needs coordinator, primary school.]

“[One of our students is Bulgarian] and he was given a homework sheet this week about comparing Bulgaria with New Zealand, things that are different and things that are the same. [It also asked him about] things he likes to be doing and it’s good that we talk about all that.” [ESOL coordinator, primary school.]

“It is not just the language side of it [ie, the difficulty level, etc]. You have to find a topic that a student is interested in, and then the language comes. Topics must be student-focused.” [ESOL coordinator, secondary school.]

“We had this girl who could read beautifully, but when you asked her about what she’d read, [she had] no comprehension whatsoever. She hadn’t had the experiences [depicted in the book] because [she came from] a teeny weeny little Samoan island that you can walk around in about three-quarters of an hour. [On her way to New Zealand] she would have [gone over to the main island] on her uncle’s boat — (I had some pictures, I had been on that boat so we actually had something we could talk about) — and she would have gone to Apia on the bus, which takes about an hour-and-a-half, and then she would have got on the plane and come here [to New Zealand]. [So] not very broad experiences. She was form 1 when she came here, and she’s one of the ones that I feel still needs follow-up. She’s come a long, long way, but I think she needs more time. She’s got a neat teacher, and last year and this year I have been able to get her to go on [school] camp. In fact, last year, she’d only been here probably about six, seven weeks, and I persuaded her parents to let her go with me on camp, and we had her abseiling and rope walking in the trees and, of course, she shone when we got into kayaks, no problem at all. She was at home because the sea was her field. So she had these experiences, which were wonderful, and when the [other] kids saw that she did these things, she could relate back to them. It was good for her to have that [camp]
experience early on when she arrived, because she learnt about things [here], and could show what she knew [from her home country], then she was able to talk about them and write about them [in class].” [Teacher aide, special needs, primary school.]

“I have photocopied pictures from books the children are interested in, topical books, and then I get them to write their own story [about the picture] on another page. I got three young ones I worked with [ awhile ago] to do that, and we laminated [their work] and turned it into a book. We used pictures from a series of books, but with their stories and their own words. They had [their work] corrected, they produced it on the computer, and then produced a book. And that’s really exciting, because you see the language, and you see the things [ideas] that they come up with, and you see where they’re at.” [Teacher aide, special needs, primary school.]

“Second language learners absolutely love it when you read a story, say, from Africa. It doesn’t have to be specifically Somalia [in the case of the Somalian students], it could be [about] Nigeria, but it represents a little bit of home and they feel good about it.” [ESOL teacher, secondary school.]

“The Herald [our local newspaper] is also put out in Chinese and we get that delivered weekly to the school. Each class has a copy and there is a copy in the library. The kids love them.” [ESOL coordinator/Deputy principal, intermediate school.]

Some of the teachers and others with whom we spoke particularly emphasised the need for age-appropriate material — that is, material which contains language at an appropriate difficulty level for NESB students but with content that reflects the activities and experiences of different age groups. Such material means that 11- and 12-year-olds (for example) do not have to learn to read from books which have as their focus characters who are much younger than themselves, engaging in pursuits that they have outgrown.

“Most of our language work is based on social studies and science topics, so it’s [a matter of] building resources around those topics to allow NESB students to do the same topics at the same time as the English-speaking students. Yet not at a baby level, but at a level which is going to advance their vocabulary and information skills — sort of scaffolded learning of language. They use pictures for writing in their first language, then translating into English, and all based on the topics the rest of the class is studying. But initially there was a conception that they had to go back to the new entrant reader-type activities. Well, we do that, new entrant activities, but not on new entrant books. We do them on topics we’re studying throughout the school — it’s more inclusive.” [ESOL coordinator/Deputy principal, intermediate school.]

