Hi I’m Lucy and go to Mount Maunganui Intermediate School. What inspired me to design my artwork the way I did was thinking about school and noticing that everyone uses numbers and letters. The painting was about enjoying school by doing artwork and being creative with the computer. The pencil case reminds me of how important it is to be organised. That’s what I think are the most important things to have when going to school to learn. I had a lot of fun designing it. The sizes and angles show different people and personalities within our school.
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Editorial

As New Zealand moves towards more inclusive education systems, where the focus is on increasing the presence, participation and learning of all children and young people, new ways of thinking about teaching and what it is to be a teacher are required. Certainly changes are afoot in this regard. In October 2010, the Government launched Success for All – Every School, Every Child. In this document, the Government outlines its vision for a fully inclusive education system where every child and young person is welcome at their local school. This is a very ambitious vision, and with the Education Review Office 2010 finding that only half of our schools are fully inclusive, much work is needed to move our policies and practices to those aligned with inclusive education. However, these things do not occur in a vacuum, and there are other policy and practice initiatives occurring that will ultimately impact upon this vision. The Transformation of the RTLB Service and the release of the working party’s report into A Vision for the Teaching Profession are two such important initiatives. Recognised in both of these projects is the agency that teachers have to make the difference.

In this edition of Kairaranga, the agency of teachers is emphasized. In the first article Berryman and Woller discuss how early intervention services can effectively support Maori children and their families and whanau. Next Peter Coleman challenges readers to re-examine the policy, SE2000 suggesting that it has become a ‘de facto’ diagnostic framework. In this article, Peter highlights what he believes to be some negative and unintended consequences of the policy, and calls for a scholarly review of it. In the third article, Tracy Riley and Roger Moltzen report on an evaluation of three Talent Development Initiatives for gifted and talented students. They highlight the use of participatory action research as a tool for evaluation, where researchers and practitioners work alongside one another. Next, Mike Thomas, Ann Liss and Alastair Milner describe the efforts of a cluster of Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour to ensure that annual effectiveness reviews are more than a compliance exercise but a genuine attempt to improve their service to schools. In the fifth article, Llyween Couper describes the work of a group of Canterbury Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour. This group met as a ‘community of practice’ to investigate the way that play in the school playground contributes to the social competence of students and how it can be viewed as an important learning environment for all children. Following this, Angela Ward reports on a study where the role of teacher aides in including and excluding disabled students within mainstream school settings was investigated. In this project, the voices of the students themselves are presented to illustrate some issues around the use of teacher aides in inclusive education.

The use of praise is a common practice for teachers wishing to bring about positive changes in relation to student behaviour. Thecla Moffat describes an intervention that was designed to increase the rate of behaviour specific praise used by a teacher, and the effect that this had on a child who displayed aggressive behaviours. Finally in this edition, Poobie Pillay and Paul Flanagan describe the long-term implications of Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour support. In this article, the authors describe a study that explored how students who have received RTLB support were faring after the support had been withdrawn. This article reports the themes that emanated from this research using the voice of the students who told of their experiences with RTLB and their school.

We hope that readers enjoy this edition.

Nga mihi,
Alison Kearney, for the Editorial Team

Kairaranga

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ABSTRACT
This paper examines Early Intervention (EI) service provision from within one Ministry of Education region in New Zealand. It does this in order to better understand what works well and what needs to change if children from Māori families, of Early Childhood age, are to be provided with the most effective EI services. By engaging with Māori families in group-focused interviews-as-conversation, and then with their service providers, about their experiences of working together, researchers learned about what could provide effective services for other Māori families in similar situations.

INTRODUCTION
Evidence has shown that the earlier an action or intervention is taken in the life of a problem, or the life of the child, the more effective the action will be (Ministry of Education, 2003). In this regard, New Zealand’s Ministry of Education, Special Education delivers Early Intervention (EI) services to families throughout the country. Support provided within EI, as described by the Ministry of Education (2009) is:

available for children [with special needs] from the time they are born until they are settled in school. ... Special education needs are defined as those that cannot be met within a regular early childhood setting, home or family, without extra support. The need may be a physical disability, a sensory impairment, a learning or communication delay, a social, emotional or behavioural difficulty, or a combination of these. Early intervention specialists and support staff from GSE, and other providers accredited by the Ministry, work with children with moderate and severe special education needs (para. 1-3).

As part of the Ministry of Education’s commitment to promoting effective services to all, including Māori families, researchers were invited by members of a Regional Management Team (RMT) to hold interviews-as-conversations in four Special Education (SE) districts within the one region. Researchers talked with Māori families who had received an EI service and also with the Māori and non-Māori service providers who had worked with these families. This paper is based on the findings from these conversations during May, 2009.

BACKGROUND
Various conceptual models, traditionally developed from the viewpoint of different professional groups, have been used to explain learning and behaviour concerns associated with special needs students. The causal factors identified by each of the different professional groups are critical to the identification, assessment and intervention procedures associated with each of the models (Wearmouth, Glynn & Berryman, 2005). Some traditional models identify the cause of behaviour disorders to be the result of psychological or biological damage or dysfunction. Traditional western models such as these often stem from a functional limitations paradigm and are characterised by the identification and reification of disabilities and special needs (Moore et al., 1999). Ecological models, in contrast, locate the problematic behaviour within the interface between the learning environment and the student (Ysseldyke & Thurlow, 1994) and are more often associated with an inclusive paradigm.

In New Zealand, the SE 2000 policy (Ministry of Education, 1997; 1998) clearly advocated working within an inclusive paradigm through the use of interventions focused on the learning environment. Simultaneous to the introduction of this policy, a study was undertaken that aimed to identify, from an inclusive perspective, sites of effective practice for improving learning and/or behaviour outcomes for Māori students with identified special educational needs (Berryman et al., 2002). In order to develop insights into some of the challenges and responses located within these contexts, these researchers compared international literature on students from minority cultures who had identified learning and/or behavioural needs with literature from New Zealand regarding the support systems provided to Māori students with
similarly identified needs. These reviews provided some clear indicators of effective practice when working in a range of settings with minority groups. Although there were distinct cultural differences, there were a surprising number of problems and solutions held in common, perhaps in part due to the common colonial education experiences. Common indicators of effectiveness included the importance of team approaches. Clearly, teams were more effective when they were built on a basis of collaboration and reciprocity, where the expertise of parents/caregivers and family members not only informed the work of the professionals but were also extended by the knowledge and expertise of professionals. A common means of overcoming problems, therefore, was understood to be the development of a clear understanding of what excellence in these contexts might look like from both the families’ and the professionals’ perspectives.

Using a process of triangulation, Berryman et al., (2002) identified five sites that demonstrated effective interventions for Māori students with identified special needs. Researchers worked with Māori elders throughout the project, also meeting twice with an advisory group of special education professionals who were asked to reflect on and contribute to the findings. Five collaborative stories revealed that family members had made valid and worthwhile contributions and were readily able to theorise these experiences. Within an inclusive ecological paradigm, the professionals had listened to and worked collaboratively with families, taking careful account of the range of influencing factors within the settings in which these children engaged.

A direct consequence of this strategy was that the relationship between family members and professionals had developed on the basis of mutual respect for what the other could contribute. Thus, assessments at the beginning of interventions were better informed and more effective interventions could be collaboratively designed and introduced. While there was still little evidence to suggest that some of the professionals may have wanted to work within the functional limitations paradigm, Māori voices had maintained authority and prevented this from happening. The key to professionals working effectively with Māori families in this research was their ability to listen and maintain responsiveness. In this way professionals were able to understand and respect the interrelationship between cultural values and practices as the foundation for working in ways that were interdependent, respectful and collaborative (Berryman et al., 2002).

More recent research from Te Kotahitanga by Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh and Teddy (2007) also identifies the importance of relationships and responsive pedagogy to the engagement of Māori students in secondary school classrooms. These researchers describe a ‘culturally-responsive pedagogy of relations’ as being one in which:

Educators can create learning contexts that will address the learning engagement and improve the achievement of Māori students by developing learning–teaching relationships where the following notions are paramount, that is:

- where power is shared: learners’ right to self determination
- where culture counts: learners can bring who they are
- where learning is interactive and dialogic: ako
- where connectedness is fundamental to relations
- where there is a common vision: an agenda for excellence for Māori education (p. 15).

The importance of culturally-responsive practitioners was also recognised by the Ministry of Education: Special Education and outlined in the framework “Te Hikoitanga: Pathway to Success.” Te Hikoitanga defines responsive services:

- as those that take a Māori potential approach by acknowledging the right of tamariki [children] and whānau [families] to help determine the best service outcomes for them. Services such as these are accessible, of high quality, are culturally relevant, and flexible enough to meet the diverse realities of tamariki [children] and whānau [families] (Ministry of Education, 2008).

In part, the research undertaken in these EI sites and discussed in this paper aimed to test the relevancy and validity of these previous findings within EI settings.

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Method

In this present study EI service providers introduced the opportunity for families to talk with researchers about their experiences. Two researchers then engaged with groups of volunteers in a participatory exercise focused on the influence of EI services for Māori families. This involved four group-focused, in-depth, semi-structured, interviews-as-conversations (Bishop, 1996) with Māori families and later, four group-focused interviews with the EI providers with whom they had worked. First, researchers explained the research in detail and responded to any research-focused, participant questions. Researchers sought
to ensure that all participants understood that they were free to decline to answer questions and that they could elect to withdraw sections from their transcribed interviews or withdraw from the project at any stage without disadvantage. Then, depending upon whether researchers were speaking with family members or EI providers, they posed the following research question: “In your experience how has the EI service been effective for you/Maori?” This was followed by a set of general questions used to further prompt participants’ reflections.

These conversations explored the attitudes, feelings and beliefs of people in regards to their own experiences with the EI service, whether they had provided it or received it. Researchers listened to participants’ experiences and taped their stories. By talking with these people, researchers aimed to facilitate their reflections on the relationships and processes they had collectively engaged with. Interviews provided a detailed participant picture of what was occurring in terms of the EI services for Maori in each of the four districts. From the interview data and process the researchers were able to tentatively identify the specific elements that participants themselves consistently understood as contributing to the success of their engagements.

Transcribing and returning transcripts to participants to verify and add any additional annotations happened at each district office. Researchers who had undertaken the interviews then analysed all transcribed material to test the previously identified specific elements. They compared results and then undertook an electronic word count to check for frequency of the mention of the agreed elements/themes. Researchers also categorised subthemes using the electronic word count facility. Selected quotes from the transcribed interviews were then used to highlight some of the common experiences represented within the identified themes. Themes emerging from participants’ experiences were also used to address the research questions and report back at a district and regional level.

RESULTS
A total of 23 family members and 29 EI providers from the four districts were interviewed. The analysis of the transcripts, as discussed above, highlighted the following three major themes:

1. Participants’ understandings about EI.
2. Two common elements of effective EI practices.
3. Challenges regarding effective EI practices.

These themes are discussed below and exemplified by participants’ experiences.

Participants’ understandings about EI
Family members and EI providers across the four districts shared very similar understandings. They talked about EI providing hands-on, family-focused support that was accessible, timely and responsive.

[The EI providers] have been awesome. They call in whenever I need them. If I am stuck and not knowing something then they are there. I have meetings with ‘Strengthening Families’ and they are there. (Family member 2, District 2)

EI providers said they worked holistically and as part of a team to help families. They understood that advocating on behalf of families and supporting staff members in education centres were important aspects of their role.

We would work with the children and their families at home and in their community settings. (Provider 1, District 3)

Family members and EI providers both understood that the earlier issues were identified the more effective the interventions were likely to be. They also understood that effective assessment needed to precede interventions if they were to benefit the child.

[The role of EI is] identifying issues early [and] providing services at an early age which is going to have more impact on the child. [There is a] strong belief in working and supporting children as early as possible. (Provider 1, District 4)

Family members spoke about the role that EI providers played in working with and ‘normalising’ the potential of their children.

If we had friends and family come over, they were speaking to him so slowly. It was agonising watching people. But [EI providers] were the people that just spoke to him like he was normal, like there was nothing wrong. (Family member 4, District 3)

EI providers also discussed the important focus on potential.

Helping parents see glimpses of potential. With lots of our behaviour cases, the parents actually don’t often see the positives in the children, and so getting down on the floor and playing and pointing out some of those positives actually goes a long way to them starting to re-frame their own relationship with their children and then that can be motivating [for families] to then do the ongoing parts of intervention without hard work. (Provider 5, District 3)
EI providers suggested that once families recognised the potential in their child it gave everyone greater focus and something that they were able to strengthen collaboratively.

Two common elements of effective EI practices

Family members and service providers also talked about how, in their own experiences, EI had been effective for Māori. Again, both groups provided very similar responses. The two highest and strongly interconnected priorities were the importance of developing respectful relationships of trust, while working in ways that were responsive to the families’ needs, aspirations and culture. Both groups understood that the development of relational contexts such as these were more likely to result in the input from each group being valued by the other and the work being able to proceed collaboratively and interdependently. Thus each group was able to contribute more effectively and with greater confidence to the goal of realising the child’s potential.

1. Respectful relationships of trust

The establishment of respectful relationships was seen as foundational to successful interventions. Each group described these relationships as non-judgemental and reciprocal. Relationships such as these helped each party begin to trust and value the input of the other.

It’s that respect for each other and they can ring me up and pop around and talk freely and it’s like there’s been no judgement being a single young Māori mother or anything like that. I’ve had such great dealings with [EI providers], it’s the fact that they’re respectful of myself and my individual story, that’s why I praise them so highly and they’ve done everything possible to support me in every venture I’ve taken. (Family member 9, District 3)

The most important part is to establish trust with the families and empowering the families to feel part of the team around the child. Then you get much better assessment information in the range of settings the child is in and you get long-term buy-in if you have spent that time in the engagement phase in that relationship.

Our role is to provide advice and guidance as well as assessment and programming but that is all reliant on how you are perceived by the family you work with. So you can have the best plan/assessment in the world but if you haven’t got family buy-in a lot of what you have done is wasted in a way. (Provider 3, District 3)

Many family members talked about the importance of providers who showed genuine care and interest in their child.

I think the biggest thing that struck me is that I feel that they genuinely love [the child] and they genuinely care about what is happening with him, whereas with a lot of the other medical people that we see, it is just in and out the office, saying “Thank you. Bye”. And I feel that I can contact [service providers] any time that there is a problem and they respond pretty much straight way. (Family member 5, District 3)

Service providers also stressed the importance of establishing good relationships before any intervention could even begin to take place.

You need to develop the relationship before anything else can go anywhere. (Provider 3, District 3)

Both groups understood that connecting at a personal level before they connected at a professional level was essential; however, they cautioned that this process took time.

Usually with my visits, it may involve just a cup of tea and talking and I think this is where we’re in conflict with Ministry processes that we don’t always do what we’re meant to do and get the service agreement signed and the consent form and all of that started straight way. We just need time to actually establish a relationship and that first visit might be just a cup of tea and talking together and then subsequent visits, you start doing a little bit, but definitely not in the first visit. (Provider 1, District 3)

Many family members identified this as the important point of difference between the EI service they had received from their provider and what they experienced as the impersonal and more ‘threatening’ service offered by some other organisations.

You go to some meetings at the hospital to see a doctor [and] there is a set criteria, you’ve got to do this, you’ve got to do that. With [service providers], you are relaxed. You just don’t have to follow one lead, it all flows in. The atmosphere is totally different. (Family member 6, District 3)

2. Culturally responsive ways of engaging

Relationships of trust and respect provided the important foundation upon which each group, family and provider, believed the actual EI work could begin. This required effective listening and learning from each other.
The service has been really important because sometimes it is about a friendly face, a person that is easy to talk to, where you could tell them things because you are worried about your child and they can say, “Well, this is what you do if you have to refer to us”. If I didn’t have that person that I could talk to, to tell me what I should do and where I should go, then we would probably be, as a family, really lost along the way. (Family member 8, District 3)

Family members appreciated service providers who respected and understood the importance of their own cultural identity.

They’ve all been very supportive of the fact that I’m Māori and always put that into consideration of everything and any venture we’ve taken. I don’t really know how to explain it; they seem like they’re aware of Māori but sort of just ‘get it’ especially dealing with me because I have such a large whānau and discuss it with them a lot. They’ve all been really supportive of that. I think it’s just been so casual for me and I’ve had it so easy, I’ve never really had to think about it. (Family member 9, District 3)

Furthermore, family members were impressed by the ease with which service providers acted in regards to their culture.

A lot of times, it is just the little things like just taking your shoes off at the door and things like that. And it was done easily. It wasn’t like they kind of got to the door and, “Oh, that’s right, I’d better take my shoes off because I’m in a Māori house”. They just did it. It is just part of what they do. (Family member 5, District 2)

EI providers talked about the importance of not just rushing in as the expert but giving people time to figure out who they were and where they were coming from.

It is also just some of the training that we have had to be more aware of just how to behave and how to talk and what to say and how to listen and not to come in saying, “Right, this, this and this to do” and you are thinking, “Right, I need to get that sort of thing done” and it is taking your time and letting people try and get an idea of who you are and what you are doing here anyway. (Provider 8, District 2)

Many attributed this to the role of the Kaitakawaenga or cultural advisor within their Special Education teams.

We tended to arrive [in Māori families’ homes] with our particular fears and think, “Well, we’ve got to do that,” whereas now with our Kaitakawaenga … we know we have a lot more time [because] she has spent that time to develop that relationship first. I think that was our protection. If we didn’t have someone else to go with, we went with our list and just ticked it off. (Provider 3, District 3)

Challenges regarding effective EI services for Māori

The final major theme was related to the challenges that emerged around the provision of EI services for Māori. Importantly, the number of responses from each group about the challenges regarding EI were minimal when compared to the number of responses concerned with what participants thought was effective about EI service provision. In the main, challenges revolved around the complexity of cases and issues to do with resourcing and time. For a few families, transition to school when children would no longer be seen by EI providers was a concern, as was the lack of Special Education resourcing in Māori medium settings. Only one family member interviewed was unhappy with the EI service they had received. They believed there were unacceptable delays in having their child seen and a lack of communication from EI providers.

The issues that EI providers understood as restricting their ability to deliver services to Māori families were mainly resource-related. They included the mismatch between the time required to establish relationships with Māori families as opposed to case-work guidelines and the lack of Māori staff to provide cultural support to non-Māori staff.

One of the key issues is that we are a Ministry-delivery service and there are some prescribed limits around the sort of work that we do that doesn’t necessarily always fit with our holistic, early intervention approach to all our families. From an organisational view, we need to have acknowledgement that we need that flexibility. (Provider 8, District 2)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It is clear from the analysis of the interviews that Māori family members and service providers were in general agreement about what effective EI practices for Māori looked like. Both groups also had some common understandings about what they saw as the challenges regarding effective EI for Māori. These themes were articulated by Māori family members and service providers from all four districts with only minor variations.
Across the region participants saw the role of EI as providing an effective family-focused service that provided support and guidance in times of need. Early intervention was described by family members and service providers working holistically with the family as part of a team around the child. In line with Berryman et al., (2002), a team approach in which parents, cultural experts, and professionals collaborate to define needs and address them is most effective when the expertise of family members informs and guides professionals, and is extended by the professionals involved. Practices that follow these guidelines have been termed ‘culturally-responsive’, meaning that family members should be able to bring “who they are” or their cultural identity into any planned intervention (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, & Richardson, 2003). The experiences of these families and professionals also demonstrated the sharing of power and the fundamental importance of establishing relationships before engaging in the intervention or working towards the common vision (Bishop et al., 2007).

Although families and EI providers were challenged by the complexity of some cases, EI providers understood the need to maintain a focus on the child’s potential and on what they could achieve, rather than being overwhelmed by the challenges. This involved their ability to: share skills and knowledge with the family; co-ordinate multiple services; and be aware of the big picture involved for the child and the family. Professionals were able to do this by establishing relationships with family members and working in ways that were culturally-responsive and seen to be appropriate in cultural terms. They began their work by first getting to know members of the family and developing two-way relationships. In this, they were respectful of the knowledge families had about their own children and the skills they brought with them into the working relationship. They then sought to bring their own professional skills into their work with families in ways that were respectful, interdependent and responsive. These relational actions have real implications for other professionals seeking to work more effectively with Māori.

REFERENCES


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ABSTRACT

The Ministry of Education’s special education policy (commonly referred to as SE2000) has been progressively implemented since 1996. Although it is a funding rather than a professional-practice policy, it has had some negative and unintended consequences for the practice of educational psychology, for special education and it is suggested, for education generally. This paper explores the development, implementation and adaptations of SE2000, and the practical outcomes for children with special education needs. Through day-to-day and perhaps unquestioned use by educators (e.g. we now comfortably talk about “ORS” and “SLS” pupils); SE2000 has become legitimised as a de facto diagnostic framework. It will be argued that it conforms rather more to a layperson’s understandings of special education taxonomies with all of the distortions and misunderstandings that this creates, than to a scientifically rigorous framework. SE2000 is well overdue for a scholarly review but the Ministry of Education (and it must be acknowledged both major political parties) have been reluctant to authorise or accept the need for a functional analysis of the professional activities that are supported by the policy, and the corresponding outcomes of it. The fact that the number of adaptations and additions to SE2000 (often referred to as “Initiatives”) has steadily grown over the years, suggests that the basic framework is inherently flawed. It will be argued that any attempt to validate such taxonomies is probably doomed to fail and that children would be better served by a needs-based rather than a category-based funding arrangement.

Position paper

Keywords: Educational psychology, funding, policy SE2000

INTRODUCTION

This paper addresses one of the themes raised in three Psychology Aotearoa papers by Brown (2010), Coleman and Pine (2010) and Hornby (2010). It comments on the impact of policy, specifically Special Education 2000, on the professional practice of educational psychology and special education.

