The word kairaranga (the weaver) has an important association with special education. In the early 1990s the role of kairaranga was created at the SES National Office to provide support and advice about Maori to the CEO of the time, Ross Wilson. Matewai McCudden was the first person to hold the kairaranga position. Together Matewai and a Maori SES Board member Alva Kapa, were instrumental in spearheading the Tangata Whenua policy for all SES staff. Wai Harawira joined Matewai as the second kairaranga. Together they began a move that would see more Maori expertise and staff brought into the organisation. This would include the Kaitakawaenga positions. Wai Harawira was in the advisory group that worked with the RTLB trainers when they were developing the bicultural component of their training programme. It was from this advisory group that the name kairaranga was passed across to the RTLB. The kairaranga positions were disestablished when the SES CEO position changed.

Mere Berryman, Manager, Poutama Pounamu Education Research and Development Centre, Ministry of Education.

In 1998 when the RTLB professional development curriculum was being designed, the management team from a consortium of universities approached the Maori caucus to offer a title befitting the RTLB role. The Maori caucus at that time was represented by most iwi, each of whom was an experienced educator. This group considered that collaboratively consulting with the schools and the communities, along with the involvement of students and teachers were an integral part of the RTLB role. The metaphor of a ‘weaver’ or ‘kairaranga’ was discussed, and was seen as compatible with the professional practice of the RTLB. Like the skilled weaver, the RTLB must introduce facts and details pertaining to learning and behaviour phenomena, working towards a plan that formed into a connected whole. It takes a number of interlaced threads to form a fabric.

Angus Macfarlane, Senior Lecturer, School of Education, University of Waikato.

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Editorial

Kairaranga has a history of sharing stories on effective educational practice that supports learners and teachers in New Zealand schools. It has been the Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) journal for five years, developed by a group of RTLBs committed to sharing and disseminating examples of effective and interesting practices.

Through sheer hard work, tenacity, perseverance and a central belief in practitioners, learners and educators, the former editorial board for this journal developed a journal that they now willingly share and co-work with the Ministry of Education and the new Editorial Team involving representatives from a range of universities and research institutes. Therefore the journal is now going through a transition period to enter into a new era of celebrating practice in partnership with the Ministry of Education – Group Special Education (GSE). As with all change, it has been an evolving, dynamic process requiring us to question, challenge and shake all our assumptions about what we mean by educational practice, and to re-examine and build on the integrity of the original intent of the journal.

Kairaranga – Weaving educational threads. Weaving educational practice is a journal that actively seeks to celebrate the work undertaken in New Zealand schools, early childhood centres and homes to support the learning, social and cultural achievements of all children and young people. To hear the voices of those taking part in supporting the next generation, this journal of educational practice is a means to hear and learn from practitioners, teachers, specialists and families, and learners themselves, about how best to support the needs we all have – the need to learn, to live in a diverse society, the need to be respected for who we are, and the need to be valued and loved. Learners with impairments have often been part of disabling environments and societies, and continue to do so where a context prevents them from getting their needs met. For many learners, marginalising and exclusionary practices occur on a daily basis – often insidious and unquestioned.

This journal of educational practice seeks to provide a range of stories, research articles, and position papers to explore issues around learning, to provide a forum for debate and dialogue, and for looking at New Zealand practices. Irrespective of our role in education, individually we need to have a sense of ownership of both the process and the outcomes for all our work, at every level. Such ownership is appropriate, indeed necessary, since our own internal professional sense of accountability for excellence is more powerful than external sources of accountability or compliance measures.

As we enter into an era of evidence-based policy and evidence-based practice, we need to examine and question what constitutes evidence. If we are to solely place confidence and trust in research, we lose much valued evidence in the hands of children and young people, their families, teachers and those practitioners that work with them. We see this as an important source of evidence that combined with research and other forms of evidence help inform and support decisions for assessments and interventions. Therefore this journal is an important mechanism to share different forms of evidence.

In the first issue of Kairaranga – Weaving educational threads. Weaving educational practice we bring you a diverse selection of papers and book reviews highlighting experiences of those working in special education, and hearing the voices of children and young people.

Everyone is capable of instilling excitement, hope and opportunity for learners. We hope this is one way to acknowledge and talk about what works, for our kids, in New Zealand schools and early childhood settings. We wish you well in your work, and want you to enjoy reading and sharing this issue as much as we have enjoyed the process of bringing it to you.

Cath Newdick (RTLB) and Roseanna Bourke (MOE) on behalf of the Editorial Board and Team

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A Shackled Heart:  
Teacher Aides’ Experience of Supporting Students with High Needs in Regular Classes  
Chris Tutty and Clare Hocking.