“I make sure I keep the [NESB] children supplied with books at the right reading age for them because they don’t like to feel young and babyish so they will go to the library and pick
out books like everyone else that they can’t read and just sit there and just turn the pages. So I keep them supplied with [suitable] books they can take home and read, and [also] read to me when I withdraw them. They love taking them home, especially the new ones, and they see me come into the classroom and are happy and they can talk about what they have read. I have got a Ukrainian [boy] and a Bulgarian boy, one’s been here a couple of months longer than the other but they get the atlas and talk about their countries and they talk about history and Hitler and — . They know their European history. They talk to each other in their broken English and they love it.” [ESOL coordinator, primary school.]

The Families

As evidenced by the passages which follow, as well as by many other examples throughout the report, schools often work hard at helping families and the school community in general feel more comfortable about being part of the school environment, but especially anything directly related to the classroom. The teachers and others we spoke to felt that ensuring that parents or caregivers in particular feel welcomed and comfortable can play a vital role in their developing a sense of involvement in or ‘ownership of’ what happens at school, and can affect the nature and extent of other input into their children’s education and well-being.

“A lot of the parents this year have become a major, a much more important, part of the school. Because of what we learned on the [professional development] contract [for assisting NESB students], we have been able to tap into the home [much more]; we have learned other ways of bringing in our ethnic families to help us.” [Principal, primary school.]

“We have an informal home and support group for NESB families through the Chinese Parents Association and the Korean Parents Association. It’s supplemented by the activities of our multilingual teacher who contacts homes and provides support.” [Principal, intermediate school.]

“We have had parent support meetings at the school. The meetings are a chance for the parents to come into the school and for us to go through with them the directions the school is heading in, and to go through aspects of our education that they have concerns about. Things like swimming — ‘Why are you teaching our children to swim?’ School camps are another concern. We have had huge problems trying to get new immigrant kids on camps — they didn’t want to go. The meetings are a real chance to liaise with [parents] face-to-face, in a group where they can ask any questions they may have. It is really valuable. (Our [part-time bilingual tutor/parent] translates for us.)” [Deputy principal, intermediate school.]

“Our school provides special reading training for the parents. That happens twice a term and is done by our assistant principal and a couple of Reading Recovery teachers. [The
purpose is] so that parents can work with their children when they take their readers home. Because we have to basically unteach a lot of the bad things that have been happening. [The training] is available for all the parents of junior children in the school.” [ESOL teacher, primary school.]

“There is a lot of home visiting that goes on. I have probably visited most homes in this school. It’s not formal [but] we are looking at [making it so]. We would like to start something, especially now with our [new] Samoan-speaking AP — a parents’ group, things like that. It’s not formal [what we do now] but all the time we are trying to open the doors and get people in here a lot more. What we are dealing with is a third world [model] of education that education is the school’s business and not the family’s business, that teachers are supported and not questioned, and the authority of the teacher is never questioned. [This] has some benefits — like, it’s tough teaching on this side of town but we don’t have articulate parents come in and tell me their five-year-old should be in standard four and I’m doing the wrong thing. That [sort of thing] is not part of my problem. [But] because you are not going to get strong feedback [from the school community], you have to make sure you are keeping on the ball in other ways. There is a lot of home contact and we really work on that, [even though] it’s not [on a] formal [basis], but what we lack, and what we are always trying to get, is a Samoan-speaking woman teacher of mature age — not a 21-year-old — who has got a bit of mana [and] who can really contact parents.” [Principal, primary school.]

[Part-time English conversation classes for adult learners are run here.] The question is how much English do they [adults] need. It is important they retain their first language, finding a balance between the two. We don’t want them to lose their first language, we don’t want them to lose their family. And it is really very tiring exchanging rather [stilted] sentences all day. You have to be able to go home and relax with your own language. [But] these adults gain enough language to function in the workplace, the marketplace, the government department. And enough English to be able to help their kids. That is one of the real advantages of having the adult learning classes here. They [the parents] are now happy in the school and have confidence to go into their children’s classrooms. There is an immediate involvement for the parents — they can have lunch [here at school] with their children, or [the children] can go home to lunch with their parents [after the English conversation class]. It’s a place to keep the family together. I think it also probably helps the family to learn English because they will be speaking it around the school and class. And they can do homework together.” [Teacher aide, adult language classes within a secondary school.]

