



Development of a New Intensive Wrap-around Special Education Service and Consultation on the Future Role of Residential Special Schools

– a consultation discussion sheet

May, 2012

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Inclusive Education Action Group

This consultation discussion sheet features key points for consultation. Please use this sheet to gather the views and ideas on the proposed new intensive wrap-around service from your staff and communities.

Please provide the Ministry with your feedback by **5pm, Friday 15 June 2012.**

Question 1: Is there a continuing need for Residential Special Schools within the new proposed service?

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The Inclusive Education Action Group (IEAG) supports the closure of the four remaining Residential Special Schools.

We support the rights of those students with complex needs and their families to live, learn and participate in their local schools and communities together. Children have a right to live at home, and to be educated alongside their peers in local schools in their local community. It is no longer appropriate to congregate such students together and segregate them from society (MacArthur, 2009). The continuing existence of residential special schools is inconsistent with human rights frameworks, government legislation and policies, and national and international educational and social evidence and research:

- The New Zealand Disability Strategy and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities both commit New Zealand to developing an inclusive education system at all levels
- Inclusion is a key principle of the New Zealand Curriculum document
- The intentions of the NZ Human Rights Act, The New Zealand Education Act and The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child are to prevent discrimination against disabled children and to extend to them the same rights as other children, including the right to education in their local school.
- The Ministry of Education's has a stated commitment to achieving a fully inclusive education system by 2014.

IEAG regards Residential Special Schools as an anomaly within this context.

Being separated from their local community currently serves as a barrier to these students' and families' accessing an inclusive and responsive education and opportunities within their local community. Three of the four remaining residential schools are in the South Island, while the majority of students who attend these schools are from the North Island. Geographical isolation further removes students from their families and community.

Local schools are required to take responsibility for **all** children and young people living within the community that each school, or clusters of schools, serve (Education Review Office, 2010 (New Zealand Government, 1989)). If local schools currently lack the capacity to include special school students, then the Ministry of Education needs to both fully support, and hold schools accountable, for providing inclusive education for every learner. Schools need on-going professional support and development opportunities to achieve success for every learner in every school. Removing children from their family and community is clearly undesirable, particularly as many gains in a student's learning and behaviour after attendance at a Residential Special School, are not sustained when the student returns to their family, school and community settings (Mitchell, 2012).

The extremely high cost of supporting a few students in residential schools for a limited period of time is not a sound investment and advantages special schools at the expense of regular schools. Re-directing the funding to providing support in local schools and communities should provide more effective support to a greater number of students.

Many other countries have also found that special schools are unnecessary, or even harmful, and have accordingly closed special schools as they develop an inclusive education system (MacArthur, 2009). For example, Italy began closing all state special schools in the 1970s, Norway in 1992, and the Canadian Province of New Brunswick in the 1980s. Many US school districts (e.g. Madison, Wisconsin) and many UK LEAs (e.g. Newham) have also closed all special schools or are timetabling their closure.

Question 2: If so, what role should Residential Special Schools play?

On-going professional support and development

The knowledge and skills related to supporting schools to develop and maintain an *inclusive school culture and practices* is key to sustained student achievement and school success.

While some staff at residential special schools have expertise that is beneficial for students, schools and families, not all Residential Special School teaching and specialist staff have experience and skills in supporting schools to provide high quality, **inclusive education** to their students, as their attitudes and teaching practice have been formed in non-inclusive settings.

On-going professional support and development for addressing the student's needs, learning and participation within an **inclusive pedagogy** is essential to the success of any wrap around service. Professional support and guidance for schools to develop and sustain an inclusive culture and pedagogy was not mentioned within the consultation document and we urge its consideration (Ballard & Macdonald, 1998).

IEAG recommends that:

- *The Ministry of Education include clear reference to the provision of resources for on-going school wide professional development, support and mentoring to develop understandings and practices that ensure every student with complex needs experiences success and has access to the curriculum alongside their peers.*

Question 3: What other things do we need to consider as we develop the new service model?

Professional support for schools

IEAG recommends that a key priority for spending be on-going, wrap around professional support for each school principal, management, teacher and Board of Trustee member.

Professional development and mentoring can support schools to learn about:

- Attitudes, knowledge and practices underpinning deficit thinking, and how to develop inclusive approaches to education;
- Becoming adept at identifying and removing barriers to learning and participation;
- Working collaboratively and in partnership with the student, family, and community

(Booth & Ainscow, 2011; Booth, Ainscow, & Kingston, 2006; MacArthur, 2009; Ministry of Education, 2007)

Socio-cultural and ecological approaches to planning for learning, participation and success

Successive New Zealand Governments have agreed that disablement happens, not because of an individual's impairments or special needs but, because of social, cultural and physical discrimination and barriers to disabled/labelled people and their full participation in society (Ministry of Health, 2001; United Nations General Assembly, 2007).