It is important to recognise that the current SE2000 policy is a funding policy, not a professional practice policy. However, that is not to say that a purely funding-oriented policy doesn’t have (possibly unintended) implications for professional practice and as a consequence, implications for the meeting of the special needs of the pupils whom it is intended to serve. One very visible artefact of the policy is the day-to-day emphasis on funding which instead of being ‘enabling’ often functions more like a dowry, rather than providing an emphasis on the specific instructional accomplishments and needs of the child. Similarly, the ‘currency’ used in negotiating the enrolment of children with special needs in mainstream schools rather too often has become ‘teacher aide hours’, rather than a discussion of their individual needs. For example, the first questions often asked of parents who wish to enrol their child with special needs at their local school is “Is she/he ORS (Ongoing Resourcing Scheme) funded?” and of supporting Ministry of Education: Special Education (MOE:SE) field-staff “Does s/he have teacher aide funding?” Secondly, although the policy was intended to achieve “a world class inclusive education system that provides learning opportunities of equal quality to all students” (Massey University College of Education, 1999, p. 5), it essentially entails a reactive, deficit and categorical response (i.e. according to the qualifying criteria for the components of SE2000). In other words, the policy represents the antithesis of inclusive education rather than a proactive, consultative and needs-based way of working with children with special needs by educational psychologists (and others) in schools.

This paper argues that SE2000 imposes a lay taxonomy of special education on us all, a taxonomy that has ‘under-laps’ (gaps in ‘need’ and service provision), ‘overlaps’ (duplication of need and service provision) and demarcation issues (e.g. access criteria, across-service protocols and review processes). At the individual level, the policy sometimes assumes that pupils clearly have or clearly do not have special needs (i.e. they are either eligible for ORS funding or not, rather like pregnancy or the flu), that special needs are discrete and do not interact (i.e. the pupil has communication, academic or behavioural needs but not all three - or more - needs) or that some
needs do not warrant the involvement of special education professionals. Stunningly, psychologists who are employed within the Ministry of Education: Special Education (formerly Group Special Education) have absolutely no involvement in addressing the espoused Governmental goal of enhancing literacy and numeracy deficits and needs of pupils who are described as the twenty percent “tail of underachievement” (Report of the Education and Science Committee, 2008, p. 7) and who are disproportionately of Māori of Pacific Island ancestry. When one considers that descriptors of the core scope of educational psychology probably includes words like ‘learning’, ‘instruction’, ‘pedagogy’ and ‘teaching’, and that these are no longer within the functional scope of practice of educational psychologists employed within the public sector, we know that we have a problem. In short, SE2000 provides the context or environment in which educational psychologists practice and has a profound effect on with whom and equally significantly, how they work.

This paper will comment further on some of the other special education needs that appear to have been overlooked in the SE2000 policy (e.g. pupils with significant learning problems who are not ORS verified), pupils who present with challenging behaviours for whom the precursors are difficulties in accessing the curriculum (i.e. the current clients of the behaviour service whose academic needs are currently ignored whilst acknowledging that there will be exceptions), pupils with ‘internalised’ (e.g. anxiety, depression, social isolation) or mental health issues, and pupils who no longer receive service from educational psychologists (e.g. ORS funded pupils who are enrolled in special schools). There will again be, in the main, serendipitous exceptions to these exemplars. Other professional groups (e.g. Resource Teachers: Learning and Communication, Behaviour) and the unmet learning needs of SE2000 (e.g. Early Intervention, ORS, SLS, Supplementary Learning Support (SLS), Behaviour Initiative, Communication, Assistive Technology, Interim Response Fund etc.) and reporting requirements, the percentage could be quite high indeed. This is probably just as true for the internal MOE:SE referral and associated processes as for some of the other components of the policy. Such time and resources would probably be better spent in meeting the child’s needs, something which clearly promoted the USA’s ‘No Child Left Behind’ legislation and the corresponding ‘Response to Intervention’ model of assessment. This used to be known as needs-based assessment and intervention, and we need to return to it.

There is a dearth of research into the practical outcomes for children of SE2000 which is surprising given the professional practice emphasis for using evidence-based interventions in casework and teaching. Whilst there have been a significant number of evaluations, research papers and reviews of one or more components of SE2000, none of these (unless in passing) have demonstrated that any pupil in any school has received a service and made academic, personal or social gains that they would not have made if we didn’t have SE2000. These research efforts, evaluations and reviews almost without exception have focused on the machinery (e.g. administration, management and governance) of the policy and the perceptions of parents, teachers, principals, Boards of Trustees and other stakeholders of its efficacy. This is not to say that such research, evaluations and reviews do not have a place; they obviously do. However, if we look at the chain of evidence for the efficacy of SE2000, one important component is missing: which children have benefited, how many and in what ways? Towards the end of this paper a research theme will be presented to counter this deficit under the ‘high needs’ targeted-funding components of SE2000 (e.g. Early Intervention, ORS, SLS, Communication, Behaviour) and the unmet learning needs referred to above.
A few clarifying statements might be useful here. It is fully accepted that those who had an involvement in designing and implementing SE2000 were well-intended and undoubtedly had the best of interests of children with special needs in mind. Both major political parties were, and remain, fully supportive of SE2000, and the current situation has evolved over a significant period of time rather than being attributable to any one decision. It is fully acknowledged that many children will have benefited from the significant amount of additional funding that has been provided since SE2000 was implemented and from the services that this has enabled. In particular, many children who have very high needs have clearly benefited and although there are problems with the ORS funding model (this is described in the body of this paper), it is fully accepted that many of these children are entitled to have their educational needs met throughout their school career.

However, SE2000 has been implemented under a curious mixture of the devolved self-management model of ‘Tomorrows Schools’ coupled with the corporate management model of the Ministry of Education: Special Education. This presents a degree of political and managerial decision-making which in previous years may have been regarded the province of professionals. At the most basic level this means that a decision on who gets access to what kind of special education service (and indeed the design of the overall diagnostic framework within which such decisions are made) and for how long, is as likely as not to reflect a management or policy decision rather than a professional decision. This has always been the case where public money is involved but perhaps never quite so obviously. As a result, MOE:SE professional staff are probably not as responsive to the needs of schools as perhaps they could and should be.

OVERVIEW OF SPECIAL EDUCATION 2000
POLICY FRAMEWORK AND ADAPTATIONS

This funding model is usually presented as a triangle with the 1% of the school population having the highest needs attracting ORS funding, another 1% attracting specialist communication services (i.e. Speech Language Therapy input from MOE:SE) and a further 1% with severe behavioural issues receiving service from a psychologist or special education adviser, also from MOE:SE. Approximately half of the children who are verified as having high needs attend regular schools and receive specialist services (e.g. speech language therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy or have psychologist or special education adviser involvement) from MOE:SE, which is their ORS ‘fund-holder’. Except for a relatively small number of children for whom their local school consortium is their fund-holder, all of the other verified pupils receive specialist services from the special school (for intellectually or physically disabled), resource centre or high school ‘learning unit’ in which they are enrolled. The group of four to six percent of school-aged children under the triangle, who are described as having moderate rather than high needs, are catered for by RTLB, the Special Education Grant (SEG) and the Moderate Physical Needs Contract.

In addition, MOE:SE provides a multidisciplinary Early Intervention Service for preschool children and the psychologists who work in this area have arguably been the least detrimentally affected by the policy. We will now look in greater detail to each of these main SE2000 funding strands (including school’s SEG) and some of the minor ones.

ORS Funding

Pupils with an ongoing high level of need (due to, for example, a severe or profound intellectual or a serious physical or sensory disability) are directly resourced through the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) as introduced above. This was previously known as ‘ORRS’ when there was a reviewable component in which the funding lasted until the end of the year of verification plus three years, after which a further application was necessary. The reviewable component was dropped in April 2011, and pupils who are currently ‘verified’ as being eligible for ORS funding, will receive this until they leave school.

To meet the criteria for verification pupils must have extreme or severe difficulties in (one or more of) learning, hearing, vision, mobility, language use/social communication or moderate or high difficulties with learning arising from (any two of) hearing, vision, mobility and language use/communication. Such pupils are verified as being eligible for either the Reviewable Resourcing Scheme or the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme under two levels of support (‘high’ including combined moderate ongoing needs and ‘very high’ special needs), by a team of Ministry of Education employed ‘Verifiers’. The compulsory sector application form requires the pupil’s teachers to provide information of functional oral language skills, written language skills, mathematics, science, technology, social studies, health and physical education skills, communication skills, work and study skills, problem-solving skills, information skills, self management skills, social and cooperative skills, and physical skills. Pupils are deemed to be eligible if they meet at least one of nine criteria, namely:
• Needs total adaptation of all curriculum content.
• Needs special assistance to engage in all face-to-face communications (e.g. rely on signing, a communicator after cochlear implant or on Braille).
• Needs specialist 1:1 intervention at least weekly and/or specialist monitoring at least once per month together with daily special education support for help with mobility and positioning or personal care.
• Needs specialist 1:1 intervention at least weekly and/or specialist monitoring at least once per month together with daily special education support for help with needs arising from a severe disorder of both language use and appropriate social communication.
• Needs significant adaptation of almost all curriculum content.
• Needs specialist teacher contact time of at least ½ day per week (i.e. from a teacher with specialist skills in deaf education or a teacher with specialist skills in visual disability) to access the curriculum.
• Need specialist 1:1 intervention on an average of once per month and/or specialist monitoring on an average of once per term together with daily special education support provided by others for help with mobility and positioning or personal care.
• Needs specialist 1:1 intervention on an average of once per month or specialist monitoring on an average of once per term together with daily special education support provided by others with needs arising from a severe disorder of both language use and appropriate social communication.
• Students with combined moderate ongoing needs (requiring significant adaptation of most curriculum content, specialist teacher intervention and monitoring to assist with an ongoing moderate hearing impairment, specialist teacher intervention and monitoring to assist with ongoing moderate vision impairment, specialist intervention and monitoring to assist with ongoing moderate physical needs, specialist intervention and monitoring to assist with an ongoing moderate disorder of both language use and appropriate social communication).

Obtaining verification for a pupil simply because of their learning and instructional needs is infrequent and unlikely. For example, in the absence of a physical or sensory disability, pupils with functional language much beyond three to four years or academic skills beyond Level 2 of the national curriculum, no matter what their chronological age, are unlikely to be verified. In contrast, pupil’s having significant self-care and physical or sensory disability issues are much more likely to be eligible for verification. The school of a pupil who has been ‘verified’ as having ‘high needs’ receives a staffing allocation of 0.1 (half day) additional teacher time and one who has been verified as having ‘very high’ needs will be allocated 0.2 (one day) additional teacher time per week. Their school also receives funding each term to cover the cost of small items for a ‘verified’ pupil, such as computer software, extra-size pens, Braille machine paper, laminating pouches etc.

Students with ‘very high’ needs receive a higher sum. Specialist services such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech-language therapy are provided on the basis of each student’s needs. These specialists and therapists are employed by and available through the MOE:SE where the Ministry is the fund-holder. Where a specialist service provider (e.g. Special School or consortium of schools) holds the funds for a student, they are responsible for the provision of specialist services not MOE:SE. Finally, the pupil will receive a variable level of teacher’s aide support as determined by a review and moderation process; this comes from the pooled funding for 20 or more verified pupils and is known colloquially as ‘over’s and unders’.

A number of changes to the ORRS (now ORS) scheme were made after the 1997 trialling and include:

• The introduction in 1998 of transitional resourcing through ORRS (also known as Ongoing and Transitional Resourcing Scheme) for children aged 5 to 7 years old, whose long-term educational needs were still unclear.
• The extension of the ORRS scheme in 1999 by the addition of the ‘combined moderate needs’ criteria above, chiefly to accommodate pupils diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Delay or Asperger’s Syndrome. This additional criteria remains in ORS.
• In 2000 the Reviewable Resourcing Scheme (RRS) replaced the Transitional Resourcing Scheme.
• An increase in funding for ORRS (now ORS) funded students in rural schools.
• As from 2010 an ‘ORRS Extension’ was created to help 400 students who also just missed out on verification. The ORRS Extension was created as an interim approach to expand ORRS while the Government carried out a now-completed review of Special Education services and support. These students will be on the
programme until they finish school or until the end of the year they turn 18.

- In early 2011 the Reviewable Resourcing Scheme is removed and the ORRS acronym is shortened to ORS or ‘Ongoing Resourcing Scheme’.
- In recent months, and following feedback presented in “The Review of Special Education; Public Response Summary” (MOE, 2010), the Government has announced in “Success For All – Every School, Every Child”, another extension of ORS funding to an additional 1100 school-aged pupils and additional support to another 1000 pupils in their first three years of schooling. It also made some other changes, but change to the overall SE2000 structure is clearly not part of this.

Special Education Grant

The funding formula for the Special Needs Grants (SEG) provided to all schools is a combination of the roll number and a dollar sum taken from a table of decile rankings. The decile is simply a statistical device to indicate the social-economic status of the population served by the school and is taken from census data. The Targeted Funding for Educational Achievement (TFEA) is another attempt to compensate for the economic and cultural ‘capital’ that pupils from low socio-economic schools lack, and together with SEG funding, acknowledges that low socio-economic schools are likely to have a disproportionate number of pupils with mild and moderate special needs enrolled. SEG funding is used in a variety of ways by schools including paying for teacher aides and a special needs coordinator.

Other Components of SE2000

The other major components of the Special Education 2000 policy include:

- The ‘Speech Language Initiative’ provides specialist support for students with severe communication needs through MOE:SE.
- The ‘Serious Behaviour Initiative’ provides specialist support and guidance to pupils displaying severe and challenging behaviour through MOE:SE.
- The Regional Hospital Health Schools provides teachers and specialist support for students who are in hospital, convalescing at home or who are in the process of returning to school.
- The Moderate Hearing Impairment Contract provides four regional coordinators to supervise the itinerant teachers of the deaf who locally support students with moderate hearing impairment. MOE:SE also employs advisers for deaf children.
- The Moderate Vision Impairment Contract provides itinerant teachers of vision impairment who locally support students with moderate vision impairment.
- RTLB provide services for students with moderate learning and/or behaviour difficulties.
- The Assistive Technology fund is available for pupils who need technological support (e.g. a computer) in order to access the curriculum.

Other changes to the original SE2000 framework in addition to the ORRS/ORS changes noted above include:

- The allocation of ‘Transition Bridging Funding’ to individual schools on behalf of students with S.9 Agreements who have not/were not verified for ORRS; this funding was in response to Quality Public Education Consortium’s successful High Court appeal and has now expired.
- The allocation of ‘Learning Support Funding’ to RTLB clusters to enable them to provide assistance to schools on a needs basis to support their students with moderate needs.
- The temporary devolution of funding for and the management of transport to fund-holders.
- The creation of ‘Facilitator’ positions within the MOE to conciliate between parents and schools, in typically, enrolment and funding issues. However these positions were disestablished in 2008.
- The Moderate Physical Needs Contract to provide Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy services to students with moderate physical needs. This was a three year package of support and research for students with physical disabilities and has since been reviewed.
- The Schools High Health Needs Fund which provides resourcing for teacher aide (paraprofessional) care and supervision for students with high health needs so that they can attend school safely.
- Supplementary Learning Support that was intended to provide 1500 students nationally who are already receiving support from one or more SE2000 initiatives (and have “just missed out on ORRS”) with .1 FTE teacher and 45 hours of specialist input. This has recently been extended.
- An inter-sectoral (i.e. health, education, welfare including social development) High and Complex Needs initiative for children aged 2 to 7 years who have severe and challenging behaviour was first trailed in Auckland, Manawatu and Dunedin in 2004.
and has been extended to other centres and up to the age of 17, and in some circumstances, 21 years. This has been designed in partnership with ‘Strengthening Families’ and is intended to intervene early with children from ‘high risk’ families.

- **An Enhanced Programme Fund** (initiated in 2002 following the Wylie Report) to supplement the SEG in schools (the so-called magnet schools) which attract a disproportionate number of pupils with moderate special education needs.
- **An Interim Response Fund** which provides a terms funding to a school (usually to employ a teacher’s aide) to maintain the enrolment of pupils with challenging behaviours until MOE:SE staff became more fully involved.
- **The Government has recently announced** as part of “Success For All – Every School, Every Child” a restructuring the RTLB Service so that each Cluster employs 30 RTLB rather than the original 8 to 10, and a part-time manager and professional advisor. This transformation of the RTLB Service is expected to be implemented in 2012.

### RESEARCH INTO SE2000

Early formative reviews of the Special Education 2000 Policy were provided by Wylie (2000) and the Massey University College of Education (2002) Phases 1 to 3 evaluations.

#### The Wylie Report

The ‘Wylie’ review received over 1000 submissions and included meetings with organisations and interest groups, and some site visits. She concluded that “The Special Education 2000 policy has expanded the number of students receiving special needs support to 5.5 percent of the school population [but that] the division of the policy into a number of separate initiatives and funding pools has made it hard to offer students, parents, and schools, the seamless, integrated service which works best for students with special needs” (p. 8). However, the number of special education ‘initiatives’ has more than doubled since the Wylie report and so the services available under SE2000 are even more fragmented. She also concluded that the ORRS funding model worked best for Special Schools but didn’t work particularly well for Specialist Education Services (SES) which was subsequently restructured as Group Special Education (GSE) and is now known as Ministry of Education: Special Education (MOE:SE) who didn’t have the economies of scale enjoyed by special schools and who had to provide services in rural or remote areas and, as could be added, difficult to staff areas.

Wylie noted that the Severe Behaviour Initiative had the lowest satisfaction rate of the main SE2000 initiatives. She pointed out that “SES staff also felt unable to work more proactively and systematically (i.e. systemically) with schools to develop an environment in which behaviour problems were reduced” (p. 58). She reiterated that a significant proportion of pupils on psychologists’ and special education advisors’ caseloads (20-30 percent eighteen months after the introduction of the initiative) had ongoing or chronic needs for support in relation to their problem behaviour (e.g. family and mental health issues) and this prevented many teams from accepting more referrals or the initiative meeting the then annual target of providing service to 7,000 students.

Wylie also found that about one half of schools thought that they could meet the needs of the pupils described as having moderate needs by a combination of their SEG and the involvement of the RTLB. A large number of recommendations were made to address these and other issues that arose in the review.

### The Massey University Summary Reports Phase 1, 2 and 3, Monitoring and Evaluation of The SE 2000 Policy and 2002 Final Report

This longitudinal evaluation addressed 126 questions that were initially provided by the Ministry of Education.

The methodology for this evaluation included yearly questionnaires to schools, site visits and interviews in four SES regions including six case studies of selected students. It is very important to note that the data that informed the final evaluation was (apart from the six case studies), the opinions of many stakeholders on the effectiveness of the initiative, rather than hard process and outcome data.

In general terms, the MOE wanted to know how SE2000 was affecting students, parents, schools and providers. The research team noted that:

- **in order to do this, the study focused on the perceptions of those involved in implementing the policy and experiencing its effects.**
- **Research data were collected from over 8000 educators over three years.** Schools, Early Childhood centres and Kura Kaupapa Maori were surveyed nationally. Case studies were undertaken in the Severe Behaviour Initiative, Regional Hospital Health Schools and Residential Special Schools. Principals, teachers, teacher aides, parents and providers were interviewed and state-funded residential special schools were also visited.

Sixty-one of the initial 126 questions were addressed in Phase 1 of the study and baseline data collected for the following two phases. This data included a national survey of schools and early childhood facilities supplemented by site visits to four geographical areas and to six residential schools, parent forums in four centres and interviews of SES group managers. Phase 2 of the study reported on initiatives for students with high or very high needs (i.e. ORRS, Behaviour and Communication), initiatives for students with moderate needs (i.e. SEG, moderate physical and moderate sensory needs) and five other issues or provisions. Data in this phase came from an analysis of a national survey, interviews of teachers from 36 early childhood centre associations, case studies from six residential special schools, ‘Serious Behaviour Initiative’ cases from four SES areas and phone interviews of 246 parents.

Overall, the highest levels of satisfaction were reported for moderate needs SEG and RTLB and for ORRS and the lowest for the Serious Behaviour Initiative. The findings on the then just introduced (moderate) RTLB service was presented in a later Phase 3 report. This reported increasing levels of satisfaction for the very high and high initiatives and for SEG and RTLB, but levels of satisfaction for the behaviour initiative remained low.

Related Research and Developments

Following Wylie’s finding that the access of children with physical disabilities to physiotherapy and occupational therapy in schools was limited, in 2003 the Ministry of Education commissioned two descriptive research reports (Clark et al., 2007; Ministry of Education, 2007) to inform policy, planning and practice. One of these used quantitative data obtained from the compulsory school sector whilst the other used descriptive case studies to illustrate the day-to-day challenges and achievements of these pupils. This resulted in the development of the Moderate Physical Needs Contract cited above.

Special Education resourcing in general was the subject of an independent survey (Ward et al., 2009) which was undertaken in order to inform the Government about the level of special education resources received by schools and the allocation of special education resources to students. Extensive data were collected at three levels including 653 teacher and parent case studies, and the overall finding was the perceived importance of teacher-aide time and quality full time teacher support for pupils with special education needs; these accounted for much of the expenditure from all of the funding streams. Although satisfaction was generally expressed about the progress made with these 653 students, there was only a weak correlation with the objective data of the progress made by these students. About one half of teachers and parents were satisfied with the available levels of resourcing.