“As far as possible, we do use parents or others in the community as resource people. [But] I think it’s fair to say that a lot of our parents don’t feel particularly comfortable in coming into the school. [However], that situation is improving and I think that a lot of that [is due to our new teacher]. He is Samoan, and I think that since he has been at the school, we have all noticed that more and more of our parents are coming into the school. By nature, I
think the Samoans don’t feel comfortable coming into the classroom — they will support us in all sorts of other ways but not actually coming into the classroom. I think that they feel that it’s not their role to interfere with what the teachers are doing and that they have no place within the classroom walls, but they are very happy to help with the sausage sizzles and picnic days and going on trips. When we go on trips we have lots of parents wanting to come. They enjoy participating in the more social aspects of school life but they don’t really feel comfortable about coming into the classroom. They come in and participate with any sort of sports days and there are always parents willing to help with sports trips and things like that. They [sometimes also] come along into the classroom at singing time and we have got some parents to come in now and actually teach children new songs and dances, but generally speaking they are very happy to help in any way with a socially-related activity but not come into the classroom as parent helpers.” [ESOL coordinator, primary school.]

“[We don’t have a home and school support group for NESB families] in the formal sense but we have, for instance, a very strong outdoor education programme and at this time of the year all of the classes from Junior 3 up go out for camps and [our special needs] teacher aide has to do a lot of visiting of our Samoan families in general, [but] in particular those who think their children are going to be killed immediately or little girls raped [if they go on a camp]. So we do a lot of visiting, and — one thing I’ve forgotten to mention to you through all of this — we also this year have done what it was my dream to do, we’ve employed a Samoan teacher for one day a week, and she is our Samoan support person, and she does the family visiting where there is a need, too, because she can talk to the family in their own language, and she takes groups of NESB children.” [Principal, primary school.]

Some Concluding Comments on the Programmes Being Provided for NESB Students

In order for schools to achieve the goal of providing equality of educational opportunities for their NESB students, it is evident that, in many cases, this means teachers and support people not only working with these students on second language acquisition, and subject learning generally, but also involves them in considerable ‘pastoral care’ work: keeping in touch with families and helping them with problems [often practical, day-to-day living difficulties], providing emotional and other support for students; encouraging parents and other community members to become involved in school events and activities and in assisting children by listening to them read, talking with them in their own language, translating and so on; and liaising — for example, between school and family, and student and family.

To help them integrate into the classroom, NESB students need certain, essential ‘tools’ — that is, they need to learn the rules and procedures which form a vital prerequisite to learning. As well, those developing programmes for NESB students need to take into account
the various factors — such as previous educational and life experiences, home circumstances, facility with first language, motivation — identified in Chapter 3 and in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 as having an influence on NESB students’ ability to learn English and progress in our schools and society generally.

It was clear from the material obtained during the study that all participating schools, and many individual teachers within those schools, placed a high value on the support that they received, indicating their belief that without this support it would be difficult, if not impossible, to provide the programmes that they ran. The support took many forms: the support provided for classroom teachers by school ESOL coordinators/teachers, the support provided for NESB students and teachers by peer tutors/buddies, teacher aides, bilingual tutors, parents; the support provided for schools by outside organisations; and so on.

Finally, as illustrated by the first spokesperson quoted on page 110, schools often have very different ways of working with their NESB students, the underlying principle being that no one method or approach will necessarily be suitable for all groups/communities: that ‘what works’ will, to a large extent, reflect the particular characteristics of individual schools, their student and teacher populations, and their communities. However, it was also pointed out — see, for example, the comments made by the second spokesperson quoted on page 110 — that care should be taken to avoid ‘reinventing the wheel’: that other schools often have a wealth of valuable experience and that sharing knowledge and ideas can be invaluable.

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15 See, for example, Exhibit 9 on page 122 which presents ways of helping students acquire the language of instructions and directions.