



**N. Z. PRINCIPALS'**

**F E D E R A T I O N**

# **SPECIAL NEEDS**

**DISCUSSION PAPER**

**PRESENTED TO**

**SCHOOLS' CONSULTATIVE**

**REFERENCE GROUP**

**24 FEBRUARY, 2004**

# Special Needs Discussion paper



## Background

In September 2001 the New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF) presented a discussion paper to the Ministry of Education entitled “ *Special Needs – 3 years from Now! A discussion document for the future. An NZPF perspective.*” This followed the Wylie Review of Special Education (2000).

Post 2001 the focus by the Ministry of Education at a macro level has been on improving the co-ordination, quality, capability and outcomes for special needs students within an ecological, inclusive model.

Given the significant changes that the Special Education Service has gone through since 2001, it is timely to reflect on whether or not the changes made equate to improved delivery. Special Education Policy Directions have attempted to move on several fronts:

1. Improving the knowledge base.
2. Improving the resourcing and the provision of support.
3. Developing the capacity and supply of specialists for Maori and Pasifika.
4. Developing the capability of teachers, specialists.
5. Improving the learning outcomes

### **The NZPF still has serious concerns about:**

1. Levels of funding to support Special Needs children in the mainstream; and
2. The selection criteria for ORRS; and
3. Mainstreaming. Does it deliver the best learning outcomes for special needs children? What are alternative models? What are the hybrids?
4. The creation of additional pools of funding when existing pools are under funded. e.g. Supplementary Learning Support
5. The capability of the sector to meet the needs of special needs children?
6. The use of allocated funding from the various funding pools. Is it being used in the best way?
7. The plethora of terms and Special Needs Resource streams. It is confusing and in the view of NZPF overly complex. ( TFEA, SEG, EPF, LSF, SWIS, SLS, ORRS etc.)
8. The impact of the “behaviourally challenged” on a teacher’s ability to teach and a child’s right to learn. Refer Church research. We view this issue as the most significant in the complex area of Special Needs.

### **To accommodate children with special needs within an ecological state education model requires significant resourcing. This additional resourcing should:**

- Meet the needs of the special needs student it is allocated for within a mainstream environment, in age and need appropriate ways; and
- Meet the needs of the other learners in the mainstream; and
- Meet the needs of the mainstream teacher and if required specialist teachers; and
- Empower sector capability to meet the needs of increasingly diverse learners; and
- Further develop sector responsiveness to the spectrum of special needs students they will inevitably encounter.

**Comment:** Debate needs to be held as to whether the current ecological model provides the best environment to maximize the talents of all special needs children. There still is a need for:

- Specialist Schools
- Specialist Units attached to schools
- An ecological model that practices both mainstreaming and reverse mainstreaming.
- Total inclusion
- Analysis of the impact of special needs students on the mainstream environment. e.g . on teachers, on learners etc

**Before discussing “Special Needs” children it is necessary to consider the categories of “Special Needs” resourcing that currently exist.**

1. ***Ongoing Resource and Reviewable Scheme (ORRS)***. In essence represents the top 1% of the special needs continuum. Currently schools that enrol children identified as meeting the criteria to be included within the Ongoing Reviewable & Resourcing Scheme (ORRS) receive:
  - Additional staffing; 0.1 FTTE for High Needs and 0.2 FTTE for Very High Needs; and
  - Support staff funding; and
  - Additional specialist services e.g. Speech & Occupational Therapists.