The Ministry of Education has also from time to time funded research proposals whose scope is wider than the above two projects, but very relevant to special education. In this section two of these will be listed and briefly described. A report by McMenamin et al. (2004) assessed how well national curriculum policy in New Zealand articulated learning outcomes for students who have special education needs. They reviewed national and international literature relating to curriculum policy and special education, and included interviews with five schools which supported students with special education needs. A characteristic of the literature reviewed was the dearth of studies that have explored the link between curriculum policy and the impacts of such policy on outcomes for students. Much of that reviewed regarding students with special educational needs focused on practical aspects of provision, particularly processes to support participation in educational settings rather than the outcomes of educational participation per se, and on structural arrangements, particularly resourcing. The other significant gap in the literature was an investigation of the outcomes for Maori and Pasifika students who also have special educational needs.

The lack of research evaluating the effectiveness of different curriculum policies meant that this report focused on descriptive data only. No benefits or implications of vertical versus horizontal provision of curriculum policy or learning outcomes were identified, nor did the school personnel participating in the interviews have strong feelings about these options. There was some support amongst the interviewees for the development of a foundational achievement level for students who may not progress to Level 1 learning objectives, and indeed was sometimes found within some schools. The usefulness of current national curriculum documents, particularly the New Zealand Curriculum Framework and Te Whāriki. Early Childhood Curriculum was perceived very differently across schools. In all cases, the Individual Educational Programme (IEP) formed the cornerstone of curriculum planning and reporting for students with special educational needs. For students with moderately high to high needs, the participating interviewees identified functional curriculum outcomes (principally life-skills) as particularly important. As with the literature overall, investigation of the transition from preschool to school for students with special educational needs was found to focus on processes and resourcing, rather than on the relationship between the transition and specified curriculum outcomes.
The well-known longitudinal EEPiSE project (Special Education Division, 2004), to paraphrase, was aimed to develop teacher knowledge and share ideas on how to support learners who require significant adaptation to the curriculum content in regular schools, school-based classes for students with special education needs, Kura Kaupapa Māori and special schools. The project included a literature review, a pilot study (involving Helen Timperley, Patricia O’Brien, Mere Berryman and others), and a programme of longitudinal research and professional learning and development involving 49 schools across the country. In terms of professional development, teachers emphasised the need for professional learning to be situated within the context of their school for it to be effective and sustainable. The relationship between whānau and the school was seen as the key ingredient for enhancing learning, social and cultural outcomes for all students in the Kura Kaupapa Māori settings.

Five key characteristics for effective professional development and learning were identified in the project as:

- Professional learning opportunities must be based on immediate needs and build upon existing knowledge.
- Teachers become facilitators and begin owning the process of professional learning and development.
- Support to meet the needs of diverse learners is required.
- Support for teachers needs to be built into school-wide planning for raising student achievement.
- Collaborative planning leads to goals that require ongoing monitoring, adaptation and review.

Using the findings from the literature review and pilot study during 2005 and the first half of 2006, the focus was on identifying, exploring and supporting pedagogy and practices which are most effective in maximising learning, social and cultural outcomes for students with special educational needs who require significant adaptation to the curriculum. Schools chose to take part in either developing professional learning communities (in 24 schools) or in action research, professional learning and development (in 25 tikanga Māori schools). In June 2006, many schools took part in a series of regional symposia which marked the formal conclusion of the EEPiSE programme.

A special issue of Kairaranga brought together an array of articles based on schools’ presentations, alongside accounts from the keynote speakers and the EEPiSE project team. A useful summative resource is provided in Weaving Evidence, Inquiry and Standards to Build Better Schools (Timperley & Parr, 2010). It is also important to record the research undertaken by the Massey University ‘Centre of Excellence for Research in Inclusive Education’ (e.g. by Bevan-Brown, Mentis, Bourke, Annan and others). Unfortunately educational psychologists employed within MOE:SE have had little or no involvement with either of these multifaceted projects, which represents, it is suggested and repeated elsewhere, a distinct loss of opportunity for the dissemination of professional-practice knowledge beyond the schools and teachers who were directly involved.

REVIEWS OF TARGETED HI-NEEDS FUNDING

Ongoing Resource Scheme Funding

The 2005(a) Education Review Office (ERO) review of ORRS found that two thirds of schools were using the funding effectively but that one in six was not. The subsequent June 2010 ERO reported on how well schools included and catered for pupils with high needs (i.e. ORRS funded) pupils. About one half of the schools reviewed demonstrated mostly inclusive practices marked firstly by ethical standards and leadership that built the culture of an inclusive school, secondly by well-organised systems, effective teamwork and constructive relationships that identified and supported students with high needs, and thirdly, by innovative and flexible practices that managed the complex and unique challenges related to the education of children with high needs. Thirty percent of the schools had some inclusive practices and twenty percent had few inclusive practices. The report stated (Education Review Office, 2010, p. 1) that:

The key question that emerges from this review is how can more schools become better at including students with high needs? Schools invest in various professional development courses that provide specialist knowledge to teachers and support staff. Similarly, much of the professional support available from MOE:SE and Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) is aimed at supporting the inclusion of individual students. More can be done to use school-wide professional learning and development processes to make schools more inclusive.

The report recommended that as part of the Special Education Review, the MOE should consider: how effective mainstream schools, special schools, Group Special Education, Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour can work together to improve the level of inclusion in New Zealand schools


Although funding played a part, the report found that the quality of leadership and the extent to which the schools could adopt a specialised
pedagogy for high needs student was more important.

The recent announcements from the Associate Minister of Education reflected some of these recommendations, set a target of eighty percent of all schools having fully inclusive practices by 2014 in addition to the expansion of ORS funding as noted above, as was also prefaced in the last budget.

Supplementary Learning Support

SLS is a special education initiative designed to provide additional support to students with ongoing significant educational needs who have “missed out” support under the Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Schemes (ORRS). This support is in the form of 0.1 FTTE of a designated Learning Support Teacher and access to MOE:SE specialist support staff.

The effectiveness of SLS has been reviewed by the Ministry of Education (2006) which used an utilisation-focused approach. The study found that the initiative had achieved an equitable allocation of resource although finding appropriate staff for Kura Kaupapa schools was an issue, the itinerant Learning Support Teachers understood and developed their role, collaboration with school staff was occurring and that improved school attendance and participation by students was beginning to become evident. The evaluation is of particular interest because possibly uniquely, it included six informative ‘outcome’ case studies in addition to interviews with stakeholders and a questionnaire for a sample of SLS Learning Support Teachers.

REVIEWS OF THE RTLB SERVICE

RTLB service began in 1999 to assist schools and teachers in achieving the best learning outcomes for their students who have moderate special education needs. RTLB complete an Annual Report at the end of each year which asks for information about the schools and students they worked with during the year and the nature of their work. An early monograph (Research and Evaluation Unit, 2003) detailed the results from the 2001 Annual Reports and provided an overview of the work undertaken by RTLB during that year.

The Education Review Office report of 2004 was generally critical of the management and governance of RTLB clusters, finding little evidence of outcomes for their clients (particularly of Māori pupils), that some RTLB had been ‘captured’ by their school or principal, and that others were inappropriately working with ORRS verified pupils. The Ministry of Education responded by publishing the RTLB Toolkit (2007) and creating three national advisory positions. Part 1 of the Toolkit provided an introduction to RTLB and to Policy, and Part 2 contained chapters on Cluster Management, Staff Management, Staff Performance Management, Funding and Administration, Planning and Reporting, Professional Practice and finally, Service Provision. Significantly, for the current paper, there is no emphasis on professional practice beyond access and eligibility for service criteria and recommendations on referral, intervention, recording and reporting and review processes.

However, the subsequent 2009 Education Review Office review found that little had changed in governance and management following the previous review and publication of the Toolkit. They found that just under a half of RTLB clusters were well-governed and managed (those that were had strong leadership) and just over one half were not well-governed or managed. The review then asked whether a larger “economy of scale” (i.e. reduction in the number of clusters and a more centralised management) would ensure “a more cohesive and consistent approach to service”. The Minister of Education’s presentation at the New Plymouth RTLB 2010 annual conference implied that this suggestion would be enacted in 2012.

REVIEWS OF OTHER COMPONENTS OF SE2000

Activity/Alternative Education Centres

Activity Centres or as they are now known ‘Alternative Education (AE) Centres’ cater for 3500 pupils nationally aged 14 and above who have been alienated (and often excluded or expelled) from secondary education and the centres are attached to a local high school for administrative purposes. A sample of six AE sites were recently reviewed by the Education Review Office (2009) who found that the quality of the educational programmes and resources was sound (this often included The Correspondence School materials) and most emphasised literacy and numeracy skills. Forty-four percent of pupils returned to mainstream education, but some moved directly on to community training or employment. The review concluded that AEs provided an appropriate alternative (and a ‘safety valve’) for students who struggle in mainstream settings.

A subsequent report (Education Review Office, 2010b) described the critical factors underpinning good practices as:

- The quality of the relationships between staff and students.
- The use of a curriculum that matched the individual needs of students.
- The passionate and compassionate approach of Alternative Education staff.
• The ability of staff to have students aspire for a more positive future for themselves.
• An ability to address the wide range of social and educational needs of students.
• The leadership and teamwork of Alternative Education providers.
• The relationships with schools.
• The relationships with whānau/families.

Special Education Grant

The Education Review Office (2005b) review highlighted concerns about school’s ‘over-use’ of the grant to fund literacy development at a cost to, for example, pupils with physical, social-emotional needs and other needs, to ‘top up’ teacher-aide support for ORRS-funded pupils and pupils receiving a behavioural service from MOE:SE.

Enhanced Programme Fund

The Enhanced Programme Funding (EPF) followed from the Wylie Report and was designed to target resources to schools that attract a disproportionate number of moderate special education needs. EPF advisors were appointed in 2003 and an improved policy statement was prepared in 2005. It was evaluated by Gray Matter Research Ltd (2006) which provided formative feedback on the implementation process and conducted 17 case studies. They concluded that although schools spent the fund to the benefit of students with moderate special education needs, it was not possible to establish whether or not the three underlying policy goals (viz. rewarding ‘magnet’ schools, these schools enhancing their existing programmes, and developing their capability to meet the needs of this group of students) was met.

Research That Is Now Needed

A recent paper by Sigafoos et al. (2010) endeavoured to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of various models of special education funding. Whilst inconclusive (in practice, many of the models are mixed and their application to some of the SE2000 components is not clear), this has provided a framework for describing the basic characteristics of popular models. These as defined (with possible New Zealand examples) are:

• discretionary funding or the “provision of additional funding or a certain percentage” (p. 20)
• categorical funding (e.g. ORRS and Moderate Physical Needs Contract) or “a set amount of additional funding for each student with a disability” (p. 27)
• voucher programmes or “direct public payment to parents to cover their child’s public or private school costs” (p. 27) moderated by the child’s (e.g. level of disability) and the parent’s characteristics (e.g. income) as defined
• census-based funding
• cost-based approach (e.g. High and Complex Needs) and to which perhaps could be added
• compensatory funding (e.g. Targeted Funding for Educational Achievement and Enhanced Programme Fund for ‘magnet’ schools).

However, the focus of this paper is more on ‘what’ is being funded and the practical outcomes of this for children than the particular funding mechanism. Most of the research and reviews that have been undertaken on the components of SE2000 are at the system, management and governance level or primarily report the perceptions of effectiveness by the stakeholders and include very little, if any, actual pupil outcome-data. The closest example to the latter provided in this paper is the “utilisation-focused” review of Supplementary Learning Support (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 16) noted above and to a lesser extent the small-sample case studies of the Massey University (2002) evaluation of SE2000, Clark et al. (2007), the Ministry of Education (2007) and Ward et al. (2009). It is a puzzle why the MOE is apparently disinterested in discovering what the practical outcomes of its own policies (e.g. SE2000) and practices actually are for the intended recipients.

Research into the outcomes of targeted and specialist services funding therefore needs to be undertaken. (As argued elsewhere this would be best done by MOE:SE professional staff rather than by external contractors. It would serve a formative function for the work of educational psychologists, assist in refining their professional practice and acknowledge their traditional roles as scientist-practitioners). In essence, this requires an ongoing analysis of the functional outcomes for a sample of clients of MOE:SE and RTLB, in effect completing the chain of evidence for the efficacy of these components of special education policy. The Ministry of Education (2006) evaluation of Supplementary Learning Support used a very similar ‘utilisation-focused’ approach which begins with the premise that evaluations should be judged by their utility and actual use. This suggests that researchers should design an evaluation with careful consideration also of how everything that is done from beginning to end will affect use and outcomes. It is very similar to the approach described as ‘backward mapping’ by a prominent researcher in school reform, Richard Elmore (2005).
An immediate problem is that educational psychologists, despite being registered as ‘health providers’, do not have access to an accredited ethics committee. Whilst the MOE has recently launched an ‘Ethics Advisory Service’, this clearly has a managerial advisory and gate-keeping function rather than providing ethical approval for research by field staff. Researchers who are affiliated to a university have access to a university ethics committee and psychologists who wish to undertake research into physical health, mental health or disability issues have access to their local Health and Disability Ethics Committee. Educational Psychologists employed by the MOE are, as a consequence, subject to a double jeopardy; that of either undertaking research without the necessary ethical approval, or of providing a therapy or intervention for which they are unable to obtain the necessary evidence. This is an unaddressed and serious issue which provides another example of the unintended outcomes of policy. A further question is whether or not the universities have been too compromised by their receipt of research contracts and grants from the MOE, to undertake a critique of Ministry policy and practices.

It is very much in the interests of university research teams to take note of professional practice issues for psychologists who work in the education sector if the outcomes of their research efforts are to be implemented and disseminated beyond the settings in which they were derived. If their functional scope of practice wasn’t so restricted by the SE2000 policy, practicing educational psychologists would be in a unique position to disseminate, for example, the evidence-based practices for teaching literacy and numeracy skills. That they are not, and do not, may in part explain the plethora of non-evidenced based ‘alternative’ and ‘complementary’ educational therapies currently being promoted within our schools. Similarly, universities who are planning or reviewing their training programmes for educational psychologists should be very concerned about the restrictive context in which their students are to be supervised and possibly employed after their graduation.

Specific Recommendations for Research

There is a pressing need for research into the processes and outcomes of the work of MOE:SE, which is the primary support service for pupils who are taught in inclusive settings. Readers might like to reflect on the promise of SE2000 which was to provide a “world class inclusive education system” (Massey University College of Education, 1999, p. 5) and note that unlike, for example, Special Schools and the RTLB Service, MOE:SE is not subject to Educational Review Office audit. There would, therefore, seem to be a need for a functional analysis of the MOE:SE work - ideally undertaken by practitioners - with pupils who have been verified as eligible for ORS funding under:

- Criteria 1 (needs total adaptation of all curriculum content);
- Criteria 5 (needs significant adaptation of almost all curriculum content);
- Criteria 8 (needs specialist 1:1 intervention/specialist monitoring/special education support for needs arising from a severe disorder of both language use and appropriate social communication), and
- Criteria 9 (combined moderate needs).

This might reveal subtle and unplanned consequences of the SE2000 funding policy (e.g. the amount of time that MOE:SE psychologists and special education advisors expend in funding application, negotiation and ‘moderation’ processes in comparison to curriculum assessment, analysis, planning and intervention and monitoring processes) in addition to, for example, the acknowledged increase in the number of paraprofessionals delivering a special education service to high needs pupils and the growth in the rolls of special schools (McMenamin, 2009), at least in the Auckland area. One way of achieving this might be to look within the pupil’s IEPs for evidence that specialist support translated into ‘school’ processes with curriculum outcomes (as opposed to medical/therapeutic treatment), as it seemed reasonable to assume that ORS funding has an educative as well as a personal-care purpose. Similar ongoing research should also be undertaken with a sample of pupils receiving Supplementary Learning Support funding. Further, it seems that the ORS application document for the school sector has not been modified to align with the five Key Competencies of the revised New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007a) so this too needs attention.

A functional analysis of casework - again preferably undertaken by practitioners - within a sample of pupils who receive assistance from the MOE:SE behaviour service could be done using their ‘service pathway’ (access, engagement, assessment, intervention, evaluation and review) or the ‘Effective Intervention for Challenging Behaviour’ assessment and intervention model currently utilised by MOE:SE. Such an analysis was undertaken in the unpublished ‘Behaviour Research Project’ (Coleman, 2005) using the preceding, but very similar, multi-element assessment and intervention framework. Of particular interest would be the interaction between each pupil’s challenging behaviour and their extant learning problems, in addition to family dysfunction, risk issues and mental
health issues, etc. As a reasonable guess at least fifty percent of pupils who are referred for a behavioural intervention are also failing academically, yet this is not a focus of MOE:SE behaviour support teams. As noted in a preceding section of this paper, there is perhaps some hope of a change within the recently announced school-wide Positive Behaviour For Learning (PB4L) initiative and the teacher-training component of the Incredible Years (Webster-Stratton, 1999) programme.

The PB4L framework has been adapted from the evidence-based “School Wide Positive Behavioral Support” (or SWPBS) work of Sugai, Homer, Colvin, Sailor and others (see www.pbis. org). However, as noted by Don Brown (personal communication, 30/07/10) “New practices emerge and new ideas are developed in any profession. They should show in practice as a general pattern as practitioners take them up, not as initiatives for selected schools, centrally chosen and managed”. It is ironic that this kind of school-wide intervention (one example is ‘Staff Sharing’ which was based on the work of Glasser and developed and implemented in Auckland more than 25 years ago by Dinah Gill), couldn’t be maintained after the introduction of SE2000, and is now being re-introduced as a MOE initiative.

Parallel research with pupils receiving a communication service from MOE:SE (i.e. a systemic analysis of language delay, language disorder, developmental or intellectual delay and academic delay, relevant ecological variables and the interaction between these and service provision) or with clients of the MOE:SE Early Intervention Teams (e.g. a systemic analysis of developmental delay, attachment disorders, the development of antisocial behaviours, relevant ecological variables and the interaction between these and service provision) might also be very revealing.

A related and interesting research question relates to those pupils who are not verified or otherwise clients of MOE:SE (i.e. are not behaviourally challenging and have age-appropriate language skills), but who have chronic academic and learning problems. Just who is providing a special education assessment and intervention service to these pupils and what is the nature of this service? Some of these pupils might be eligible for Supplementary Learning Support funding and receive service from RTLB and RTLIts, but the practical effects of this have yet to be evaluated. It is of interest that following a recent ERO review (Education Review Office, 2009) the Minister of Education announced the appointment of ‘50 experts’ to help schools develop better processes of assessment, planning and teaching in early reading and writing skills. Yet, as noted in the above example, this is precisely the kind of systems level work that educational psychologists were involved in prior to the implementation of SE2000!

The other stream of evidence that is visibly lacking is research into the effectiveness of implementation of the components of SE2000, particularly the individually targeted components, for example, the last two ‘behaviour initiatives’. We are all aware that there is a chasm between the research evidence for what should work and the efficacy of this in practice. Often it is not the intervention per se that is the problem, rather it is the fidelity of its implementation and the quality and quantum of the support that is provided. So we also need to review and take heed of the research evidence for what makes for an effective implementation, and review each step towards it from the bottom up. Only when this has been achieved, will we have completed the chain of evidence from special education policy to enhanced student outcomes.

REFERENCES


**AUTHOR’S PROFILE**

**Peter Coleman**

Peter Coleman worked as an educational psychologist within the Department of Education and now Ministry of Education from the early 1970s until 2009, the last 15 years part-time. He then moved into full time private practice specialising in Family Court and child protection work. Peter was Director of Social Issues for the NZPSS and is now President-Elect.

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Learning by Doing: Action Research to Evaluate Provisions for Gifted and Talented Students

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ABSTRACT
Between 2006 and 2008 the Ministry of Education funded the evaluation of three Talent Development Initiatives for gifted and talented students. The methodology employed was one of participatory action research, a process of evaluation that enables learning by doing, as researchers and practitioners work alongside one another. Through the process of evaluating the three programmes, the researchers were also able to reflect on how and what formative feedback effects the development, implementation, maintenance, and evaluation of provisions for gifted and talented students. Based upon notes from team meetings, ongoing communications, and focus group discussions, the researchers concluded that an action research approach, despite some tensions, is useful and instrumental in the ongoing development of provisions for gifted and talented students.

Research paper

Keywords: Gifted and talented, participatory action research, talent development initiatives

INTRODUCTION
The Talent Development Initiatives were launched by the previous government as one of a series of work programmes to enhance educational opportunities for gifted and talented students, their parents, and educators. Between 2003 and 2008, two contestable funding rounds enabled over thirty-five providers to develop a range of initiatives. These included a wide diversity of innovative programmes, using different organisational structures, aimed at a variety of target groups and needs, provided by both schools and private providers. The original purposes in the contestable funding, as outlined by the (Ministry of Education, 2002), were to:

- Develop innovative approaches to gifted and talented education that would result in improved outcomes for students.
- Research the impact of innovative approaches on teaching and learning.
- Disseminate knowledge, understanding, and models of effective practice.

During the second round of funding, two types of initiatives were funded (Enhance and Ignite programmes) and a team of researchers was contracted to evaluate some of the initiatives. The Enhance programmes were selected for continued funding to further develop and build upon their innovations from the first round, and the Ignite programmes were new programmes with a targeted focus on specific groups of students (e.g., Māori and Pasifika, rural, low-income). Between 2006 and 2008 the researchers evaluated two Enhance programmes of professional development and support for teachers using a case study approach, and three Ignite programmes designed for gifted and talented students using an action research approach.