ABSTRACT
The purpose of this study was to seek understanding of the experience of those who support students with high needs in regular classes. Seven teacher aides were interviewed, with the interview and data analysis guided by Heideggerian phenomenology. The findings reveal that teacher aides are unprepared for the responsibility or the relationship that develops with students. The nature of this relationship is brought to light, revealing meaning for teacher aides’ mode of caring and how they provide support. As they embody experiences of the student as their own, teacher aides feel “one step away from mother”. Their support goes beyond the boundaries of the school day, as they constantly worry and plan ahead. Their hearts are shackled. Serious concerns arise for teacher aides and students when there is an absence of awareness and acknowledgement of the nature of the relationship being created.

Key Words: teacher aides’ experience, students, high needs, phenomenology, ORRS.

INTRODUCTION
Within the context of education in Aotearoa, New Zealand, special education policy has been subject to constant review since 1990. In 1997, the Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Schemes (ORRS) was established to support students who have very high or high ongoing special educational needs. This Ministry of Education initiative was “to provide extra teaching, specialist programming and education support, wherever they attend school” (Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 2). For many of these students, the majority of support is provided by a teacher aide, and is often for a considerable part of the day.

This study arose from the first author’s experience as an occupational therapist, conducting classroom observations as part of assessment of students’ environments. I became aware that teacher aides often appeared to be taking responsibility for much of the students’ day-to-day learning and management, also supporting them in the playground, the toilet and at meal times. They appeared to impact on students’ relationships with peers and with the teacher. As an occupational therapist, I was concerned with the ways “other occupations support or hinder the person, and how they might better provide support” (Hocking, 2001, p. 465). I was also aware that where teacher aides’ occupations sit alongside those of the student, it is often difficult to see clearly where the balance shifts from supporting to hindering a student’s inclusion.

The focus of this study was therefore to seek understanding of teacher aides’ experience of being with a student with high needs on a daily basis in New Zealand classrooms. Its purpose was to reveal what that experience tells us about how teacher aides provide this support. The teacher aides who participated worked in the context of regular Year One to Eight classrooms, where they supported students identified as requiring significant ongoing resourcing to access the curriculum.

LITERATURE REVIEW
As a result of pressure from both parents and teachers to ensure the inclusion for students with high education support needs, teacher aide hours have increased internationally. This trend has continued to a point where teacher aides, also known as paraprofessionals and paraeducators, have become the main method of implementing inclusive practices in many schools (Giangreco, Broer & Edelman, 1999; Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli & McFarland, 1997). Furthermore, it appears that teacher aides are being given increasing responsibility for the education of students, and are taking responsibility for the success of a student’s inclusion (Giangreco et al., 1997; Marks, Schrader & Levine, 1999).

Many studies have identified practices that in effect inhibit or work against the goals of inclusion for the student and the teacher. These identify that practices introduced to support inclusion, as in having a teacher aide full time with a student, may in fact be counter productive, with teacher aides remaining unnecessarily in close proximity to the student (Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman & Schattman, 1993; Giangreco et al., 1997; Hemmingsson, Borell & Gustavsson, 2003; Meyer & Fisher, 1999; Rose, 2000).

This finding is supported by the limited number of studies that have focused exclusively on the endemic perspective of teacher aides (Downing, Ryndak and Clark, 2000; Marks et al., 1999). One revealed that many teacher aides assume responsibility for both the student’s learning and behavioural needs, in order for the student to succeed and not disrupt the class or the teacher. They protect the teacher from the “burden” of the student, assuming a liaison role between others involved in the student’s school life. They feel like the expert, the one who knows the student best. Shared responsibility for the student seems to be the missing link in this example of inclusive practice (Marks et al. 1999). In addition, concerns have been raised about the extent to which teacher aides take responsibility for adapting...
programmes, and make decisions to take students out of class to prevent disruptions (Downing et al., 2000).

“TEACHER AIDES ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR BOTH THE STUDENT’S LEARNING AND BEHAVIOURAL NEEDS IN ORDER FOR THE STUDENT TO SUCCEED AND NOT DISRUPT THE CLASS OR THE TEACHERS.”

It is apparent, however, that the New Zealand situation differs from that found overseas. Here, ORRS funding is attached to individual students and teacher aides are not required to have a relevant tertiary qualification. Therefore previous findings may not be directly applicable, although Wylie (2000) reported that schools in New Zealand have voiced similar concerns.

METHODOLOGY

In order to better understand teacher aides’ experience of supporting children with high needs in New Zealand regular classes, seven teacher aides were interviewed. A phenomenological philosophy guided the process of inquiring about and interpreting their descriptions of supporting students for the major part of the school day. Phenomenological methodology demands attentiveness to details and dimensions of everyday experience that may seem trivial. This attentiveness allows us to be “thoughtfully aware of the consequential in the inconsequential, the significant in the taken-for-granted” (Van Manen, 1984, p. 36), and gives rise to shared experiences and themes revealed by research of this nature.