**Comment:** *The underpinning philosophy of ORRS is sound however school principals and SENCO’s are disillusioned with the process. It is imperative that resourcing is needs based. NZPF believes that modifications are required among which include:*

- Review of the criteria to attain ORRS. Currently groups of children are excluded.
- Removal of the 1% threshold. Children should not be denied funding because the 1% allocation has been used.
- No reduction of allocated ORRS funding through political expediency. The IEP process should remain as the only vehicle for the reduction of ORRS funding.
- A significant increase in the hourly funding rate to meet the CEA for Special Needs Support Workers. This increase should be indexed to subsequent CEA movement.
- The realisation that mainstream schooling may not necessarily be in the best interests of ORRS children.
- Surety that there is a synergy between ACC & SES funding for Special Needs Support.
- Immediacy of response to pre-enrolment of special needs students- if this cannot be afforded schools should be afforded the right to not enrol the student until the necessary support mechanisms are in place.
- Magnet schools should be able to apply for additional staffing up to 1.0 FTTE. Currently schools with for example 0.7 ORRS generated staffing have to make up the additional staffing from within their staffing entitlement. The ORRS children are not at school for 0.7 of the time!
- A career path for teachers skilled and empathetic for those with special needs should be available. Currently this is not an option.

2. ***SEVERE BEHAVIOUR INITIATIVE***. (Inclusive of what was once called BEST). This initiative covers the top 1% of behaviourally challenged children.

Severe Behaviour impacts negatively on all who come within its sphere of influence. The community demands that the school do something about the perceived negative impact on their children. In many cases the only response left to the schools is to Stand Down, Suspend, Exclude or Expel. *“Suspensions have remained at 7 per 1000 students since 2000. Indications are, where*

*specific interventions are in place, both stand-downs and suspensions have reduced or remain steady.*"<sup>1</sup>

The Definition, Diagnosis and Treatment of Children and Youth with Severe Behaviour Difficulties: A Review of Research." John Church, Education Department, University of Canterbury

- **Detailed analyses of the interactions of antisocial children with their parents, teachers and peers suggest that children who are raised in environments in which polite and friendly responses pay off more frequently than coercive and antisocial responses learn to interact with others in polite and friendly ways while children who are raised in environments where coercive and antisocial responses pay off more frequently learn to interact with others in coercive and antisocial ways.**
- **To prevent antisocial children growing up to be antisocial adults it is desirable that interventions occur at the first sign of antisocial development.**
- **There is a lack of standardised screening procedures suitable for NZ use.**
- **It is estimated that the proportion of antisocial children in NZ schools is between 4.5 and 5% however this percentage can increase between 3 and 6 fold in lower decile schools.**

*Three conclusions were drawn from the research:*

1. **Children who do not engage in antisocial behaviour during childhood do not engage in antisocial behaviour during adolescence and adulthood.**
2. **Children identified during childhood as engaging in high rates of antisocial behaviour are at considerable risk as adults. (unemployment, psychiatric disorders, alcoholism, substance abuse, early pregnancy, early fatherhood, drunk driving, criminal offending, domestic violence, higher rates of injury and hospitalisation).**
3. **Current social conditions appear to be producing a group of life-course persistent antisocial children who go on to become delinquent youth and then adult offenders. For boys raised in the 1970's, this group numbered about 7% of all boys.**

**Children with severe antisocial behaviour difficulties are likely to have four major types of special teaching need.**

1. **The need to respond in prosocial ways to the behaviour of other people.**
2. **The need to learn that other people can be trusted and that how other people react to one's behaviour is important and needs to be taken into account.**
3. **The need to learn and to practice age-appropriate social skills, especially those that are necessary for the development of and maintenance of positive relationships with peers and with adults.**
4. **The need to catch up as quickly as possible in the core learning areas. i.e. reading, writing and maths.**

The research reviewed in this report shows that the task of halting the behaviourally challenged becomes more complex, more costly and less likely to succeed the older the child becomes. **Further the longer the intervention is left the less chance of affecting a successful outcome. Pre-school interventions have the most success (75 – 80%), between the ages of 5 -7 years, 65 – 70%, between 8 – 12 years, 45 – 50%)**

---

<sup>1</sup> Children & Young People in New Zealand: key statistical indicators. P.45 L. Melville.

**Further it goes on to say that it appears extremely unlikely, on the basis of the research reviewed that antisocial development can be halted and prosocial development accelerated using just a school-based intervention on its own.**

**Comment:**

There is no doubt that this represents one of the greatest barriers to achievement in a number of New Zealand schools. This anti-social behaviour represents a barrier to achievement for both the socially unacceptable child and also for children with whom they come in contact. It is also a central issue in teacher stress and supply.