The evaluation of these five programmes has been reported by Riley and Moltzen (2010), and this article focuses on only one slice of the full report: action research to evaluate provisions for gifted and talented students. At the outset, it is important to clarify that we do not believe action research and evaluation research to be dichotomous or in conflict with each other. We also adopt the position of Potter (2006): there is no one correct way to conduct programme evaluation. Rather, we take the stance that the evaluation of gifted programmes should utilise a responsive research approach which incorporates collaboration, opportunities for improvement and change through an iterative process, and, ultimately, leads to empowerment of participants and sustainability of programmes. “Evaluation employs an inquiry cycle that iteratively frames and examines problems of practice, chooses actions to address the problems, assesses the effects of these actions, and then reframes the original problems of practice” (Rallis & Militello, 2009, p. 254).

This definition of evaluation fits well with action research, which, as its name implies achieves “both action and research outcomes in a single study” (Dick, 1997, no page given). We believe that an action research evaluation encourages people to look at what is happening, reflect upon how programmes are developing, and make changes as they are going along, rather than just evaluating them at the end. In other words,
the focus of such an evaluation is on action or change, or continuous improvement. Potter (2006) would argue that the approach to evaluation we are describing is underpinned by a critical-emancipatory paradigm – one which aims for transformation through evaluation.

The article begins by describing what we know about the evaluation of gifted programmes in New Zealand, followed by an explanation of the underlying principles and practices. The advantages and disadvantages of learning by doing, as perceived by the participants and researchers, are described, with recommendations for practice.

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

In New Zealand, gifted and talented provisions are seldom formally evaluated and reported upon, resulting in “a paucity of … research which evaluated the effectiveness of provisions … in relation to social, cultural, emotional, creative, and intellectual outcomes” (Riley, et al., 2004, p. 3). This lack of reported evaluations leaves New Zealand’s practitioners in a vulnerable position of adapting or adopting international practices without a “critical, research-driven analysis of their appropriateness” (Riley & Moltzen, 2010, p. 5) within our own cultural and educational landscape. While there is a growing body of information about gifted and talented provisions, without empirical research evidence it is difficult for teachers to make informed decisions or reliably test the efficacy of chosen practices.

And yet, what we know, from reports of the Education Review Office (2008) and Ministry of Education (Riley et al., 2004), is that only around a quarter of schools employ evaluation methods. In 2007, the Education Review Office collected data on 315 schools, reporting that nearly half of the schools (46%) had not developed any processes of evaluation as would be indicated by:

- systematic and ongoing processes for evaluating student outcomes;
- sharing and consultation about evaluation findings with key stakeholders;
- actions based on the recommendations of evaluations, and
- evaluations of provisions both internal and external to the school.

If these indicators were evidenced in schools or other services for gifted and talented students, chances are they would be better armed to make good decisions and to be responsive to students’ needs. On the other hand, the lack of good evaluation data can result in an insufficient programme infrastructure which can potentially lead to superficial provisions (Van Tassel-Baska, 2004a). Therefore, in some ways it is not surprising, that after a three year action research-based evaluation of programmes for gifted and talented students, Riley and Moltzen (2010) concluded that each of the programmes demonstrated a dynamic approach to programme development, implementation, and evaluation. Using formative evaluations, the providers were able to collect information from key stakeholders and respond to their findings to improve their provisions. This needs-based approach requires “flexibility, adaptability, creativity, and innovation” (Riley & Moltzen, 2010, p. 143). These same factors are important in evaluating provisions for gifted and talented students, as the next section explains.

WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW?

There are two interconnected elements of evaluation: the outcomes for students and the effectiveness of the programme (Taylor, 2000). Academic, social, cultural, emotional, creative, and intellectual outcomes contribute to a programme’s overall effectiveness, and, similarly, the effectiveness is in one part determined by evidenced outcomes for students. The effective implementation of a programme is determined by measuring the effectiveness of management objectives, while the programme objectives determine outcomes for students (Gallagher, 1998). Thus, provisions need to be measured based on input (i.e., resources), processes (i.e., identification and differentiated programmes), and outputs (i.e., student outcomes) (Taylor, 2000). To do this, evaluation needs to be ongoing and based on formative and summative approaches.

The National Association for Gifted Children in the United States (1997) suggests different approaches to evaluation: incoming evaluations, or needs analyses; transition evaluations (when students move from one programme to another); year-end evaluations; and ongoing evaluations. Ongoing evaluations enable timeliness: a chance to measure the process of development, to test innovation, and gather formative data (Van Tassel-Baska, 2004b). This requires an eclectic mix of evaluation types, as described by Van Tassel-Baska (2004b):

- **Case study** approaches answer the questions of how and why by providing rich, thick descriptive data from multiple perspectives.
- **Utilisation-focused approaches** embed evaluation methods into programme development and implementation, enabling the data to influence programme changes.
change or growth. As Winner (1996) explained, pinpoint ‘the programme’ as the sole cause for any individuality of students, it would be difficult to the nature of some gifted programmes and the above-level measures need to be utilised. Given standard measures of assessment: alternative and and cultural outcomes, is unachievable using student outcomes, including emotional, social, be made with caution. Measuring multi-faceted evaluation approaches or results should only means that any generalisations across different and identification of giftedness and talent in the field. For example, differences in definitions and talented programmes: administrators, teachers, parents and whanau, community members, and the students themselves (Riley & Moltzen, 2010). Tomlinson and Callahan (1994) also recommend the inclusion of qualified evaluators – experienced, skilled, and knowledgeable ‘experts’. Each of these stakeholders will have different evaluative questions, interests, and purposes (Reid, 2004), but by including many perspectives, the evaluation will generate greater support, shared understandings, and opportunities for implementing recommendations (Tomlinson & Callahan, 1994). As Van Tassel-Baska (2004b) states, “Involvement increases relevance, understanding, and ownership of the evaluation, all of which facilitate informed and appropriate use” (p. 20) of the results.

However, evaluation is complex and not without problems. Difficulties in the evaluation of gifted and talented programmes stem from deeper issues in the field. For example, differences in definitions and identification of giftedness and talent means that any generalisations across different evaluation approaches or results should only be made with caution. Measuring multi-faceted student outcomes, including emotional, social, and cultural outcomes, is unachievable using standard measures of assessment: alternative and above-level measures need to be utilised. Given the nature of some gifted programmes and the individuality of students, it would be difficult to pinpoint ‘the programme’ as the sole cause for any change or growth. As Winner (1996) explained, this could only be achieved by random sampling – identifying students as gifted and talented and then implementing an intervention with one group (treatment) but not another (control). As Reid (2004) reminds us, research of this nature creates ethical dilemmas. Therefore, in the evaluation of gifted and talented programmes, it is important to take individual differences into consideration, avoid sweeping generalisations or cause-effect conclusions, and employ appropriate measures.

To summarise, evaluations of gifted and talented programmes should provide information for improvements using a collaborative process to gather data from multiple sources (Van Tassel-Baska, 2004c). What this enables is a dynamic interplay between programme planning and development, implementation, and evaluation which Van Tassel-Baska (2004c) describes as a cyclical process of planning, doing, studying, and acting. Taking all these considerations into account, it makes sense to use an action research approach.

**LEARNING BY DOING**

Participatory action research is "a systematic inquiry by collaborative, self-critical communities … out of the need to improve educational knowledge and practices" (Watts & Watts, 1993, p. 36). Grundy (1982) described the underlying principles of participatory action research as collaboration and participation, empowerment, knowledge, and social change. Through authentic and committed participation, communities of people open themselves up to enlightenment about the relationships between “circumstance, action, and consequence” (Wadsworth, 1997, p. 70). Through dissemination and sharing of their experiences, this enlightenment is extended to other stakeholder groups. These ideas align well with what we know about the evaluation of gifted and talented programmes, and particularly the testing of innovative approaches.

What an action research approach entails is a spiral of steps taken by teams of researchers and programme stakeholders. These steps can be applied to the evaluation of provisions as follows:

1. Develop a plan of action for evaluating outcomes and processes.
2. Act to implement the plan by undertaking the evaluation.
3. Observe the effects of the action by documenting the evaluation.
4. Reflect on the action and plan further action for the evaluation.
By using this sort of approach, an evaluation would be both responsive and illuminative. A major benefit is that the evaluation is not just summative, but also formative, enabling “judgement of the worth of the programme while it is forming or happening. It also allows for the programme to be shaped based on an ongoing evaluation, rather than a ‘too-late’ evaluation” (Riley & Moltzen, 2010, p. 12). Using this design also allows providers to build records of improvement and, if planned at the outset of programme development, to tell the story of programme evolution.

For the evaluation of the Talent Development Initiatives for gifted and talented students, an action research approach was employed over three years with teams of researchers working alongside practitioners. Each team included three academics with experience and knowledge in gifted and talented education, as well as curricular knowledge related to subjects or levels of teaching. The initiative’s director(s) were also part of each team.

The teams worked together to develop processes for determining the most appropriate approaches and perspectives for answering the Ministry of Education’s research purposes:

- To determine how providers design, implement, maintain, and evaluate programmes for gifted and talented students.
- To determine how providers structure relevant and engaging learning and growth opportunities for gifted and talented students, as evidenced in the achievement of programme objectives; improved outcomes for students; impact upon key stakeholders, and planning for sustainability.
- To determine how, and what, formative feedback effect the development, implementation, maintenance, and evaluation of programmes for gifted and talented students, by using an action research approach to evaluation (Riley & Moltzen, 2010, p. 2).

Thus, each year represented a cycle of research framed by a broad question:

1. Cycle 1: What is going on?
2. Cycle 2: Is it working?
3. Cycle 3: How do we know?

In other words, during the first year of programme development, the focus was on programme design and implementation. As researchers, who were external to the conceptualisation and creation of the programmes, it was important to gain a sense of how students were being identified; what curriculum adaptations were being made; how the content, processes, and products were differentiated, and how the providers would determine programme effectiveness with their own internal processes. By the second cycle, it was time to focus upon how those decisions were working in practice: were they effective measures of identification, differentiated provisions, and so on? In the final year, while effectiveness was still of great importance, it was also timely to ask questions related to sustainability, evaluation processes in practice, personnel, and programme impacts.

Each of the three case studies was evaluated using several methods of data collection: document analysis; observation; surveys, and interviews (focus group and individual). Perspectives were sought from all stakeholders, including gifted and talented students, the programme director(s), teachers, mentors, and parents. For each case study different data methods were used with different stakeholder groups, but all participants were well-informed of the reasons for and implementation of action research in the evaluation. All participants were also provided with a detailed information sheet and asked to provide informed consent, as per the Massey University Human Ethics Committee guidelines.

Throughout the three years of the evaluation, the research teams met regularly, communicated over email and phone, and kept research diaries. During the final research team meeting in 2009, a doctoral student was hired to conduct focus group interviews with the programme directors and the academic researchers, probing their experiences and perspectives as members of an action research-driven evaluation of gifted and talented programmes. From these sources, the researchers were able to contemplate the usefulness of action research for the evaluation of gifted and talented programmes.

**WHAT DID WE LEARN?**

As Van Tassel-Baska (2004c) promised, by employing an action-oriented evaluation method, the researchers and programme directors were able to plan, do, study, and act as these innovative initiatives evolved. Working alongside one another through the research cycles enabled planning, implementation, evaluation, and then the creation of a plan of action for improvement. Over the three years, this approach ensured collaboration and participation, empowerment, and change (Grundy, 1982). For new programmes, which were evolving and changing as they were being implemented, this approach proved useful; however, it was not always smooth sailing.
Also, while it should be noted that some of the perceived advantages and disadvantages of this approach may relate to other ways of conducting evaluations, what was unique in this project was the purposeful mixing of ‘expert’ researchers and ‘expert’ practitioners (Riley & Moltzen, 2010).

Using an action-driven method which emphasised change led to fluidity and responsiveness in the evaluations. For example, although the researchers were contracted by the Ministry of Education to ask a specified set of research questions, there was scope to be responsive and flexible in the ways in which those were pursued. As the programmes were shaped and evolved, so, too, did the evaluation.

Advantages of Learning by Doing

Riley and Moltzen (2010) reported an array of advantages for stakeholders in each of the programmes and including the researchers. For example, the use of a collaborative approach gave key stakeholders, including students and parents, opportunities to have a ‘voice’ and to influence programme development and implementation. For the gifted and talented students, “it provided opportunities for sharing their work and ideas in a broader context” (Riley & Moltzen, 2010, p. 145). Using multiple measures of effectiveness from different perspectives ensured validation and triangulation of emerging and final results.

Some of the advantages for the programme directors involved in this project included: access to relevant expert knowledge, materials, and resources; support, encouragement, and validation of practices, including wider dissemination, and professional learning and growth. Each of these advantages is elaborated in the following sections.

The programme directors had access to relevant expert knowledge by careful matching of research team members with programmes. For example, a visual arts programme was evaluated by an academic in gifted and talented education, supported by a music educator and visual artist, both of whom had professional interests in gifted and talented students. While the lead researcher was able to provide expertise on ‘the big picture’, his supporting artists were able to add a touch of fine detail, depth, and experience specifically related to the programme. Similarly, a marine biology programme was supported by a generalist in gifted and talented education, a science teacher educator, and a mathematics teacher educator.

Materials, resources, and expertise offered by universities also provided an advantage for the programme directors. As members of the evaluation team, the programme directors had access to library resources, including books and journals, which they otherwise would not find in their schools or centres. In one case, the programme director chose to spend several days at the Massey University campus so that he could refine his evaluative tools. This gave him access to expertise in terms of input and resources, but also the ‘space’ in which to focus on his work, free of distractions normally associated with his role in the centre.

Working with the researchers allowed opportunities for support, encouragement, insights, and validation of practice. Planning and implementing specialist programmes can sometimes be a rather isolated experience; however, being part of a research team provided collegial and professional support. For example, the director of a school-based programme received limited ‘in-house’ support, as no formal mechanisms were in place to offer such. In this case, the academic researchers “probably assumed a more influential role than might be expected to normally occur” (Riley & Moltzen, 2010, p. 76). The director explained “They’d basically walk in the door by the end and it was just verbal diarrhoea from me most of the time – they were just the only people I could talk to, ‘cos I’m quite isolated with what I do, it was like ‘blah blah blah blah’” (Focus Group Interview, 2009). Another director said, “They fitted in beautifully, they fed back data, they’ve been very sharing, I couldn’t have asked for a better team and they’ve been very much mentors” (Focus Group Interview, 2009).

Assistance and support in ongoing dissemination of practice was a real benefit for the directors. The programme directors presented nationally and internationally at conferences, sometimes in collaboration with the academic team members. Collaborative writing projects have also eventuated. As one of the directors, who had presented a workshop with one of the researchers, shared, “I think that was a huge boost for me, a learning curve for me” (Focus Group Interview, 2009). Riley et al., (2004) concluded that the dissemination of New Zealand-based research in gifted and talented education is found lacking, and furthermore, when it is disseminated, it doesn’t always reach practitioners. Each of these programmes has reached a range of local, national, and international audiences through presentations and publications. This has also served to enhance their own processional learning and support (Riley & Moltzen, 2010).

Having an external perspective to programme development, implementation, and evaluation was also seen as valuable. As was stated earlier, programme coordinators can sometimes experience feelings of isolation, and as a
programme develops, this can feel a bit like navel gazing! The academic researchers did not have the same sense of ownership of the programmes, and this afforded opportunities to provide different practical, theoretical, and research-based ideas. The researchers could also ask the ‘tough questions’, enabling critical analysis of the programmes as they evolved. In the focus group discussion (2009), one of the directors explained it like this:

And it’s been another set of eyes … because once you get really close to something you can often be a little bit blind and blinkered to things and it’s been really important to have someone else see it from another perspective.

As a result of all these advantages, each director also had opportunities for, and showed evidence of, professional growth. As one of the directors shared in the focus group interview (2009),

As part of the process of doing … your own professional development is happening – whether you want it to or not, in a sense. And so it’s like whoever you’re working with, you’re moving them along, and … you are having to move along yourself.

This seems unique to the methodology, as the hands-on involvement in the evaluation ensured the directors were not ‘outside’ the process, results, or conclusions, but firmly cemented within the action research.

Similarly, there were advantages for the academic researchers. Firstly, there was the opportunity to be engaged in practice which created “practice-informed research, an often overlooked link between theory and practice whereby research usually drives practice” (Riley & Moltzen, 2010, p. 145). Being external to the programme’s conceptualisation, and to a lesser degree its implementation, meant that any research or theory-driven ideas really had to be contemplated in relation to practice, and considerate of programme development. As one of the research team members explained, “It made me think, if I’m evaluating, at the same time ‘How can I feed-forward for the people I’m evaluating, working alongside them, that helps them move forward and then spurs another bit of growth?’” (Focus Group Interview, 2009). This responsiveness took at least one researcher a while to grow accustomed to: she referred to this as “delayed resolution as a researcher” (Focus Group Interview, 2009).

Also, involvement in practice-driven research influenced tertiary teaching by developing understandings of giftedness, provisions, and evaluation, and providing examples of practice. One researcher explained it like this:

It was kind of a reinforcement of characteristics if you like, of gifted and talented students, the importance of working with like-minded peers, and I think the key for me, the biggest growth, was my understanding of how mentors could be used (Focus Group Interview, 2009).

Another researcher felt her involvement in a secondary programme added to her “credibility” as a lecturer with a background in primary education. Research skills and abilities were also developed and there was great value placed on working as part of a team with a balance of experiences, skills, and backgrounds.

There were clearly positive spin-offs for all those involved in the evaluations, and the researchers became a natural part of the Talent Development Initiatives. But this was not without tensions and issues, especially for the academic researchers, which the next section describes.

Tensions for Researchers

From the outset of these evaluations, it was important that there be an established level of trust between the researchers and the programme stakeholders. In initial discussions with the programme providers, while on the one hand they were willing to cooperate, on the other hand it was not without some scepticism, wariness, and possibly even fear of criticism. Action research requires the development of collaborative, trusting and respectful relationships, but this was heightened by the fact that both the Talent Development Initiatives and the evaluation approach were innovative and still under development. So, in a sense, not only were the programmes evolving, so too was the research.

Not surprisingly then, finding a balance between the research process and final product was at times difficult for the researchers. How important was it to help develop, shape, and even influence the programme while at the same time pursuing the research questions? Similarly, it was at times difficult to maintain and demonstrate respect and understanding for the programme’s circumstances and needs, while operating within a defined set of research parameters. Riley and Moltzen (2010) describe this as a tension between ‘bottom-up’ or ‘top-down’ approaches to research. For example, one of the research team members described her dilemma when asked to conduct parent meetings, and being advised by one of the research directors not to do so: “I would have fallen into the trap
of being more involved in the process of the programme rather than knowing quite where to draw the line” (Focus Group Interview, 2009).

It was also difficult defining the roles of the researchers and the participants. These roles shifted throughout the research, ranging from novice to expert, researcher to practitioner, and insider to outsider. The researchers were academics with expertise in theory and research, while the programme directors were expert practitioners. But even within the research teams, there was a complexity of expertise in both research methods and contexts. Over the three years of the research, however, all these roles shifted. The programme directors were defined initially by their teaching practice, but were expected to become active researchers. Similarly, the researchers were marked by their academic expertise and expected to become involved in practice.

As the action research progressed, the lines between researchers and practitioners became fuzzy and expertise more balanced. For example, as questions and problems arose, solution-finding became more collaborative, particularly as each cycle of the research progressed. A researcher described the changing roles in this way: “And it’s also that they feed back and you work collaboratively with them and then something new evolves from it and the pathway is explicit and obvious” (Focus Group Interview, 2009). There was greater sharing of the ownership of both the research and programmes’ problems. But this also caused dilemmas: “Yeah there were problems with boundaries, with boundaries around the programme” (Researcher, Focus Group Interview, 2009).

As has been described, both the researchers and programme directors demonstrated professional growth, and this aided in the fluidity of roles. Across and within the teams the research roles and programme roles became more transferable and interchangeable. Building on individuals’ strengths enabled a collaborative sharing of tasks as both problem-finders and problem-solvers. While this sounds positive, and to a large degree it was, for the researchers it created a tension between the roles of collaborator and external evaluator. The researchers were acting in two roles, insiders and outsiders, and there was some danger in objectivity being lost as relationships developed. As one of the research team members explained:

I found a real tension for me between being an evaluator and what I consider my role as an evaluator of the project, relative to what the project goals were, and, so I was really on the outside looking in, but I couldn’t help but get on the inside and be a mentor so there was a sort of real tension between “Well, how much am I supposed to be taking on a role of being part of the team?” to feedback, feed-forward (Focus Group Interview, 2009).

It was also difficult at times to be critical of the programmes, especially when sometimes these were derived from theory and research developed by members of the research teams. It was also difficult to know when to be hands-on or hands-off. Another team member described the conflict like this: “that grey area … where we’re outside the organic model so to speak versus how much we put inside and lead” (Focus Group Interview, 2009). There were role conflicts that evolved: researcher versus expert, researcher versus monitor, and supporter versus advocate.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Programmes for gifted and talented students should be evaluated both formatively and summatively, using internal and external processes, and inclusive of a variety of stakeholder voices heard through multiple measures. One important element that is sometimes overlooked is the importance of establishing the framework and design of an evaluation at the outset of programme development. Using an action research approach provides the flexibility and fluidity needed for parallel evolution of the programme and the evaluation.