Some New Zealand school principals, teachers and special education staff are using socio-cultural and ecological approaches in planning around disabled-labelled students. This has involved shifting their practice from the individualised language, process and planning model of the traditional 'IEP'. In some schools, IEPs have been replaced or adapted into processes such as 'Plans For Inclusion', 'Community Plans', 'Quality Learning Circles', 'Inquiry Based Teaching', 'Teacher-Researchers', 'Appreciative Inquiry', and 'Narratives for Learning' (Guerin, 2008; Ministry of Education, 2007; Moore, Molloy, Morton, & Davis, 2008; Wansart, 1995). These collaborative, problem solving and strengths-based approaches place the responsibility for change and success onto the school and community working alongside the child, their peers, family and community (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2008).

Inclusive education involves transforming environments to meet the needs of every learner. This requires much more than a focus on the individual's learning and/or behavioural goals (Ministry of Education, 2007). Used on their own, IEPs can over-individualise the focus of intervention through viewing the student in isolation from their peers, teachers, classrooms, family and school (Macartney, 2011). IEP processes do not clearly guide a team to reflect on social, relational and other context specific barriers and enablers to learning and the implications of these for the practices and learning of others. New Zealand schools need support to consider and make changes to ensure the success of every student (Education Review Office, 2010; Ministry of Education, 2010). An explicit focus on the school environment and culture within the planning process around each student is likely to lead to more sustainable change within the school (Booth & Ainscow, 2011).

IEP-based funding allocation

At present, the key mechanism for funding the wrap around service appears to be the student's Individual Education Plan goals and associated interventions.

IEAG recommends that

- *the funding and resourcing for each student, family and school be based on a comprehensive plan that includes a focus on the social, cultural, relational and physical environments of the student as well as the individual student's complex learning and behavioural needs.*

Team Co-ordination

The Lead Worker role needs to be considered in terms of what it entails within the wrap around service and student's support team. Traditionally a key part of the Group Special Education Lead Worker role has been providing Ministry of Education oversight, school, family and specialist liaison and ensuring the child receives an adequate allocation of funds and resources based on their IEP goals and agreed level of need.

The Lead Worker role within an intensive wrap around service will require people with the capacities and time to understand and develop positive relationships with schools, teachers, local communities, health and special education professionals, the student, and their family. They will need the skills to develop a collaborative support network around the child or young person in their local community. A key purpose of this support would be to help the school build and maintain their capacity to meet the learning and participation of the student and future students of the school.

IEAG recommends that:

- *those fulfilling the roles of 'funding and resource allocation', 'team facilitation and co-ordination' and 'professional development and mentoring' are selected because they have the specific skills and knowledge pertaining to the role. (rather than requiring a specialist to take on community and professional development roles)*
- *roles related to 'funding and resource allocation', 'team facilitation and co-ordination' and 'professional development and mentoring' could, but may not necessarily be combined, depending on what skills and resources are available locally.*
- *each school is supported by a person who is skilled at building and facilitating the capacity of the school to provide an inclusive education for every student. This person could be a parent, someone from the local community, a school SENCO, teacher, local MOE personnel or a professional development provider.*
- *the New Zealand Curriculum and/or Te Marautanga and the indices for inclusion provide foundations for this support.*

- *professional development, mentoring and facilitation could be extended to other schools in the locality of a school with a student or students receiving the intensive wrap around service (Ministry of Education, 2010).*

References

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- Wansart, W. (1995). Teaching as a way of knowing: Observing and responding to students' abilities. *Remedial and Special Education*, 16(3), 166-177.

Personal information

The Ministry of Education would appreciate knowing a little about you. The information will help us to analyse your feedback.

Does your feedback represent an individual or group?

Individual **Group YES**

Approximately how many individuals does your submission represent?

.....250.....

Please tick the box that best describes you or your group?

Parent(s) or caregiver(s)

Student(s)

Principal(s)

Board member(s)

Classroom teacher(s)

Residential Special School principal(s)

Residential Special School manager(s)

Specialist(s)

Paraprofessional(s)

Other(s)

IEAG has around 250 members throughout New Zealand.

Our membership includes:

- parents of disabled children or people with disabilities (37%);
- education sector workers (24%) comprising of school principals, special education staff, therapists, and educational psychologists;
- disability sector workers (20%),
- researchers and academics (11%)
- and others (6%).

Send us your feedback

Send your feedback to the Ministry by post or email by **5pm, Friday 15 June 2012**.

By post

New Intensive Wrap-around Special Education Service and the Future Role of Residential Special Schools, Ministry of Education, Special Education Strategy, Early Years and Learning Support, PO Box 1666, Thorndon, Wellington 6140.

By email

residentialspecial.schoolsconsultation@minedu.govt.nz