The establishment of Resource Teachers: Learning & Behaviour (RTLb) was a positive move. The underpinning philosophy of RTLb is one of operating within an ecological model i.e. inclusively. There is no doubt that some schools need to address their own operating cultures, the lack of empathy contained within these schools can in effect be a barrier to achievement. The vast majority of schools however are empathetic and learner centred. They are attempting to adapt teaching methodologies and curriculum delivery to meet the learning needs of behaviourally challenged children. **The fact remains that these children take a disproportionate amount of time, energy and funding, often to the detriment of the majority.** Often the school is the only normalising agent within the child's life.

*The following are recommendations to enhance Severe Behaviour initiatives.*

- An understanding that for some children to remain included will require “on-going” resourcing. This resourcing should be targeted at the child and his/her family at the earliest sign of repeated non-compliance.
- Modifications to the existing Social Workers in Schools (SWIS) programme. Once rectified we recommend an increase in the provision of SWIS.
- That the learning needs of the majority should also be taken into account when assessing need.
- That for some children exclusion and intensive therapy is required. We need to consider the need to increase services such as Waimakoia and McKenzie Schools.
- The development of classroom management skills in pre-service programmes based on developing the Emotional Intelligence of teacher graduates.
- A reduction in class sizes to recognize both the learning needs and diversity a modern classroom presents.
- Enhanced interagency connectedness. e.g. CYF, Police, Health and Education.
- The provision of human resources available for schools to access as lead agents when Strengthening Families initiatives are called.
- That the Strengthening Families process be given “legal teeth.”
- That research is undertaken into the rate and effects of transience.
- That a review of the “*current stand-down, suspension, expulsion and exclusion guidelines, to ensure that schools refer children and young people to appropriate statutory or community agencies during disciplinary processes, and that this referral is monitored by schools in terms of shared case management and review with those agencies.*”<sup>2</sup>
- “*Monitor the degree to which schools refer to specialist agencies and whether that referral results in collaborative and planned intervention in the best interests of the child.*”<sup>3</sup>
- Monitor the movement of trained RTLb teachers. How many remain in positions but have not had the training? What is the retention rate of RTLb's.

---

<sup>2</sup> Aplin Report. Office of the Commissioner for Children. P.55

<sup>3</sup> Aplin Report. Office of the Commissioner for Children.

### 3. *Special Education Grant (SEG) and Targeted Funding for Education*

*Achievement (TFEA)*. These formula driven allocations paid to schools are graduated according to schools decile rankings.

“TFEA is a resource to assist schools to lower barriers to learning faced by students from low socio-economic communities.”<sup>4</sup>

“The SEG is intended to assist schools to help students with **moderate** special needs, such as learning and behaviour difficulties.”<sup>5</sup>

#### **Comment:**

The allocation of the SEG and TFEA allows for local decision making to effect enhanced learning outcomes for those children with moderate learning needs. The reality is that for many schools these pools of funds are not meeting the needs of the target group. i.e. children with moderate needs. They are instead meeting the shortfalls of the ORRS and Behaviour funding streams. The positive is that this model allows for local decision making to address local needs. This feature should be retained.

#### ***The following are recommendations to enhance SEG & TFEA.***

- Research the impact of transient children on school resource allocation.
- All schools should receive a base grant. Additional per capita funding could then be linked to the decile rank. The fact remains that Decile 10 schools have a need for both SEG & TFEA.
- Schools in the middle decile range are put under pressure in that they try to address the demands from both ends of the decile continuum.
- Maintain the decision making at the school level as to the best way to spend the SEG & TFEA.
- Conduct research as to how schools are using their SEG and TFEA funding.

### 4. *Learning Support Funding (LSF)*. These grants are paid to RTLB Clusters.

Funds are administered by Management Committees representing local clusters of schools.

Generally this pool of funds provides short-term emergency support for Year 0 – 10 students.