More research is needed to test the viability and strength of action research approaches to programme evaluation in gifted and talented education, but from this preliminary work, a set of practical recommendations for evaluation arise. When designing and implementing programme evaluations for gifted and talented education, educators should consider:

1. Using a team approach which is inclusive of stakeholders from within the school community, but also professionals external to the school who may have expertise.
2. Carefully matching the evaluation purposes with the methods of data collection.
3. Developing trust and clarifying roles of all those involved in the evaluation process.
4. Using the results of evaluation for programme improvement; this requires gathering practical information by asking practice-driven questions.
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Acknowledgements:

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AUTHORS’ PROFILES

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ABSTRACT
This article describes the work undertaken by a cluster of Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) to ensure that annual effectiveness reviews were more than a compliance exercise but a genuine attempt to improve their service to schools, hence the title of this article of “Going Beyond Audit”. Historically, the cluster had met the reporting requirements set by the Ministry of Education (MOE), however to make the process more purposeful, reviews were broadened through the collection of a wider variety of qualitative and quantitative data. A feature of the qualitative data collection methods employed is the annual focus group interviews designed to gather feedback from representatives of client schools. As a result of the interviews, the RTLB cluster has received positive affirmation about its service and additionally, identified some key areas where its service could be strengthened. More importantly, it has developed a robust and practical system of review by blending information sources and methodology. Feedback collected can be fed directly into strategic planning and is proving useful in shaping practice. The focus group interviews are also benefiting participants by expanding their understanding of the RTLB role as well as enhancing professional networks. This article outlines the cluster’s interpretation and implementation of authentic evidence-based practice (EBP).

Practice paper

Keywords: Evidence-based practice, focus group interviews, social validity, stratified sampling

THE CONTEXT OF THE REVIEWS
The diversity of the Otaki Kapiti RTLB cluster and complexity of employment arrangements are important factors to consider when looking at the development of their review processes. The cluster is situated within a large semi-rural geographical area. It serves eighteen primary schools and three colleges between Paekakariki in the south and Manakau in the north. Within the schools there is considerable variance in terms of school culture and demographic profiles. The cluster employs ten RTLB in total. Due to job-share arrangements this equates to 7.5 full time RTLB positions. Included in the cluster is an RTLB Māori who primarily serves Māori immersion units and schools. The RTLB are hosted by five different schools and all RTLB are active members of the cluster management committee; this enhances ownership and responsibility for the annual reviews. While useful information on individual RTLB performance had previously been gathered, because of the diverse nature of the group, gaining an understanding of the effectiveness of the cluster as a whole had proven more difficult.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW MODEL
Over the last eleven years, the RTLB had reported statistically to their management committee and the MOE. The majority of information provided related to referral numbers and types, year levels and the ethnicities of children on the RTLB roll. In 2004, an Education Review Office (ERO) report on the RTLB service across the country found that a significant number of clusters could not provide evidence of effective practice. As one of forty clusters included in this review, the Otaki Kapiti RTLB cluster had received positive feedback from the ERO team. However the national finding prompted the RTLB cluster to reflect further on the way effectiveness reviews were conducted and to make modifications to its own systems.

Initially, changes involved the RTLB collecting and presenting an expanded range of quantitative data to its management committee and the MOE. The most noticeable feature was recording and presenting the achievement (or non achievement) of casework goals within broad categories. In an attempt to improve the efficiency of collection processes, a range of different forms and templates was developed and trialled by the cluster. At this stage, individual casework and cluster effectiveness was largely measured by goals achieved within casework.

In 2005, the cluster introduced qualitative reporting as an additional way of measuring
effectiveness, RTLB were asked to present a written narrative report to the management committee. The reports were based on a particular piece of case work and included information on the context, goals set, interventions and outcomes. They proved to be a useful way to demonstrate the complexity of RTLB case work as well as report on the collaborative consultative process that is central to the RTLB role. While the cluster found the combination of narrative and statistical reporting reassuring, as outcomes for students were often positive, the cluster was also aware that this type of reporting was not shaping practice or contributing to the overall improvement of the cluster as a whole. As a result, a decision was made in 2006 to evaluate the effectiveness of the RTLB service to local schools through a questionnaire. Specifically, the questionnaire would attempt to establish client expectation of the local RTLB service, identify parts of the service that were working well, and identify changes the RTLB cluster could make to improve practice. Obtaining information on client expectation was considered to be a vital prerequisite. A concern had developed that the clients understanding about the RTLB service may not be congruent with what the RTLB could offer; therefore interpreting feedback provided by teachers would remain unhelpful until further examination of client understanding was completed.

The cluster established a working party to develop the questionnaire, however doubts arose about whether a questionnaire would provide the quality and type of information needed. This decision was based on previous unsuccessful questionnaires where the level and depth of response was low. The cluster hypothesised that teacher participants were not motivated to complete the survey because they may not have seen a direct benefit. Through discussion and further consultation, the concept of using focus groups as an alternative way of gathering the necessary data was promoted. This method of data collected aligns closely with the theory of evidence-based practice (EBP).

Debate about EBP has long been occurring within academic circles. Interestingly, despite a lack of clarity about EBP, “almost everyone engaged in teaching and preparing educators would say that they employ evidence-based practice” (Siegrist, Leech, Bass & Patten, 2008, p. 147). At the heart of the argument was the question of what constitutes evidence and what does it actually mean to engage in evidence-based practice (Thomson & Anderson, in press). Walker (2004) suggests that the gold standard of evidence-based practice is that it is research-based, structured and clearly outlined in a prescribed manner. The RTBL cluster had begun to develop its own pragmatic definition of EBP, understanding the EBP to be the collection of robust and relevant evidence that proves directly useful in shaping practice to ensure improved outcomes for students, teachers and schools.

**THE FOCUS GROUP MODEL**

The RTLB cluster enlisted the support of an educational consultant to help plan and facilitate the focus group interviews and provide feedback. Focus group interviews are frequently used to promote and organise discussion with selected groups of individuals to gain information on their views and experiences of a topic (Gibbs, 1997). The cluster chose to use focus group interviews in this situation due to an understanding that relevant and rich data could be gained, with fewer constraints than questionnaires. The potential benefit to participants was also a contributing factor to the decision; it was hoped that feedback from focus group interviews would constitute genuine evidence-based practice rather than a mere exercise in consultation.

The cluster identified key areas to be addressed within the focus group interviews. This included gaining the participants’ understanding of the RTLB service in relation to:

- Access to the service
- Casework
- Professionalism
- Goal setting
- The collaborative and consultative process.

A series of questions was developed around these key areas and included:

1. What is your understanding of the RTLB service?
2. What were the main sources of that understanding?
3. Which services provided by the RTLB have you found to be particularly useful/helpful?
4. Have any of the services not been useful/helpful? If so, what were they?
5. Consider the cases that you believe had really good outcomes. What do you think were the main factors that contributed to their success?
6. If you were to use three different adjectives to describe the RTLB, what would they be?
7. Are there any general issues you would like to raise?

Selection of participants has varied according to the numbers within the potential selection pool. In the first focus group interviews in 2007, the Special Education Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) from all cluster schools were invited. As this was a relatively small group, all could be accommodated.
within two interviews. In 2008, classroom teachers were the selected group. As this was a large group, stratified sampling was used to select participants. Stratified sampling is based on a blend of both categorisation and randomisation as it divides a population into homogeneous groups based on similar characteristics (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). In this situation it allowed random selection within the following set criteria:

- Classroom teachers who had worked with a RTLB during the previous year.
- Classroom teachers from a range of year levels.
- Classroom teachers from all cluster schools.

A possible difficulty associated with focus group interviews is that individual participants can capture or dominate discussion, or inhibit others, so that a full range of perspectives is not gained (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Cohen, et al., 2000; Johnson & Christensen, 2000). The literature suggests that groups of six to twelve people is optimal (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Cohen, et al., 2000; Gillham, 2000; Johnson & Christensen, 2000) and in this review, groups of eight to ten were used. This was considered a number most useful in maximising the engagement of all participants. Groups were not too large to hinder those who do not like speaking in front of a group, and large enough so that a wide range of information and perspectives could be gathered.

The third group interviewed in 2009 were senior managers from the secondary schools in the cluster. Again this was a small group so sampling was not required.

OUTCOMES

Focus group interviews have been completed for three years. There has been a good response from participants with most taking up invitations to attend interviews. In 2007, 80% of the invited SENCOs attended one of the two focus group interviews. Similar rates of participation were achieved in 2008 with classroom teachers. While establishing interview dates that suited all principals and members of college senior management was more difficult in 2009, interviews were well attended. Specific invitations to participants played a large part in the high participation rates achieved.

Data collected from the interviews has given the RTLB cluster clear information of client expectation of the RTLB service. It became apparent that this was well matched to that of the RTLB cluster.

The focus group interviews confirmed that the support provided to schools has been highly regarded. Furthermore, in three key areas, the participants provided a wide range of useful information regarding the factors that they believed contributed to the successful delivery of the RTLB service to local schools.

Firstly, the clients identified a number of general factors that impact on success of the local service. Responses included were:

- the ease of accessibility to the RTLB service;
- the RTLBs’ knowledge of school systems;
- the practicality of interventions.

Secondly, participants identified which RTLB services have been particularly useful across cluster schools. Typical responses were:

- working to support teachers with group or whole class interventions;
- training of teacher aides;
- assistance with transitions of students from primary schools to secondary schools.

Thirdly, participants were asked to consider RTLB cases where the outcomes had been particularly positive. Participants were then asked to identify what the main factors were that characteristically contributed to the successful outcomes of these cases. Typical responses included:

- thorough data gathering and analysis;
- liaison with families;
- perseverance and consistency.

The focus group interviews also provided specific feedback on areas that could be developed to enhance the RTLB service to the local schools. This included:

- building on parent/caregiver understanding of the service;
- acknowledging the difficulty of arranging meeting times;
- providing professional development opportunities for client schools.

The RTLB group has used the information gained from the focus group interviews to develop practice, for example, a parent/caregiver pamphlet has been produced. This pamphlet which has been published in both English and Māori, and provides information on how the RTLB service works and can be used by schools as they make decisions with parent/caregivers regarding an RTLB referral.

Principals, SENCOs and teachers have increased their knowledge of the RTLB service as a result of being involved in the focus group interviews. They have also developed their understanding of the possibilities and potential of an RTLB referral through hearing of other educators’ experiences.
The facilitator has prepared written evaluative reports which have been presented to the RTLB cluster management committee. Copies of the reports have been sent to all the cluster principals and to the MOE as an attachment to the annual report.

ANALYSIS

The cluster is confident in the accuracy, social validity and reliability of findings. Key factors involved in this were that the RTLB themselves were not included in the discussion groups. This provided anonymity and confidentiality for the participants. Having an independent facilitator with a sound knowledge of the RTLB model and the ability to shape the questions and responses through clarification and encouragement also promoted honest and genuine feedback. Stratified sampling ensured a transparent selection process which again contributed to the robustness of the process. The process ensured that individual RTLB were not professionally disadvantaged or embarrassed: findings were reported as themes relevant to the cluster as a whole.

SUMMARY

The cluster now has a comprehensive system of effectiveness review that combines quantitative and qualitative data collection. Statistical data continues to be collected. A software package and cluster training have enhanced the efficiency of the collection and presentation of the data. Qualitative data collection includes presentation of RTLB case studies to their management committee and the MOE. There remains the opportunity for informal feedback from the principals, SENCos and teachers, however it is the advent of the focus group interviews that has rounded off data collection for the RTLB group. In previous years, the group had found that data collected was not easily transferred into a development plan. Feedback from the interviews (and other sources) can be directly linked into the RTLB cluster’s annual strategic plan. The successful outcomes of the focus group interviews mean that the RTLB effectiveness reviews are purposeful, practical and of benefit to both RTLB and client schools.

In conclusion, annual reviews allow the cluster to plan for improved service as well as report clearly to management committee, MOE and other interested groups such as ERO and fellow RTLB groups. Therefore the cluster’s effectiveness reviews ‘go beyond audit’ and are an integral part of the cluster’s effort to continually develop and improve their service to schools.

REFERENCES


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Putting Play Back into the Playground

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ABSTRACT

During 2008 and 2009, a group of nine Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) from Canterbury met as a Community of Practice to investigate the way that play in the school playground contributes to the social competence of students. While the original concern was around the needs of students who were unable to manage their behaviour in the playground, the focus shifted to question how the school playground can be viewed as an important learning environment for all children.

The RTLB Playground Focus Group, as they were known, began by discussing the differences between play, games and sport. They collected advertisements and considered the impact that the marketing of toys and equipment has had on choices for play, including the demise of traditional games. Some members of the Focus Group informally surveyed their schools’ reasons for changing break-times, the role of duty teachers, student voice, choices in the playground and strategies for the successful inclusion of all students in their playground. Survey participants were advised that the findings would both inform RTLB work in the region, and were intended to be published.

It was soon found that there is an enormous body of research around bullying and physical violence and play in early childhood, but very little concerned with the design or physical structure of playgrounds or the role of adults in the playground. Some researchers like Hickman (2009) and Leff, Power, Costigan, and Manz (2003) have explored children’s perceptions and playground experiences in an attempt to assess the climate and school environment, and the balance of power between adults and children.

This paper was born out of the work of the Playground Focus Group, but also reports on issues confronting schools in relation to play and school playgrounds.

DEFINING PLAY

At an RTLB Canterbury Regional meeting the Playground Focus Group decided to invite the meeting to participate in a simple survey. About 50 RTLB were asked to define play using one sentence. They found it difficult but most included words such as: ‘shared’; ‘fun’; ‘free’; and ‘informal experience’. Sutton-Smith (1997) agrees that play is hard to define but claims that every child knows what it is but adults can only speculate. Pellegrini (1995) says that play is an activity done for its own sake which is flexible and fun. Play can be contrasted with exploration which may lead to play, work which has a goal, or games which are organised with the aim of winning.

Play is not only hard to define but also hard to find both in and out of some school playgrounds. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, adults can be over-anxious about children hurting themselves or others so the opportunity to explore and freely express themselves through robust play is denied. Secondly, many adults have been manipulated by persuasive advertising and the over-commercialisation of toys and play equipment. Television programmes and promotions lead children to play according to rules imposed by adults (Klein, 1995). Thirdly, opportunities and places for children to make friends and play away from the control of adults are few and far between. The car ride to and from school has taken away one of the most important times for daily social interactions (Blatchford, 1998; Pellegrini, 1995). In many countries children rarely engage in street games or visit parks without adult supervision. Finally, time for playing outside in the school playground matters and does benefit children’s ability to pay attention and learn according to research by Pellegrini and Bjorklund (1996).

However, break times are becoming marginalised and undervalued by schools reducing and regulating time for play. The Focus Group found that the decision was usually based on an assumption that negative behaviour would decrease and that the expanding curriculum requires more teaching and learning in the classroom. Little mention was made of the detrimental effect this is having on developing...
skills in social competence. Such decisions devalue the playground and the social curriculum that exists in all playgrounds. (Hurni, 2001). There is no basis to support assumptions that play should be confined to the preschool years or that, at primary school, time in the classroom is of greater importance than play in the playground. Play is important because according to Perry, Hogan and Marlin (2000) it helps brain development in many ways. They believe that play, more than any other activity, fuels healthy development of children. It is a natural learning tool that develops co-ordination with both fine and gross motor skills. Because play is fun it helps to develop emotional well-being and stability. It includes rules of its own and allows children of all ages to develop skills in social competence that endure.

Frequently, adults see play through their eyes and they get in the way of friendships and children’s play. Adults can take control and impose their own values, beliefs and ideas on children’s play. This leaves few opportunities for children to be challenged or to discover solutions for themselves. Doll and Brehm (2010) say that “Adult’s perspectives are shaped by mature ways of understanding and they have lost the ability to enter into the kids-eye view of play, games, friends and fights” (p. 39).

Teacher aides ‘tracking’ students can act as a barrier to the student’s peer group and prevent, rather than foster, friendships. Adults can make well meaning decisions that are not in the best interests of the children in their care (Woolley et al., 2006). Even a pristine, landscaped playground can fail to provide adequate play opportunities for children if they have never been consulted or considered (Factor, 2004).

TRADITIONAL GAMES
Whatever happened to Oranges and Lemons, huts, marbles, swings and sandpits? Traditional games have all but disappeared in one generation. We are losing games that, according to Blatchford (1998), belong to children and have passed from child to child.

When children participate in traditional games, language functions like those needed for explaining or teaching the rules of a game are used. Oral language and pre-reading skills are supported through rhyme, repetition and memory. Children are focused, concentrating and aware of whose turn comes next. They practice good listening skills and rehearse some basic facts that require sequencing, such as the alphabet, counting, days of the week, months of the year or colours.

Social playground games are safe traditional games that are for everyone. Repetitive chants and songs make them easy to learn including circle games like The Farmer in the Dell, The Hokey Tokey, The Big Ship Sails on the Alley Alley Oh. Perry et al., (2000) has found that play increases all oral language skills including semantics, sentence length, listening skills and enriches vocabulary.

Children play with other children, not just those chosen by an adult from their class or restricted to best friends. Physical games develop fine or gross motor skills (Barbour, 1996). Games like knucklebones, marbles, pick-up sticks, rakau (Māori stick games), string games, whip ‘n’ tops, and yo yos increase hand-eye coordination as do many skipping and clapping games.

THE PLAYGROUND AND THE NEW ZEALAND CURRICULUM
Take another look at your playground. You will see the Key Competencies (Ministry of Education, 2007) in action with children relating to others, participating, contributing, communicating, thinking and managing themselves in a variety of situations. You may also see conflict, teasing, tantrums, anger, aggression and children left out. This is the place for teaching and learning the fundamental skills in social competence needed by all humans (Doll, 2009). This is the natural context for children to learn how to participate in socially-appropriate ways and when to use the rules that are basic to becoming a contributing member of our society. The life-skills developed through playing can be found in all of the Key Competencies (Ministry of Education, 2007). The profile of an effective school will include a positive playground when teachers view the playground as a valued curriculum resource (Doll, 2009).

The Playground Focus Group listed the following skills from play as they explored connections with the Key Competencies. These are illustrated in Table 1.
CHALLENGES

When we consider that time in the playground is an important time of the day for students we get a new sense of urgency and impatience to make that time valued and with as much status for learning as the classroom.

Time in the playground can be negative for everyone including teachers on duty, as well as children who do not want to be where they feel unhappy, left out, picked on by other students or ‘pounced on’ by negative duty teachers. For many students, playgrounds are dangerous places especially when they are devoid of play equipment, and have insufficient play choices. The writer has observed playgrounds with limited equipment allowed for playground use or ineffective distribution of equipment from the sports shed, resulting in more children becoming involved with play-fighting, grass throwing, gangs/cliques and bullying.

Some schools have relied on their adventure playground to provide play opportunities for their children. It can be popular and overloaded because it is all there is with very little ‘play’ actually happening. This is an exercise structure constructed by adults for children. One school, after considering data that showed this to be true, enriched their playground by creating zones led by classroom teachers. All over the playground, equipment was placed ready for use. This included cushions with books on the verandah, pickup sticks, marbles, stilts, skateboards, chess sets, cards, dress up clothes, skipping ropes with senior students to teach new skipping rhymes, frisbees, hula hoops, sand toys and hoses in the sandpit, water play troughs and easels for painting. All this, as well as two adventure playgrounds and the usual team games on the big fields, resulted in students who couldn’t wait to get outside into a place that allowed them choices for play.

Banning of Games

Many games that require social and physical interactions have disappeared. Physical contact is too hazardous for some teachers’ and parents’ thinking. Students may get dirty, may get hurt, may end up with damaged clothes or worse may get angry or tearful or over-excited! If you doubt this then consider the games and activities that have recently been banned from schools in the UK: football, three-legged races, skipping ropes, tag and even making daisy chains. The Focus Group have found that some schools in their clusters are also into banning activities: marbles - because there are fights over possession; skateboards - because other students feel envious and skateboarders may injure themselves or others; sandpit toys - because of ownership squabbles and they are sandy at the end of the lunch hour; even sandpits in some schools because they haven’t kept them safe from dogs or cats; tree climbing; rope ladders; swings; and bull-rush and all those games that require chasing and a lot of body contact.

Bull-rush and messy play activities can happen when students bring appropriate clothes with

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<tr>
<th>Key Competencies</th>
<th>Behavioural Indicators through Play</th>
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<td>Participating and Contributing</td>
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parent agreement. Marbles can become a game of skill when students learn to look after their own marbles and learn to play the game and experience winning and losing. Sand toys can come to school when students learn to wash them at the end of play and take them home or store them at school. Skateboards can come to school if they are used in a specific place with safety equipment. Traditional games like Oranges and Lemons can return to the playground if they are taught.

Playground Duty - To Police or Participate?

The school-wide philosophy on both behaviour management and the value of play for learning and social development determines the nature and specific requirement of ‘duty’ for the playground duty teacher. Some school playgrounds are viewed as negative places by adults. Duty teachers can see time in the playground as an unwelcome but required task. There is a tension between managing behaviour and the school environment to keep children safe from injury and bullying, and making the playground an interesting and challenging environment where children can manage their own play. Schools often choose to ‘police’ or ‘participate’.

Little and Wyver (2008) believe that avoiding all risks is not the solution as doing so limits children’s participation in worthwhile experiences that promote their optimal health and development. They see the goal as managing, not eliminating, risk. However, in this era of apportioning blame, schools feel vulnerable if a child is injured. To protect their staff and children, some schools feel they have little choice but to ‘police’ the playground, maintaining a high level of vigilance to prevent accidents and aggressive behaviour. Interactions with children are limited to solving problems and enforcing playground rules, and are most often negative or directive. Blatchford and Sharp (1994) see that teachers are caught in a dilemma of wanting to be as non-interventionist as possible when on playground duty, whilst at the same time, having to respond with assistance to pupils. One consequence is that playground contacts tend to be officious and managerial.

Other schools are taking the opposite approach—they ‘participate’ in children’s play, encouraging the development of language and independent social skills through positive interactions. If children have plenty of options to be creative, competitive, cooperative or just playful, issues with behaviour management are markedly reduced. In these schools teachers work as a team to provide equipment, teach skills and play with children, while still providing adequate supervision and giving attention to problem-solving. Teachers’ interactions with the students are restorative, positive and respectful.

One school that considered the research of O’Rourke (1987) and identified the equitable distribution of equipment as a barrier to play placed all play equipment in big boxes around the playground for easy access. They increased the number of designated participating teachers/teacher aides while decreasing the number of traditional teachers on duty. This resulted in a significant decrease in negative recorded incidents in the playground and positive teacher attitudes to ‘duty’.

![Figure 1 Childhood playground memories](image)
The challenge for all schools is to achieve a balance between ensuring student safety through vigilant care over student behaviour, and facilitating student independence and social development through opportunities to engage in play.

MEMORIES

In spite of this negativity, time in the playground is still a happy time for most children and will be the most remembered time of their schooldays. Sutton-Smith (1990) claims that “The school playground still provides the one assured festival in the lives of children” (p. 5).

Figure 1 shows a summary of one-sentence responses written by approximately 50 RTLB describing their greatest memory of their primary school playground. The biggest responses were from those who were in rural playgrounds in the 1950s and 1960s. When the same group were asked to name the best game that they played, those recorded most frequently were: skipping and elastics; bull-rush; ban the door; and running and chasing games. These games were closely followed in frequency by: hopscotch; hut building; hide and seek; rounders; marbles, and the jungle gym. There was lively discussion among the group after this survey was collated and shared as the participants compared their playground experiences. Which activities and games will be remembered by today’s children when they are adults?

CONCLUSION

Students can’t wait to get into an interesting playground. These playgrounds let students ‘feel the fear’, handle disappointment, get a bruise or a scrape, try new things, experience winning and losing, and prepare themselves for taking risks and taking responsibility for their own lives. Schools that invest in their playground as a valued resource can focus less on punishing and banning, and respond more to the trends and social needs of their students. Teachers in these schools can choose to use restorative practices rather than a referral process, providing solutions rather than problems.

Developing friendships and having friends according to Blatchford (1998) is one of the most important features of every child’s life. Playing in their school playground is where this can happen naturally and this includes students with disabilities or behavioural needs. MacArthur and Gaffney, (2001) remind us that the school playground is a critical social context for the development of friendships.

The playground satisfies the basic need of all children for social interaction with their peers, for play, fresh air and exercise. It is a school’s most valued curriculum resource for learning and practising skills in social competence: the Key Competencies. The playground is not just a place for ‘letting off steam.’ It is a learning place where discovery, pleasure, excitement, imagination, fun and laughter abound. It is also a place where skills to manage conflict, anger and aggression are taught and learnt in context. By reducing time in the playground or placing the very students who need the skills in managing their behaviour out of the playground, a school is limiting learning opportunities for their students.

FURTHER INFORMATION

A playground audit can be the first step for a school to investigate what is actually happening in their school playground. It will help a school value what is already in place and most importantly enable decisions for change to be based on robust data.

During a 10 week teachers sabbatical in 2010, the writer developed A Practical Guide to Conducting a Playground Audit. Templates for gathering data are included in this document as well as examples from schools as they have worked to put play back into their playgrounds.

In 2010 the writer was invited to share the findings from using a Playground Audit at the 32nd International School Psychology Association Conference Trinity College, Dublin July 22nd-25th 2010. The conference theme was Making Life better for all Children.

To access the Playground Audit developed by Llyween Couper during a 10 week Sabbatical 2010 http://www.mps.school.nz/starnet/media/Our_Parents/Newsletter/Playground_Audit_with_pictures_28.4.10.pdf

Alternatively, go to the Mairehau School website www.mps.school.nz and click on “Our Parents”, then “Our School Newsletter”. You will find the Playground Audit and the power point presentation for 32nd International ISPA Conference, Dublin, 22-25 July 2010.

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AUTHOR’S PROFILE

**Llyween Couper**

Llyween Couper has been an RTLB in the Mairehau Cluster, Christchurch since 2004. Prior to that, she was the Regional Coordinator for the SE2000 Contract. She has an interest in models for delivering professional development and was a Cluster Facilitator for the INSTEP project and on the Advisory Committee for the Exemplar Learning Story project. She is an advocate for inclusion and presented a paper describing the RTLB model at the 31st ISPA (International School Psychology Association) Conference in Malta entitled “Strengthening Inclusive Practice in New Zealand Classrooms”. In 2010 her focus for inclusive practice included the playground. She was invited to present a paper at the 32nd ISPA conference in Dublin titled “Putting Play Back into the Playground”. Much of the content has been included in this article.

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Let’s Talk About Teacher Aides

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ABSTRACT
Since 1989, teacher aides have become a familiar part of our classrooms as they support students with special educational needs. International and New Zealand research shows that despite many teacher aide practices that effectively support student learning in inclusive settings, there are some practices that work against the inclusion of some students and therefore, their academic and social learning needs are not being met. As part of a study that examined friendships and social relationships, four secondary school students with severe physical disabilities, teacher aides and teachers shared their stories. These stories complement other research studies and indicate that some schools are not addressing issues relating to the use of teacher aides. This study provides recent narrative data to inform policy and practice in relation to the use of teacher aides in inclusive settings.

Research paper
Keywords: secondary schools, social relationships, students with disabilities, teacher aides, teacher aide practices, teacher aide roles

INTRODUCTION
Nationally since 1989, and internationally, the use of teacher aides to support students with special educational needs has become a common phenomenon. For many teacher aides their official focus is to support students with their academic learning. However research (e.g. Siperstein & Rickards, 2004) highlights the complementary nature of academic and social learning and so raises questions about the teacher aide role in the wider learning process in the context of inclusive classrooms and schools.

A BIT OF HISTORY
I came to this research from my experience as a primary and a secondary school teacher with a concern over the way teacher aide practices were creating barriers for social inclusion. Traditionally, teacher aides helped the classroom teacher with photocopying, cutting paper, mixing paints and glue, tidying the resource room and so forth. With the passing of the 1989 Education Act, when all children were given the right to enrol in their neighbourhood school; teacher aides were seen as the “solution to inclusion” (Rutherford, 2008, p. 88). From my teaching experience and supported by the literature, I observed that many teachers felt apprehensive about having students who had high needs in their classrooms, and these teachers were relieved when they found that many of these students came with an attached teacher aide (Giangreco, 2003). In these early days, teachers had no pre-service education or professional development in ‘special’ education and did not know how to include the students with disabilities so their social and academic learning needs were met. Later this situation was challenged, and in 2002 in her review of Special Education 2000, Wylie recommended there should be professional development for teachers as part of compulsory pre-service education, and also for teacher aides (Wylie, 2002). However, what evolved in this country and overseas was that we had students with severe needs being ‘taught’ (and indeed many teacher aides took over the education of these students with little guidance from teachers because they did not know what to do or were busy) by untrained people in situations where some students received all their support from teacher aides rather than teachers or peers. In reality, the teacher aide often withdrew the student to another room and provided simple activities depending on the creativity of the teacher aide (Giangreco & Doyle, 2002). This created an ‘out of sight/out of mind’ scenario where the teacher did not take responsibility for the students, and life in the classroom proceeded as before. This was not inclusion; it was barely mainstreaming and a situation that Chapman (1988) had earlier described as “maindumping”; such practices had major implications for students’ social and academic learning.

Although there was legislation so students with special needs could be enrolled in classrooms, often teachers were less than encouraging about having these students in their classes. Anecdotal reports revealed that some SENCOs found it...

1 There has been professional development for pre-service teachers and teacher aides offered through Massey University College of Education, and for teacher aides with private providers.
difficult to place students, especially in secondary schools with the pressures of getting through the curriculum and the assessment system. Villa, Thousand, Meyers, and Nevin (1996) found that these initial attitudes and beliefs changed in a positive way with actual experience of including students with disabilities in their classrooms.

With the development of Support Teams and SENCOs in the 1990s, as well as developing university courses and teacher aide training, some teacher aides took on a more productive teaching role. However, more often than not, teacher aides were still left to take responsibility for students’ with disabilities, so often the success of the venture depended on the knowledge and creativity of the teacher aide (Giangreco, 2003) with the teacher aide role remaining ambivalent and not clearly defined (Howard & Ford, 2007).

Overseas research, for example, Giangreco and Doyle (2002); Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli, and MacFarland (1997) supported the New Zealand experience, reporting that practices excluded children from academic and social learning as well as contact with their teachers: an indicator of successful inclusion is whether academic and social learning goals are being met and expected academic and social progress is being made (Alton-Lee, 2003; Booth & Ainscow, 2002). Recent reviews in New Zealand (ERO, 2008; 2010) report that there are still issues around the variable and effective use of teacher aides for at-risk learners and for those with high needs, with recommendations for sufficient training and professional development of teacher aides within a context of school-wide initiatives: an ecological approach.

Although there has been relatively little research in this country into teacher aide practices, there is a large extant body of literature from overseas researchers (e.g. Booth & Ainscow, 2002 (UK); Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000 (USA); Giangreco, Edelman, Broer, & Doyle, 2001 (USA); Howard & Ford, 2007 (Australia); Skär & Tamm, 2001 (Sweden); Takala, 2007 (Finland). In this country there is a growing body of knowledge into inclusive (and exclusionary) practices (e.g. Alton-Lee, 2003; Kearney, 2009; Maccartney & Morton, 2009; MacArthur, Kelly, & Higgins, 2005; Mentis, Quinn, & Ryba, 2005;) particularly in the area of social relationships (e.g. Higgins, MacArthur, & Kelly, 2009; MacArthur, 2002; MacArthur & Gaffney, 2001a; MacArthur & Gaffney, 2001b; MacArthur & Morton, 1999; Meyer & Bevan-Brown, 2005; Ward, 2008, 2010). Alongside these studies, Rutherford (2008) in New Zealand, and Giangreco, Suter and Doyle (2010) in North America, present extensive literature reviews of the teacher aide/paraprofessional research. However, despite this expansive research evidence, Rutherford (2008) concludes her study of the perspectives of 18 teacher aides and ten students, with the question: “How much evidence do we need before we begin to think and act otherwise?” (p. 250). Much of the overseas research draws on observations and experiences of teachers and teacher aides; in this country there is an increasing trend that recognises the importance of listening to students to hear the stories of their experiences at school (e.g. Higgins, MacArthur & Kelly, 2009; Rutherford, 2008; Ward, 2008). In an earlier article in Kairaranga (see Ward, 2010) I discussed socio-cultural factors that support or create intentional or unintentional barriers (Pivik, McComas, & LaFlamme, 2002) to establishing friendships and positive social relationships. An unintentional barrier can be created through lack of knowledge because of lack of training for teachers and teacher aides; consequently the teacher aides’ role in academic and social learning is ill-defined. The purpose of this article is to focus particularly on teacher aide practices and roles from four students’ perspectives as evidence to highlight practices and roles that directly support, or hinder, social and academic learning. I will also critique how these practices affect their peers’ perceptions of their classmates with disabilities as they ask the question; “Would I like to be friends with him/her?”

In order to contextualise the discussion I will briefly describe my research project and the four students who shared their stories. Drawing on the students’ stories and contextual knowledge gained through observations and interviews with their seven teacher aides and many of their teachers, I will discuss these practices and roles, and the implications of them for social learning with the consequential impact on peers’ perceptions.

THE RESEARCH

My research project involved four students with disabilities in four New Zealand secondary schools: Sam, Adam, Gemma, and Sarah. The purpose of the research study was to explore the nature of friendships and social relationships and examine what these looked/sounded/felt like for the students. I interviewed them four times over two academic years and also interviewed their principals, teachers, teacher aides, parents, some siblings and some peers. I also observed in their classroom and playgrounds. It was evident from their stories that the practices of their teacher aides unwittingly physically hindered their opportunities to interact with their peers and thus their opportunities to make friends and social relationships. Teacher aide practices also affected
the perceptions of students without disabilities towards their peers with disabilities in a negative manner where ‘difference’ was reinforced in a detrimental way. A number of practices that created unintentional barriers to interaction and positive peer perceptions are outlined and illustrated with students’ stories. Four themes relating to teacher aides’ role that emerged from the data are threaded into the discussion:

- teacher aide as facilitator (F)
- teacher aide as academic assistant/support (AcAS)
- teacher aide as physical helper (PH)
- teacher aide as caregiver/mother/friend/counsellor (CMFC).

The four students had physical disabilities and so physical help (PH) was a major factor in the support provided. This was particularly so for Sam and Adam, however Gemma and Sarah also had academic support provided by their teacher aide (AcAS). The role of facilitator (F) was an intentional response that saw the teacher aide deliberately ‘standing back’ to support peer interactions, and the students’ independence.

In the next section I will use some of the participants’ stories to illustrate some of these practices and roles, and invite readers to reflect on these and their own experiences. All the students chose their pseudonyms; I selected the other pseudonyms.

Sam’s teacher aide, who was a trained teacher, had come with him to secondary school from intermediate school. Initially this suited Sam as he found it difficult to settle into the changes at high school and experienced some difficulties with peer relationships. He was dependent on his teacher aide rather than peers for emotional support, and she would counsel him (CMFC) although he was quick to point out: “I don’t need a mother at school!” This contrasts with Rutherford (2008) in her doctoral research, who reported a response from Nell, a teacher aide, who described herself as “a bit of a mother figure really” (p. 160). Sam had poor dexterity in his hands, and although he did not need academic support (AcAS) his teacher aide’s main role was to copy his notes (PH); and she also had the key to the chairlift (PH): …half the problem is that I have to wait…the teacher aide that’s meant to be taking me to class sometimes doesn’t get there till like five minutes after the bell or ten minutes so…it’s like I’m already late but ‘cos I don’t have a key to work the chairlift which I wish I had but they probably don’t trust me with the key.

In Year 11, Sam became more confident, taking more control of his life; however he could see that having a teacher aide affected his peers’ perception of him as a needy, dependent person:

When the teacher aide is not in class it’s kinda cool because then...even though the teacher aide helps you it’s kind of...it kind of feels as if you got...it...it...I know I'm helped but it makes me feel different and like...and I kind of find it hard to just turn around and talk to my friends because people like...especially Mrs Prince...she’s always like watching me and telling me to do my work when no-one else in the classroom is doing their work but I have to do my work and I really want to turn around and talk to my friends and that just gets annoying sometimes but...yeah...so I kind of like being independent and not...but it’s yeah...that’s the way it goes.

Seating arrangements sometimes meant that he was isolated:

I don’t have anyone sitting next to me anyway because normally I used to have a teacher aide sitting there and so the teacher aide sits there and I sit there and so people got used to where they were sitting and I don’t have a teacher aide anymore so like people just sit where they normally sit and no-one sits there.

This echoes the story of another student, Catherine, in a study by Carroll-Lind and Rees (2009) “Even on days where my teacher aide is away, no one will sit with me because that’s my “helper’s seat” (p. 2). So in Year 11 Sam told his teacher aide that he didn’t need her much; he worked hard to write more quickly thus lessening his need for this physical help, and some teachers began to photocopy notes for him so she wouldn’t need to be there:

Well Mrs Prince said to me that she could probably be better utilised somewhere else but if I really needed her then she could stay, but I decided that she could be better used somewhere else.

The teacher aide had shared with me that they were supporting Sam’s desire to be more independent (F). This had begun the previous year when she did not go to Art classes with Sam. I observed in this class that without the teacher aide’s presence, Sam’s peers, as natural supports, helped him when necessary.
Some teachers saw the responsibility for Sam’s learning in their class as theirs, or shared with the teacher aide, however his Year 10 Science teacher said: “I help the teacher aide”, illustrating ill-defined and conflicting teacher/teacher aide roles. Similarly, in Rutherford’s (2008) research, Mack’s story reinforced that some teachers absolved themselves of the responsibility to teach all students (p. 126).

Adam liked his Year 9 teacher aide because “She helps me a lot…she would go out of her way to do stuff” (PH) and had formed a close relationship with her (CMFC). Rutherford (2008) reported similar positive feelings from some of her students, for example, Sophie and Mack, as does Sarah later in this article. Adam had experienced less helpful teacher aides in the past:

At intermediate the teacher aides were meant to be a help to the teachers so I got barely helped…I don’t think that’s fair…no help whatsoever…well yeah sometimes…they helped me write sometimes…high school’s different…they help you properly.

At Adam’s school, teacher aides were changed each year with the rationale that the students did not become too dependent on any individual teacher aide (F) and so in Year 10 he said:

My teacher aide’s not very good. She misses out words. I get annoyed…I don’t like my teacher aide this year…she’s not very nice…the way she talks to me and stuff…she’s rude to people.

He also found that in Year 10 he didn’t have a teacher aide as often as in Year 9 and he was unhappy about that, for example, she didn’t come as often to science, “when we do a science experiment and I can’t do anything” however, he did find that when the teacher aide was not there, his teacher helped him more rather than his peers, but: “Only a few teachers will help me with my work.”

Adam’s form teacher shared her perspective of ill-defined roles with me:

I don’t think in this school at present that ordinary classroom teachers take full responsibility for the learning of students with special needs at all. Gosh…I’m getting myself into trouble here…in many classes I go into, that student is basically excluded from that class. I mean they’re physically in the class but they have no part in it because the teacher feels, right, the teacher aide is responsible for that student; I’m responsible for these students [i.e. the student without disabilities]…and it makes me angry.

For all students, but particularly male students, the constant proximity of a female teacher aide as ‘nanny’, ‘nurse’ (for a ‘sick’ student), or ‘mother’, creates a perception of neediness and difference. A male teacher aide would change the perceptions of peers and may facilitate entrée into boys’ talk and activities. For some female students, the boundaries for female teacher aides and their female students may be blurred, with a friend/co-dependent relationship developing, as we can see from Gemma’s stories.

When I first met Gemma she was in Year 13 and had had the same teacher aide for five years. From my observation and from talking to Gemma, her teachers and the teacher aide I concluded that they had developed a co-dependent relationship (CMFC). Gemma had found it difficult to make friends until Year 12 and so Mrs Graham had become her friend at school. She would also ring her after school if she had any worries or concerns (“She rings me up often when she has problems” – Mrs Graham); she would also ring Gemma to check that she was doing her homework. Mrs Graham appeared to want to be a part of Gemma’s group in Year 13, always taking part in the girls’ conversations and activities, even if Gemma did not need her to be there: “Oh I just flit around… and then I just check on her” (Mrs Graham). She always had a stock of paper, pens, erasers etc and kept Gemma supplied with these; she also became a supplier to all the other girls as well and she seemed to enjoy the students’ dependence on her for these things. Mrs Graham admitted that she organised Gemma and that in Year 13 she was trying to wean her off this (“not harping, harping like I would have done in previous years”) and to be more independent (F), however I observed these practices still happening in several classes.

Gemma’s teacher aide seemed to have taken responsibility for Gemma’s learning (AsAS) as teachers did not plan ahead for her or prepare or order large print material, and would take it upon herself to withdraw Gemma when she felt it was
right and take her to the Learning Centre to work on activities of her making (AsAS). If anything was ‘hard’ Mrs Graham took her off. When I asked her what help Gemma had received for her learning difficulties, she replied: “Just whatever I supply her with”. She elaborated:

Mostly she would go to maths…but we just did the maths in the centre and seeing she wasn’t interested in 30 times 6 or something like that…I would get an Ezibuy magazine or Postie magazine or something similar and say, ‘Look, if you had $20 what could you buy out of here for $20?’ And she would go through the book and find things like that and ‘if there was 10% discount on clothes, how would you work it out?’ That’s how we did maths.

However, some of her teachers felt that this had resulted in Gemma underachieving and leaving school without basic skills, signalling a frustration from a teacher’s perspective with a lack of knowledge about the student’s needs, unclear roles, and how these should be addressed, and suggests that Gemma was a ‘guest’ in the class (Meyer et al., 1998; Schnorr, 1990) whereby the rest of the students in the class did not see Gemma as part of their class and made little attempt to get to know her socially. In one class, Mrs Graham and Gemma sat at the front and away from the other students. When the teacher asked the class to work in groups, Mrs Graham would just work with Gemma (AsAS). This resulted in isolation and a focus on difference, thus affecting peers’ perception of her as ‘other’. As I discussed earlier, the constant presence of a teacher aide in a caring/helper role can be perceived in a negative way; Gemma described how one boy frequently taunted her: “There goes Gemma with her helper lady! Gemma needs a helper lady”. Gemma found this distressing and humiliating.

Reminiscent of Sam’s quotes (and Nell’s in Rutherford, 2008), Gemma described her teacher aide: “She helps me…she’s really, really nice…she’s neat! If I can’t do anything she just does it no trouble…yeah she’s like a mum! We got on really well.” (CMFC). Sarah’s perception of her teacher aides’ role was more clearly defined.

Sarah liked her teacher aides, and saw that their role was to help her with her academic learning:

You can joke with them and fool around with them and then they take it a serious way. They’ve helped me catch up with my work [she felt she was not learning at her previous school]…like if I’m away they’ll write some wall notes down for me and put them in my books for when I get back [Sarah often had time off for illness and stints in hospital]…if the teacher aide didn’t understand my question then I’d just put up my hand and the maths teacher would come over and help [so the teacher aide was the first port of call]: (AcAS).

She spent her first two years at another secondary school and was enjoying her new school. I observed in most of her classes in both years; however, in each class where she had a teacher aide, she sat at the front with the teacher aide creating an ‘island in the mainstream’ with no interaction with the rest of the class. In classes where she did not have a teacher aide she would sit with students who had disabilities. She had no close friends at the school apart from Amy who also had spina bifida (and spent intervals and lunchtimes in the Learning Support Centre) and who was in her maths class; they shared a teacher aide – the teacher aide sat between them and it was hard for them to have conversation ‘through’ the teacher aide. Sarah’s teacher aide talked about when the class was put into groups for a science activity:

We tend to just move in our group. We tend to just stick with us and it’s just the way it goes (AsAS).