**Comment:** The allocation of Learning Support Funding to local RTLB cluster management committees has provided a successful mechanism for local initiatives concerned with “moderate” learning and behaviour needs. However Management Committees have found that this pool of funding is being used to resource schools to cater for children whose needs are longer term. This was not the initial target group of LSF. Many of the children receiving resourcing are behaviourally challenged. A positive “spin off” is that Management Clusters have brought schools together to focus on the learning needs of children in and across schools. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that the success of the RTLB clusters is highly dependent on the infrastructures that govern their operation. There is however significant additional workload for schools that have attached RTLB’s. The additional 0.05 staffing and the movement to a staffing based remuneration system is appreciated however it does not compensate for the additional workload.

#### ***Recommendations to enhance LSF:***

- Address implications of workload on principals who take on Management Committee responsibilities. Review adequacy of 0.05 additional staffing component.
- Provide research data on the ways in which the LSF funding has been used successfully.

---

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Education Funding, Staffing & Allowances Handbook. P.12.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Education, Funding Staffing & Allowances Handbook, p12.

## 5. *Enhanced Programme Fund (EPF)*

“Schools that have a disproportionate number of students with moderate special education needs are eligible for a supplementary grant called the Enhanced Programme Fund (EPF).”<sup>6</sup>

The EPF was introduced to help eligible schools maintain, refine and/or further develop quality special education programmes. The schools with the greatest need are targeted. Schools that are funded are able to provide data supporting their case that they have a disproportionate number of students with special education needs.

### **Comment:**

It would be fair to say that responses on EPF are varied from strong advocacy, generally from those successful in their application, to heightened frustration, generally from those unsuccessful.

### ***Recommendations in regard to EPF:***

- Review the contestability aspect of EPF.
- Provide professional development assistance to schools in interpreting school needs and “best fit” assistance.

## 6. *Supplementary Learning Support (SLS)*

This is a new initiative for students with special education needs and will be rolled out in 2004. The purpose of SLS is to better support students with special education needs including those students with significant, and ongoing, learning needs. This initiative aims to support students who have missed out on ORRS support. Individual students will be able to access new specialist teacher, learning support teacher and one-to-one support. Students admitted into SLS will receive 0.1 FTTE and 45 hours of specialist support per year. The eligible students will already be receiving support from other Special Needs funding pools e.g. TFEA, SEG and will be chosen by MoE, Special Education specialists and RTLB’s.

**Comment:** “Modification of the ORRS criteria to include additional students did not identify and include sufficient students to be seen as a viable solution.”<sup>7</sup>

Although time has to be given for this new initiative to be embedded there are still questions that need to be asked. It is the view of the NZPF that the criteria governing the ORRS scheme need revisiting. Many schools have given up sending in ORRS applications out of frustration. There are many ORRS students in the system whose resource allocation, in the view of the school, is insufficient to meet the needs of the student in a mainstream environment. The additional funding provided for SLS would be better directed at an under resourced ORRS scheme.

### ***Recommendation in regard to SLS:***

- Redirect this funding stream to ORRS.
- Consider the issues of accessing suitably qualified, empathetic teachers willing to work in part-time positions.
- Clarify employment conditions of these people before positions are advertised.

---

<sup>6</sup> [www.minedu.govt.nz/index.cfm?=-document&documentid=7208&data=1](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/index.cfm?=-document&documentid=7208&data=1)

<sup>7</sup> [www.minedu.govt.nz/index.cfm?layout=document&documentid=8862&data=1](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/index.cfm?layout=document&documentid=8862&data=1)

**Summary:**

**We have to ensure** that funding allocated to meet the needs of children actually does that.

**We have to ensure** that there is local accountability and flexibility.

**We have to ensure** that there is equity of access.

**We have to ensure** that principals & SENCO's do not have to jump through a plethora of hoops to access needed resource whilst at the same time providing accountability of resource usage.

**We must ensure** national moderation whilst at the same time encouraging local initiatives.

**We must ensure that the processes for resource allocation are** as simple as is possible.

Kelvin Squire  
February 2004