This resonates with Gemma’s experience; what could have been an opportunity for Sarah (and Gemma) to work with her peers without disabilities is lost to the “us” and “them” barriers for students learning together.

**DISCUSSION**

During my observations in classes and in interviews with all the teacher aides, I concluded that they were dedicated and well-meaning people who cared about their students and were working towards what they thought were the students’ best interests. Some had received some training however in two of the schools (Gemma’s and Sarah’s) I felt that roles were not clearly defined and that teacher aides were left to assume far greater responsibility for academic learning than they were paid for or trained for. There was little (if any) on-the-job training and support; none of them were included in planning meetings (this would cost more) or specific professional development for ‘their’ student.

In my conversations with all the participants, their stories of teacher aide practices highlighted that this was an area that needs more exploration; it also highlighted that principals, teachers and teacher aides were unsure of their roles and that there are still barriers to inclusive education:
some stories indicated that we had not moved far from the 1990s experiences. Alongside the extant literature, I concluded that teacher aides were an underused resource for a number of reasons: limited teacher aide training; lack of professional development for teachers on how to use teacher aides effectively, and lack of clear role definition, lack of inclusive school policies and ethos, often creating intentional and unintentional barriers to students’ social learning. The students’ voices provide us with important perspectives of their experiences as they work with their teacher aides each day.

Education is not just about academic learning; teachers and teacher aides need to also focus on social learning and the development of key competencies (Ministry of Education, 2007) and this should be achieved within regular schools: “To achieve inclusive education for all children, change is essential – we need better education polices, more positive values and practices in schools, and we need to listen to what disabled students themselves say” (MacArthur, 2009, p. 7). Research (e.g. Siperstein & Rickards, 2004) has shown that students who are happy at school and who enjoy positive social relationships do better academically, so there is a direct relationship between the two. Themes that emerge from literature reviews of friendships and social relationships (for example, Ward & Meyer, in progress) are that children need to be in proximity to each other so they can see similarities as well as differences; they need opportunities to be together in natural situations in order to develop healthy perceptions of each other; and that these opportunities to be in proximity can be facilitated by teachers in the way they structure their classrooms and the learning, and well as the way that teacher aides operate in the classroom and playground. My research (Ward, 2008), and other research, for example, Downing, Ryndak and Clark (2000); Giangreco et al. (1997); MacArthur & Gaffney (2001a); Rutherford (2008), found that often structural and social barriers meant that opportunities for students to work and play together were not facilitated or even thought about, and that practices often worked against students being together, for example, seating arrangements such as ‘islands in the mainstream’ or the teacher aide ‘velcroed to the hip’ of the students and always sitting next to them; withdrawal from the class, and helicopter teacher aides. Other practices that isolate students from their peers are the teacher aide as ‘friend’, and as previously discussed, gender issues. Over-reliance on a teacher aide can lead to separation from classmates as friends and natural supports, an emphasis on ‘difference’; dependence on adults; only talking to adults all day; negative perceptions of students who do not have disabilities and thus a negative impact on peer relations; limitations on receiving competent teaching; exclusion; loss of personal control and in some cases, loss of gender identity.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

By listening to the four students’ experiences of their teacher aides, we learn about a number of practices and ambivalent teacher aide roles that, whether intentional or unintentional, create real barriers for social learning and interactions, and the development of positive social relationships. It is appropriate that the last words should be those of a student:

The teacher draw up the seating plans. They tend to leave a desk [for the teacher aide] just in case, but in the classes like maths and computers where I don’t really need a teacher aide, I have someone sitting next to me. In economics it was fine because I didn’t use the teacher aide very much…then she sat at the back until I needed her so I had someone sitting next to me... you’re being like a normal person. (Adam)

As teachers we must listen to students and their experiences as we reflect on, review, and question our attitudes, exploring barriers whilst seeking to maximise inclusive practices in our schools and classrooms whereby valuing and supporting all students’ academic and social learning in an inclusive context.

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**AUTHOR’S PROFILE**

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ABSTRACT
A single subject design was used to investigate the effectiveness of an increase in teacher behaviour-specific praise statements to address anti-social behaviours demonstrated by a student who displays aggressive behaviours. Researchers agree that praise is effective in improving problem behaviours. They also agree that training teachers to use behaviour-specific praise can increase the level of praise teachers give to students. Baseline assessment was carried out and used to examine the teacher’s use of behaviour-specific praise statements before intervention and the potential influences these statements had on the target child’s aggressive behaviour, participation and engagement. The results indicated that the teacher’s use of specific praise increased, and the child demonstrated positive changes with an increase in appropriate behaviour, and a decrease in aggressive behaviour.

METHODS FOR INCREASING TEACHER PRAISE
In a study, examining the effect of visual performance feedback on teacher use of BSP, Reinke, Lewis-Palmer and Martin (2007) concluded that teachers increased the amount of BSP, significantly decreased the amount of disruptive behaviours in the classroom, and reduced their number of reprimands of students. The findings were consistent with earlier conclusions that BSP is highly effective in reducing antisocial behaviour (Feldman 2003). Other researchers examined the effectiveness of training teachers to use BSP, as well as giving students the opportunity to respond to questions or demands (Moore Partin et al., 2010). They reported that both strategies were highly effective in reducing problem behaviours. They emphasised that teachers need to be reminded to use specific praise. Further, consultation and classroom support were recommended to keep teachers actively using praise.

INTRODUCTION
Behaviour problems often begin at an early age, in some cases before entering preschool (Campbell, 1995). After early onset, it is not uncommon for the behaviour problems to remain stable over time (Campbell & Ewing, 1989). In many cases, students with behaviour problems do not receive intervention early enough to forestall problem behaviour patterns from developing. Thus students may go to school with behaviour problems which hinder their success in school. In other cases, student problem behaviours are not prevented with positive teacher interactions. Researchers investigating disruptive behaviours such as noise-making, blurting out answers, noncompliance, disrespect and aggression have found overwhelming evidence that these behaviours can be reduced through appropriate use of praise (Lampi, Fenty & Beaunae, 2005).

Teacher Praise
To praise is “to comment on the worth of or to express approval or admiration” (Brophy, 1981, p. 5). Praise consists of verbal or written statements that acknowledge desired student behaviour and are manifested in different ways, including making positive statements about a person or an idea that a person has come up with publicly or privately (Gable, Hester, Rock & Hughes, 2009). Praise can be general such as ‘Well done Tom’ after Tom has done something appreciated or it can be specific. Behaviour specific praise (BSP) specifies what is being praised, for example, ‘Awesome Mat for using your gentle hands.’ Researchers have examined the use of BSP in managing behaviour, and have found it to be very effective (Feldman, 2003; Reinke, Lewis-Palmer & Martin, 2007).

Effects of Behaviour Specific Praise
Walker, Colvin and Ramsey (1999) have argued that the use of praise promotes a more positive relationship between teachers and students.
Fewer teacher reprimands towards students and increased positive praise statements can create a more positive and supportive learning environment (Walker, Colvin & Ramsey, ibid.).

Meaningful praise should be given immediately following the appropriate behaviour. By providing praise following the approved behaviour, children who find praise reinforcing will be more likely to engage in the praised behaviours in future (Freeland, 2003). Similarly, Martens, Hiralall, and Bradley (1997), carried out a study to discern the effects of immediate teacher praise on appropriate behaviours. They concluded that using praise immediately following behaviour increased teacher use of praise statements while also increasing students’ targeted replacement behaviours.

Brophy (1971) argued that children like it when adults recognise their efforts, particularly in their early childhood years. This is consistent with recent research which continues to report that specific praise increased appropriate behaviours and decreased antisocial behaviours in early childhood (Fullerton, Conroy & Correa, 2009; Stormont, Smith & Lewis, 2007).

**Barriers to Specific Praise**

Kalis, Vanest and Parker (2007), argued that specific praise was not commonly practised in the classroom despite its effectiveness. Lago-Delello (1998) concluded that students with behaviour problems encounter a high rate of teacher commands and received more reprimands from their teachers for inappropriate behaviours while little attention was given for their appropriate behaviours. Even when the students appeared to comply with teachers’ requests most of the time they were rarely praised for their good work (Jack, et al., 1996; Van Acker, Grant & Henry, 1996). This would suggest that frequently teachers have not recognised children’s appropriate behaviour with positive feedback. Rather, preschool students often receive teacher attention dependent upon their aggressive and disruptive behaviours (McKerchar & Thompson, 2004). The attention the young students receive for antisocial behaviour could reinforce these behaviours, particularly if they only receive attention when they misbehave. However, these students are likely to lose out academically as teachers decrease instructional interaction to avoid triggering and escalating disruptive behaviours (Moore Partin, et al., 2010). Thus students are disadvantaged by lack of positive support for their behaviour as well as minimal instruction.

Use of specific praise has been indicated to be effective in providing positive support for children, particularly in early childhood (Brophy, 1971; Stormont et al., 2007; Fullerton, et al., 2009). Nevertheless, research has shown that as little as 5% of praise statements were behaviour-specific (Anderson, Everton & Brophy, 1979). The purpose of this study was to use behaviour-specific praise in an early childhood centre with a target student we will call Tich and his teacher, who we will call Mona, to examine, (a) teacher use of behaviour-specific praise statements toward a student with aggressive behaviour, (b) the effect of feedback intervention on the rate of the teacher’s behaviour-specific praise and,(c) the effect of the expected increased rate of behaviour-specific praise on Tich’s aggressive behaviour.

**METHOD**

**Participants**

The teacher-participant in this study was a female teacher (Mona). Mona is Māori and has more than twenty years of teaching experience in the early childhood sector. She is currently involved in early childhood teacher training. She was nominated by the team leader and centre manager as a teacher who would be suitable to take part in this study. The student-participant, Tich, is 3 years 9 months old. Tich is also Māori. He was also nominated by the team leader and centre manager as a student who display aggressive behaviours including pushing, punching or hitting. His behaviour problems are mild. He is a full time student at the day care.

**Setting**

The setting is an early childhood centre. It has a total roll of approximately 60 students with eleven teachers including the centre manager. The majority of the teachers are qualified registered teachers, however, some are in training. More specific information about the centre and the teachers has been withheld from this article to protect identities. The philosophy of the centre is that children learn through play and teachers plan according to the children’s interests. Physically, the centre has a huge inside area which consists of a baby area, older children’s area and a food area. A sandpit, climbing structures, swings, a slide, gardens, and a grass area where the children play sports make up the large outside area. Four teachers are assigned to the babies area, three assigned to the older children’s area and three assigned outside at all times. For the purpose of this study, Mona remained in the areas where Tich was playing.
Ethical Considerations

Written voluntary informed consent was sought from the centre manager, the secondary observer, the teacher, and the parents of the child participant through a letter which outlined the purpose of the study, the nature of the study, and the extent of their participation. Robinson and Lai (2006) state that the issue of free informed consent is extremely valuable, which had earlier been stressed by Winter's (1996) assertion that permission must be sought before making observations on individuals. The participants were informed that their anonymity would be protected. Their permission was also requested to publish the results of the research.

Assessment

Baseline assessment took place over five days: Friday, Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday between 9:30 and 9:50 am. Data was collected through direct observation, note taking, and audio recording. Intervention assessment was carried out three days a week - Wednesday, Thursday and Friday - between 9:30 and 9:50 am. Monday was left out because the centre seemed to have many teachers taking Mondays off every week, and Tuesdays were left out because Mona was not in the centre. During the observation time children had free play and were not restricted to any particular area unless it was raining and they all had to be inside. Thus, observations were carried out in different areas of the centre. The children usually had their morning tea between 9.00 and 9:25 am so the 9:30 time was chosen because there would be no disturbances to Tich's food and sleep routines.

Topography of the Problem Behaviour

Baseline observations indicated that Mona frequently reprimanded the children and rarely used praise. Almost every time Tich acted aggressively or in an unacceptable manner Mona would reprimand the child. However, when Tich engaged in pro-social behaviours, Mona did not respond with praise. Tich's aggressive behaviour included pushing, kicking and punching.

Function of the Behaviour

A functional behaviour assessment of Tich’s behaviours indicated that Tich would push, kick or punch so that he could have a turn or because he was frustrated about something. Tich would also behave aggressively if he was provoked. Tich was also gentle with the younger children, particularly crawling babies. He was also a very good helper.

Measurement

Observations of Tich and Mona were carried out for the duration of the 20 minute period. The observer used an A-B-C descriptive data sheet to record the frequency of the dependent variables during each session (Smith & Heflin, 2001). The frequency count was calculated in five minute intervals because of the mildness of the problem behaviour. An anecdotal record of the observations was kept.

Interobserver Agreement

In 30% of the observations across all phases, inter-observer agreement was assessed for the occurrence or non-occurrence of reprimands, BSP and pro-social behaviour. The secondary observer collected inter-observer agreement measures at the same time as the observer. During inter-observer agreement checks, the observer and the secondary observer positioned themselves in places where they could observe without disturbing Mona and Tich. Reliability was measured for recording reprimands, BSP, pro-social and aggressive behaviours by scoring an agreement when both observers recorded identical frequencies of the behaviours during five minute intervals. Inter-observer agreement was calculated for each category by dividing agreements by agreements plus disagreements and multiplying by 100%. The mean agreement was 86% for the occurrence of reprimands, 93% for occurrence of BSP, 83% for occurrence of pro-social behaviours, and 100% for the occurrence of aggressive behaviours.

Dependent Variables

Reprimands were recorded as a frequency count when Mona reprimanded Tich for indicated behaviours. For example, “Tich you are not listening so I am taking that toy off you.” Reprimands were recorded in order to measure the level used by Mona in her practice before and during intervention. Behaviour Specific Praise statements were recorded as frequency counts when Mona gave behaviourally-specific verbal praise directed to the pro-social behaviours of Tich, for example, when Tich asked for a turn instead of pushing to get a turn. Tich’s pro-social behaviours were also recorded as frequency counts. This was done to establish whether there was an increase in pro-social behaviours displayed by Tich during intervention. Pro-social behaviour was defined as behaviour that showed empathy, understanding and accommodated others during play without hurting them. If Tich displayed aggressive behaviour instead of pro-social behaviour, the observer recorded ‘aggressive’ behaviour for that
Independent Variables

BSP served as the independent variable for Tich’s behaviour. The number of BSP statements directed at Tich by Mona towards the replacement behaviours were recorded. Consultation and graphical feedback was given to Mona after baseline assessment. Feedback was repeated after every intervention session. Mona was praised for using BSP. Areas where she could have used BSP but missed that opportunity were also highlighted. Before every intervention session Mona was given examples of BSP statements.

Changing Criterion Design

The changing criterion design (Alberto & Troutman, 2003) was used to analyse the effects of intervention on Mona’s use of BSP statements and the effect of the increased rate of BSP statements on Tich’s aggressive behaviour. This design was chosen because the baseline assessment rate of Mona’s BSP was zero. Therefore, the first criterion was that Mona should give Tich at least two BSP statements when he displayed positive behaviour within the 20 minute session. This criterion was increased by two BSP statement every time the target criterion was reached.

Procedure

Baseline

During the baseline phase, no changes in Mona’s or Tich’s behaviour were made. The sessions consisted of ‘child initiated’ play. Direct observation data were collected on BSP and reprimands by Mona, as well as aggressive and pro-social behaviours displayed by Tich.

Intervention

The intervention consisted of the observer providing Mona with verbal consultation and graphical feedback on the observed rate of BSP recorded during the 20 minute sessions. Before the first intervention observation, the observer met with Mona to report on the rate of BSP observed during baseline. Ideas on how Mona could improve and some examples of BSP statements were provided. Mona was informed of the possible advantages of BSP to students with behaviour problems. A criterion level of at least two BSP statements to start with was set and agreed upon, with a target to increase to at least six BSP statements per 20 minute session. The first criterion was set because of the zero rates in BSP statements during baseline, and the target to six was set because the teacher believed she could reach that level. Before each observation session, the observer met briefly with Mona to show her how much she had used BSP statements. Some examples of how Mona had used BSP statements are provided (Table 1). She was praised for her use of BSP.

RESULTS

Reprimands

The number of reprimands per session given by Mona to Tich is shown in Figure 1. The mean rate of reprimands during baseline was three. This rate decreased to zero during the intervention phase. During week one of intervention, reprimands were used only once and did not occur during weeks two and three.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>Behaviour Specific Praise Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharing toys</td>
<td>&quot;Excellent job sharing the toys you are playing with.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving a hug after bumping into someone accidentally</td>
<td>&quot;Well done Tom for giving Jay a hug and making sure she is ok.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saying sorry after realising you hurt someone</td>
<td>&quot;Wow, awesome work Mau for saying sorry and helping Tim to get up.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping babies on the swing</td>
<td>&quot;Way to go! Helping the young ones, they feel secure because of your help.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gently touch</td>
<td>&quot;Awesome work giving the baby gentle touches.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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**Behaviour-Specific Praise Statements**

The number of BSP statements per session given by the teacher is shown in Figure 2. The mean rate of BSP during baseline was zero. It increased to two during Week one of intervention. The mean rate increased to four during the second intervention phase and further increased to six during Week three.

**Aggressive Behaviours and Pro-social Behaviours**

During baseline, the mean rate of aggressive behaviours was two with a range of two to four within a 20 minute session (Figure 3). During the first intervention phase, the rate decreased to one. This decreased further during phase two of intervention with a rate of zero ranging from zero to one. For the pro-social behaviours, the mean rate of occurrence was zero during baseline, ranging from zero to two. This increased during the first intervention phase to a mean above two, with a range from two to four. During the second intervention phase, pro-social behaviours increased to a mean above four, and in the third week of intervention achieved a mean of six. During the third week of intervention, no feedback was provided because Mona and Tich had both reached target goals. Rather, this phase was used to assess if Mona would maintain the increased level of BSP and whether Tich’s behaviours would remain stable.

**DISCUSSION**

Results from this study were consistent with previous findings on the effect of consultation and graphical feedback on the rate of teacher BSP statements (Moore Partin, et al., 2010; Noel, et al., 2005; Reinke, et al., 2007; Reinke, et al., 2008). It was evident that after the first consultation with Mona, giving her specific examples of BSP and pointing out where she could have used this during baseline, she increased her rate of BSP statements, and decreased the rate of reprimands. This was also consistent with earlier findings by Reinke et al., (2008) that the rate of reprimands decreases as a result of an increase in BSP. Even the classroom atmosphere and rapport changed due to increased rates of praise. There also appeared to be a positive change in the student-teacher relationship and interaction between the teacher and the child (Lago-Delello, 1998). The relationship was now positive. Both teacher and child seemed to understand each other better. Therefore, increased rates of BSP statements enhance pro-social behaviours and reduce...

The teacher’s use of BSP statements met each criterion throughout the intervention phase. During the last phase both the teacher and the student maintained their positive behaviours. Although a high level of aggression was displayed by Tich during baseline this was reduced to a mean rate of zero during the last sessions. The teacher’s use of BSP statements had also increased from a mean rate of zero during baseline to a mean rate of six during the last session. Although Mona was unfamiliar with BSP prior to this study, she seemed to recognise its importance as a behaviour management strategy. She expressed this during one of the consultation feedback sessions when she said, “It really works. I do not even want to go back to my old self. The children are listening to me and respecting me. I am using specific praise with all students now.” These results are encouraging and promising.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are some limitations to the present study which were evident. Firstly, even though the rate of BSP statements increased markedly after intervention, the teacher was also going to class once a week for her studies and during the second week of intervention she had a tutor visit. There is, therefore, a strong possibility that the rapid change might have been due to the fact that she was learning some of the positive methods in class as well as preparing for her lecturer and this possibly contributed to her positive attitude. Secondly, this study focused only on a single teacher and a single student. Therefore, although the teacher did increase her rate of BSP and consequently the student decreased the rate of his aggressive behaviours and increased pro-social behaviours, the findings in this study cannot be generalised. Finally, the parents of this student were working hard towards minimising the child’s aggressive behaviours as well so this might have possibly influenced the positive behaviour change.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The empirical evidence on the effective use of BSP is overwhelming and it counters comments regarding the negative use of praise. It is recommended that teachers use BSP in the education system particularly as reinforcement for those students with behaviour problems. Teachers skilfully and consistently need to use verbal BSP with young children as it has been proven to be effective for them (Brophy, 1971; Stormont, et al. 2007). The skilled use of contingent praise could increase positive behaviour and simultaneously decrease problem behaviours (Moore Partin, et al. 2010). Evidence from this study shows that being specific about the action one is praising resulted in the behaviour being repeated. For example, when Tich was praised for waiting for a turn, he repeated this behaviour.

Given the focus in evidence-based practise, teachers should carry out more experimental research designs for students with behaviour problems in an effort to find the solution through evidence-based practice. As evidence from this study, teachers may encourage pro-social behaviour and decrease antisocial behaviour problems in their classrooms through the use of behaviour-specific praise. To reduce challenging behaviours, teachers should self monitor on their use of behaviour-specific praise. Teachers should form partnerships with parents so that they work together to minimise behaviour problems. In addition, through self-reviews, teachers should investigate events in the research environment that contribute to the effective use of BSP or limit the use of BSP. This will provide for the ecological intervention in children’s learning. This study examined the use of effective praise. It is recommended that schools and other early childhood centres try this approach in their settings to contribute to the positive behaviour for learning in the environment.

In this study, an increase in the teacher’s use of BSP statements resulted in a decrease in aggressive behaviours and an increase in pro-social behaviours for the student. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to use this evidence-based practice in helping students with behaviour problems.

REFERENCES


Thecla Kudakwashe Moffat has a great understanding of young children and their families. She enjoys being involved in professional development alongside supporting the education of young children and their families, so that they can have a brighter future.

She is a registered teacher who has worked in the teaching field for 17 years both overseas and in New Zealand. Thecla has taught in schools and early childhood. She has a teaching diploma, a degree in education management and postgraduate diplomas in Early Years and Special Education.

Thecla is currently studying towards her Masters Degree with Massey University, while also working full time as a teacher and team leader at Apakura Te Kakano. Her passion is to see young children grow and develop their potential. She believes in inclusive education for all regardless of age or gender. She believes that educators can make a difference in individuals’ lives.

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The Long Term Implication of RTLB Support: Listening to the Voices of Student Experiences

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ABSTRACT
Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) have supported more than 15,000 students since RTLB 1999 by assisting teachers to manage and support students with learning or behaviour difficulties within inclusive classroom environments. Research indicates that there are long term positive educational effects for students receiving short-term intervention such as those provided by RTLB. This article reports on a narrative study that explored these effects for a small group of boys in their secondary schooling. The article outlines the study and its key results. One significant finding is consideration for how immigrant students are transitioned into NZ schooling.

Research paper

Keywords: Boys in schools, immigrant students, narrative research, needs analysis, RTLB, RTLB training

INTRODUCTION
This article is about Poobie’s inquiry in 2008/2009 that explored the perspectives of six secondary school students who had been supported by an RTLB in the past. The study captured the experiences of the students with RTLBs, their difficulties in school both past and present, and how they were currently coping with school through their narratives. Paul joined the process as Poobie’s supervisor. The article is written in the first person by Poobie.

BACKGROUND
Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour were established in New Zealand schools in 1999 as part of the Special Education 2000 (SE2000) policy. This service is a school-based resource that provides itinerant specialist support to schools to work with regular class teachers to improve the educational outcomes for students with moderate learning and/or behavioural difficulties (Ministry of Education, 1999; Walker et al., 1999). The RTLB works with individual students, groups of students, teachers, or with whole school systems (Ministry of Education, 2001). RTLBs can be seen as consultant teachers who have developed ways to work collaboratively with schools, teachers, parents and students to promote and establish an inclusive education system (Fancy, 1999; Thomson, 1998).

I was motivated to do this inquiry for three reasons. Firstly, in reflecting on my role as an RTLB, I often wondered about the impact we made on the students we supported. Was there a lasting positive impression? Have we really made a difference? How were the students coping with school after we had ended our support? I was keen to find out whether our interventions had a lasting, positive effect. This interest was also influenced by Church’s (2003) report that the most appropriate way to measure the effectiveness of interventions “is to measure intervention outcomes for several years following completion of the initial intervention” (p. 11).

BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS
The aim of SE2000 was to achieve an “inclusive education system that provided learning opportunities of equal quality to all students” (Ministry of Education, 1997, p. 5). The RTLB service established as part of the SE2000 initiative was aimed at assisting schools and teachers to be able to provide relevant learning contexts for all students. However, achieving the aim of including all students is a daunting task with behaviour, social and/or emotional problems presenting the biggest challenge (Rouse, 2006). Although it has been claimed that a lack of knowledge attributed to lack of training is one of the main barriers to inclusion, Florian and Rouse (2001) found that teachers do not lack knowledge of effective teaching strategies, but they seem unaware that prescriptive teaching approaches are not effective with students of differing abilities. It is positive teacher attitudes and appropriate teaching strategies that determine the success of an inclusive classroom (ibid). The role of an RTLB includes supporting classroom teachers in...
assessing students’ needs and developing learning programmes or behaviour plans to overcome difficulties that individuals or group of students may have through collaborative planning and implementation. Therefore as an RTLB the primary questions that drove my inquiry was:

1. What were the students’ experiences with the RTLB?
2. What were their current experiences of school life?

The questions were intentionally broad in nature because I wanted to keep the inquiry as open as possible to ensure that the participants’ narratives were not constrained in any way. Underpinning the research questions was a genuine desire to obtain insights that would inform ways in which RTLB services could be enhanced, particularly in my cluster.

**METHODOLOGY**

... Children talk ... but their words are rarely listened to and leave no trace. Giving a voice to childhood thus means recognising children’s right to be the primary authors of their lives. (Allodi, 2002)

I was motivated by the research undertaken by the University of Waikato – “Te Kotahitanga: The Experiences of Year 9 and 10 Maori Students in Mainstream Classrooms: Report to the Ministry of Education” (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003), in which the researchers gathered narratives of students’ classroom experience by the process of ‘collaborative storying’ (Bishop, 1996; 1997). I was particularly interested in the Te Kotahitanga approach of listening to the stories of students’ classroom experiences and the subsequent development of the rest of the project.

I was keen to hear the stories of six students - their experiences with interventions by an RTLB and their current experiences of school, long after the RTLB support had ended. I was aware that this inquiry was based on the subjective experiences of the student participants and their perceptions of their lives, narrated through their stories. I was also aware that the interpretation and analysis of those experiences relied on my own meaning-making as a researcher. However, the importance of the subjective experience of individuals in the creation of the social world is summed up quite succinctly by Cohen, Marion and Morrison, (2007) who state that “the principal concern is with an understanding of the way in which the individual creates, modifies and interprets the world in which he or she finds himself or herself” (p. 8).

A narrative approach methodology (Casey, 1995; Chase, 2005) was chosen because it allowed the stories of the students to be told in their own voices. Since I wanted to listen to the stories of the participants the interview method was chosen as the methodological tool to collect the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Kvale, 1996; 2007). Interviews are practical yet powerful in attempting to understand the “world from the participants’ point of view and to try to unfold the meaning of their experiences” (Kvale, 2007, p. xvii). The principles of a narrative guided the construction, presentation and application of the interviews. The interviews were audiotaped. Interview data were transcribed and retold as stories in collaboration with the individual participants and formed the narrative text of the research (Merriam, 1998), while the analysis of the stories formed the discussion in response to the questions that initiated this inquiry.

**Participant Selection**

There were two criteria for participant selection. Firstly, they must have received RTLB support in the past, and second, they must be reasonably articulate to ensure that I had information-rich cases for this study that examined meanings, interpretations and perceptions (Rice & Ezzy, 2000). The names of possible participants were obtained from the RTLB cluster’s database which held the names of all students who had been on the RTLB roll since 1999. I intended to have 15 possible participants, selecting 10 students to participate in the study and five students’ in reserve in case one or more students from the initial selection were unable to participate. However, it was only possible to select 10 students who met the above criteria and still remained at school. There were eight boys and two girls.

Prior to commencing the research I met with the school administrator, responsible for pastoral care and special programmes, and obtained the necessary permission to undertake the inquiry in the school. The two girls were excluded from participation because of their high level of anxiety. The group was made up of four students who were born in New Zealand and four students who were not New Zealand born. I met with the eight boys briefly and discussed the project. One boy chose not to participate. This was the first and only time that the boys met as a group. It was obvious from the interaction during the meeting, that there were no friends within the group and that the students did not know each other very well, apart from seeing each other during the normal course of the school day. Subsequent contact with the boys was on an individual basis and pseudonyms were used to maintain anonymity. The choice
However, for the purposes of this article, only the discussion in response to the research questions are examined.

**What were the students' experiences with the RTLB?**

The storied experiences provided information on whether the students had a recollection of the RTLB who worked with them and were able to recall specific interventions to address their needs. The students had varied recollections of the RTLB:

- "In Year 5, I was referred to the RTLB who helped me quite a bit." (Anthony)
- "Then I got referred to the RTLB, I can't remember her surname though, but I went to her, not so much for getting sent out of class but for just not doing my work." (Henry)
- "And the work was a lot harder; we had to do a lot more writing, and I wasn't used to that. That's when I got extra help from the RTLB; I can't remember her name though." (Murray)
- "The school did refer me to this lady [reference to RTLB] who tried to put me in one day school, for talented kids." (Jeff)
- "But, then I got a teacher aide [referring to the RTLB], I think that's because my mom asked for one." (Greg)

Anthony, Henry and Murray were able to provide substantial details of their interactions with the RTLBs. All three acknowledged that the support was helpful and that it had an impact on their current school experiences. For example, Anthony talked about the RTLB engaging him in specific exercises for memory and eye concentration, as well as checking in on him.

- "I did quite a bit of memory things, like memory card games and then she did spelling. She also came into the class and checked on how I was doing. So in Years 5 and 6, I started to get better." (Anthony)

The other students reported similar experiences:

- "My time with the RTLB was good because we started talking about things; not a lot about problems with the teachers but always about motivation and why I was not working - stuff like that. Yeah, it was very nice and it also made me feel like someone was concerned and listening to me. Anyhow, I found it quite useful." (Henry)
Both Anthony and Murray experienced learning difficulties very early in school. Anthony realised that he had learning problems when he was in Years 3 and 4 because he had great difficulty learning maths and spelling:

> I went to the local primary school and I remember in Years 3 and 4, I started having a real rough time understanding maths and spelling. I felt really embarrassed asking people how to spell simple words and always got really low scores. I didn’t want to try, because I didn’t want to feel like I got it wrong. (Anthony)

Murray struggled academically in all his classes because of the misunderstanding and mismatch between the New Zealand and the education systems out of the country he came from.

> When we came to New Zealand I went to a local school and was put into Year 3 straight away. I then completed Year 4 and half of Year 5. Funny thing, in [name of the country he came from] I was in Grade 1 but when I came here I went straight to Year 3. I missed out on two years and I really struggled to keep up with all of the other children, so my mom and dad moved me to another school. At the other school I got moved back a year, to Year 4, so that I could try to keep up with the other children in that year. After I did Year 4, I was sent back to Year 3. So I did Year 3 again and then went back to Year 4. Halfway through Year 4, I got moved straight to Year 6. I did not do Year 5. It was quite confusing, but I had extra help and kind of caught up with kids a little bit younger than my age group. I kind of coped though. I think by doing Years 3 and 4 again helped me catch up with my reading and maths. Year 6 was quite difficult, because all the kids were the same age as me and I wasn’t used to hanging out with older kids like the same age as me. So I was kind of like quite scared. And the work was a lot harder; we had to do a lot more writing, and I wasn’t used to that. That’s when I got extra help from the RTLB. (Murray)

However, both acknowledged that the extra support they received had a major influence on their learning.

Two other students, Sam and Greg, could not recall their interactions with the RTLB. However, all participants acknowledged having either learning or behaviour difficulties prior to RTLB involvement, although Sam was the least vocal about his learning difficulties and stood out from the rest as being the least interested in the academic part of school. His most exciting experience of school was when he started drumming lessons and belonged to the school band. When his music was not encouraged at secondary school he frequently stayed home to play on the computer or listen to music. He began to show an interest in school again when he took Music Studies in Year 10.

The short period of time that RTLB work with students is crucial in establishing meaningful relationships and providing positive expectations for the students (Macfarlane, 2007). Although the students did not remember the RTLB per se in this inquiry, they were positive about the nature of assistance they received which appeared to have had positive outcomes for them (Macfarlane, 2003, 2007). It could be argued that given a great length of time had passed and that RTLB are expected to work more with teachers than students, not remembering them could be quite acceptable.

**What were their current experiences of school life?**

All six participants reported that their current experiences of school were positive despite continuing to have some difficulties. Anthony, Murray and Greg were positive about their achievements at school and all three of them attributed a part of their progress and success in learning to their RTLB intervention. As Murray reflected... “I reckon that from where I was to now, there’s been a big, big improvement in my work. I couldn’t even read and write at all but right now I am capable of reading and checking the book and stuff”.

Anthony also made great improvement in his reading and had writing support for his exams. Greg was focused on completing Year 13 and had minimised his disruptive behaviours. Greg finished Year 13 successfully and is currently undertaking further study.
Jeff continued to excel in his academic work but still had some difficulties interacting socially. Sam was also more positive about school and was quite involved in his Music Studies until early 2010 when he dropped out of school. Henry continues to have some minor behaviour difficulties at school but has not been excluded from any classes this current year.

**DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

This inquiry revealed positive experiences of RTLB intervention for six secondary school students, although some continue to have difficulties at school. While the RTLB had been perceived in a positive manner by those students who remembered the RTLB and their interventions, this inquiry also highlighted the need for RTLBs to be proactive in developing meaningful relationships with students (like Sam) and make them more aware of the purpose of RTLB involvement. There was also some evidence to support the impact of the interventions in the long term:

> And then in Year 10, I got a reader-writer for my exams. I passed all my papers, except maths. I didn’t get to finish the paper, because I struggled with some questions and stuff. I was, however, able to use the things that the RTLB taught like memory and all that, it helped me memorise all the equations and stuff. (Anthony)

An incidental finding through the stories of the non New Zealand students highlighted the structural differences in the two education systems. In adjusting to the New Zealand education system these students presented with learning and behaviour difficulties. The finding implied that RTLBs need to be aware of immigrant students’ level of readiness for the New Zealand Education System when working with them.

**CONCLUSION**

This research was driven by a search for answers on the long-term impact that RTLBs had on the learning of students’ who were on their roll. The inquiry found the long-term impact to be variable, with the greatest impact being with students who had a meaningful relationship with the RTLB. Although it was a small study, the enlightening voices from the six narratives offered an interesting insight into the lives of these students and in some small way, may influence RTLBs work with children.

**REFERENCES**


**AUTHORS’ PROFILES**

**Poobie Pillay**

Poobie Pillay is an RTLB in the Northern Bays cluster based in Torbay, Auckland. He started his teaching career in South Africa as a qualified physical education teacher. He then qualified as a school counsellor and spent several years as a counsellor in a secondary school. In 1996 he moved to New Zealand and took up a post in South Auckland as a Guidance and Learning Unit teacher before becoming an RTLB when the transformation occurred in 1999. From 2001-2004 he taught in a Behavioural and Emotionally Disabled class in the USA before returning to New Zealand to take up his current position.

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Weaving educational threads. Weaving educational practice.

WHAT EXPERT TEACHERS DO – ENHANCING PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE FOR CLASSROOM PRACTICE

John Loughran, Professor of Curriculum and Pedagogy, Monash University

The preface of this book highlights its ethos and for me its usefulness for practitioners in that it quite rightly recognises and celebrates the expertise of classroom teachers. This book focuses on classroom practitioners and how they may articulate their practice in order to improve the learning of their students. Loughran argues that if we can articulate our expertise to ourselves and the wider community, just how we manage to teach things to the 25 divergent and different students we face in each lesson then we can claim to be specialists and perhaps experts. He champions teacher reflection and research as vehicles through which we can identify patterns in our practice. It is through this naming and framing that we can guide our practice and ultimately enhance the quality of our teaching, and foster more meaningful student learning. The stand out for me in Loughran’s framework, held within this text, is his view to the better valuing of teachers and teaching.

This book is organised into three sections. In Section One we are introduced to three chapters which explore teaching, learning and pedagogy. While these contain ‘friendly reminders’ about the key theorists underpinning much in accepted teacher training programmes, Loughran has written about them in new ways. He draws threads through the key players - Bloom, Goleman, Budd Rowe, Gardner, Piaget and Vygotsky which remind us just how useful they continue to be in building our practice and articulating our frameworks of guidance. In this section we are introduced to a technique Loughran has used throughout this text - that of using ‘real teachers’ reflection diaries to emphasise or illustrate a point he is trying to make. This technique is extremely helpful as it not only lends credibility to Loughran’s central argument – that teachers have knowledge about, and can articulate their practice, and that counts as academic knowledge - but serves to deepen the readers knowledge about the explored concept.

Section Two is described as ‘Knowledge of Practice in Action.’ This section explores a variety of teaching tools to support students’ learning such as utilising their prior knowledge an underpinning philosophy in New Zealand education in programmes such as Te Kotahitanga, where we seek to harness the cultural and social knowledge of our Māori students, so long overlooked and possibly discounted. Loughran discusses many techniques, such as mind maps, think-pair-share, chunking grids, and PMI exercises. This section explores much of the current thinking about cognition and ends with a chapter about metacognition which helps the reader to focus on ways in which students and ourselves could develop the skills of planning, monitoring and evaluating.

The final section of the text is about professional learning through reflection, teacher research and professional development that enhances our professional skill levels. Loughran continues his use of teacher diaries to great effect and also his argument that teacher research is a valid and reliable way to add to the body of knowledge about teaching and learning practices. He reminds us that teaching is ‘untorgivingly complex’ and that while absolutes make useful headlines they are not much use in the ‘real world’ of classrooms: a comforting thought for RTLBs as we work alongside colleagues, students and families in the multiple levels of readiness that we find them at when we arrive to provide our support, advice and guidance. Loughran builds a useful argument through this text that I believe will support the practice of RTLBs as we work in collaborative consultation with our teachers, students and their families. He validates that our ‘research’, as we develop interventions and theories-of-action to support young people challenged by the schooling system is valid and should be celebrated. It is the articulation of this theory-of-action, underpinned by sound pedagogical research and enhanced by reflection that will be the key to our success as we weave together the ecological aspects in our casework.

REVIEWER’S PROFILE

Cath Steeghs is an RTLB in the Fairfield Cluster in Hamilton. She is a member of the Kairaranga Editorial Board and has worked with and for the journal since its inception. Currently she is working with a cluster secondary school as a Te Kotahitanga facilitator and continuing her casework within cluster schools.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Title: What expert teachers do – Enhancing professional knowledge for classroom practice
Author: John Loughran, Professor of Curriculum and Pedagogy, Monash University
Publication Dates: 2010
Publisher: Allen & Unwin, Australia
Price: NZ$59.00
TEACHING READING VOCABULARY
Tom Nicholson and Sue Dymock

This is another book in a series that has been written by Nicholson and Dymock. Earlier publications have focused on teaching comprehension whereas this book focuses more specifically on teaching vocabulary, although it is often difficult to separate the two in the classroom.

In the introduction the authors correctly note that this book is written not only for teachers but also “for anyone who wants to improve their vocabulary” (p. 1). The authors also link the text to the New Zealand education environment. This is apparent in the introduction where the authors make links between the teaching of vocabulary skills and their relevance to the recently published Reading & Writing Standards. The teaching of vocabulary skills have often been ignored when we discuss literacy teaching, so it’s opportune to have a text that focuses predominantly on this important aspect of literacy.

The book is clearly divided into two main sections (Theory and Practice). The Theory section (Chapters 1-3) discusses the theoretical understanding of the nature of English and how it relates to and impacts on the teaching of vocabulary. The second (Practice) section (Chapters 4-9) focuses on the practical teaching implications for developing vocabulary knowledge in the classroom.

Chapter 1 covers a brief history of the development of English words. I could see that this particular chapter also has relevance for teachers in helping them to understand not only the teaching of vocabulary but also to an understanding of the decoding and spelling processes as well. The importance of vocabulary development to general language development and how words are learnt are the focus of Chapter 2. The importance of having a good level of vocabulary knowledge as a factor in reading comprehension is also made clear in the text. Catering for diverse learners is the focus of Chapter 3 and here the authors discuss some of the challenges facing English as second language learners (although I suspect that most of these challenges are identical for many natural English learners as well). The importance of ‘oral-rich’, ‘visual-rich’ and ‘print-rich’ class environments is of relevance to any learner and not specifically for English second language learners.

The Practice section (Chapters 4-9) present well-structured sequences of teaching ideas that teachers should find particularly relevant for their classes. Separate chapters focus on Reading (Chapter 4), Structural Analysis (Chapter 5) Concept Mapping (Chapter 6), Multiple Word Meanings (Chapter 7) and Dictionary & Thesaurus Use (Chapter 8). The final chapter (Reflections) is a general summary of the text.

The book contains many useful and relevant citations from the research literature and teachers should find the teaching suggestions and tasks particularly helpful. The book presents an equal balance between the theory and the practice.

The only issue that I have is that there is little attention given to the assessment of vocabulary knowledge. Although there are two pages (36-38) that briefly discuss the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and the New Zealand PAT (Vocabulary) and the STAR test, I thought that a more detailed discussion of vocabulary assessment measures (and how they could inform teaching practice) may have been included. However, this book should form a valuable resource for all those who are interested in teaching or learning about vocabulary skills.

REVIEWER’S PROFILE
Keith Greaney
Dr Keith Greaney is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Educational Studies at Massey University College of Education where he teaches both undergraduate and postgraduate papers in literacy. He also researches in the area of literacy learning difficulties. Before coming to Massey he taught for 28 years in primary schools including as an RTR (now RT:Lit) for 12 years.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DATA
Title: Teaching Reading Vocabulary
Author: Tom Nicholson and Sue Dymock
Publication Dates: 2010
Publisher: NZCER Press, Wellington
Price: unknown
ISBN: 9781877398629
Hello everyone,

Please save the date of 22 and 23 November, 2011 for the 4th Annual Educational Psychology Forum. The theme of this year’s Forum is Increasing Evidence-Based Services for ALL Populations. Strands include response to trauma, systemic change/school-wide interventions, cultural considerations in service delivery including service delivery to Maori, Pasifika, rural schools and migrants/refugees, and professional issues. Keynote speakers confirmed include Dr. Dan Reschly from Vanderbilt University (USA), Dr. Wally Penetito, Victoria University, and Dr. David Fergusson from the University of Otago Medical School. There will also be several free workshops on topics ranging from using ABA with children with autism or ID, cognitive behavior therapy (CBT and Trauma-Focused CBT), and interventions for reading. The conference will be held on the Massey campus in Albany at the beautiful Sir Neil Waters building with a cocktail party on the evening of the 22nd.

PLEASE SAVE THE DATE!! The website where you can register should be up and running in mid-April. All, including emails to 2010 attendees, will be notified as soon as the site goes up. If anyone has any questions at this time, please contact Dr. Steve Little at s.little@massey.ac.nz or phone at 09 414-1595.
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  b) Minor editorial revision by the author.
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• Reviews will reach the Kairaranga address by the date published on the letter of invitation.
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