The research process

The process extended from what was known or anticipated prior to the study, to examining the implications and truth of what was uncovered. This included identifying personal biases and pre-understandings in an attempt to prevent these influencing interpretations.

The participants all had more than one year of recent experience working with a student who has high needs and ORRS funding in a regular primary school classroom. The students had a wide range of disabilities, from primarily physical to those with more challenging behaviour or cognitive delay. All teacher aides supported their student for the greater part of the school day.

Interviews were guided by the fundamental question of how teacher aides’ experience supporting these children. They were asked to describe specific examples of supporting the student and their experience while doing this. The intent was to capture stories, anecdotes, incidents and experiences, however little structure was applied within the interviews in order to encourage rich disclosure and fluency. Transcripts were analysed using a thematic interpretative process, with an initial focus on Van Manen’s (1990) four existentials of lived space (spatiality), lived time (temporality), lived body (corporeality) and lived other (relationality) to guide reflections and gain a deeper understanding of the experience. Heidegger’s (1962) notion of ‘concern’ as a mode of being-in-the-world, and Levinas’s (1998) notion of ‘caring encounter’ informed the interpretation.

FINDINGS

The findings of this study reveal that teacher aides begin supporting students unprepared for the responsibility and the journey they will travel. “Being in the world of school” means living alongside the student, sharing their daily experiences (Heidegger, 1962). It means experiencing their life-world or everyday existence (Van Manen, 1984). Within the life-world of these teacher aides, lived body, lived time, lived space and lived other are intricately linked, with one impacting on the other.

Corporeality: Carrying another.

Corporeality refers to being bodily in the world (Van Manen, 1990). For these teacher aides, to support their student is to be alongside them in a classroom. They juggle for the right place to situate themselves, as they attempt being as inconspicuous as possible. They try being “there but not there” to support when needed but to avoid having their student and others in the class engage with them unnecessarily. Teacher aides regularly experience loneliness and isolation, doing activities with their student in a different place and time to the rest of the school, with no one with whom to share their emotions and thoughts. They sometimes embody this feeling as a cocoon around themselves and the student, as Sharon and her student did when sharing an experience.

I remember an incident when we’d been banished from the class because there’d been an accident. Peter ran into the trolley of paint powder, and so I was told to take him away while it was cleaned up. I got quite angry. I thought “to have that trolley there, paint unlidded, it was an accident about to happen”. Anyone could have done it, but because it was Peter, he was singled out. I was really angry that he was being picked on. I felt they were picking on me as well.

So we took refuge under a tree, on a bench. I sat and cuddled him, I was feeling very sad for him. It was just he and I against the world, that’s how it was. It started to thunder. I began to sing. “I hear thunder…..” He stopped, and he listened. He started to join in. So from that time on, if it became stressful in the classroom, if on the mat he touches someone, and they say “please move him”, I would take him aside, and we would sing.

Sharon and Peter are bound, in some way parcelled together. What impacts on one, impacts on the other; feeling picked on and singled out. There is a sense of being treated differently and being excluded. They look for shelter; protection from the storm in the classroom, yet outside another storm is brewing. They hear thunder. To protect the student, Sharon wraps him in her arms, shutting out the world by singing to him. They sit entwined in another world in their cocoon. Having discovered the warmth of this
encapsulating environment, they have a safe haven to return to at other times of trouble.

"THEY JUGGLE FOR THE RIGHT PLACE TO SITUE THEMSELVES AS THEY ATTEMPT BEING AS INCONSPICUOUS AS POSSIBLE. THEY TRY BEING THERE BUT NOT THERE."

Providing this level of safety is physically and emotionally demanding and teacher aides often experience exhaustion at the end of the day. A student that runs often means the teacher aide must run with them. To do this day after day is tiring, as is shouldering the continuous responsibility of watching a student to ensure he or she is accepted in the classroom. Joan described the burden as a weight on her shoulders that she lived with, unaware of its physicality until a day her student was absent. To carry this weight day after day is draining, the responsibility of doing so an encumbering worry. These findings highlight the fear and concern these teacher aides live with day-to-day.

Corporeality: Living with thrownness.

Being in situations where possibilities present themselves, where things just happen, is to live with thrownness (Heidegger, 1962). While life is a series of thrown experiences for all of us, for these teacher aides it seems that unpredictability sits alongside them for the greater part of the day. Many times they feel without choice or control, being totally unprepared for what the day or the student might present. They frequently find themselves in situations where they must act or react, with no time or ability to grasp the full implications or consequences of their actions, as Shirley explains.

"Often the activities we do are dictated by her mood on the day. If she pushes the activity away, I have to put it aside and do something else. If I’m not prepared, I can think ‘Oh God, what can I do next?’ I’ve got no-one to enthuse me, to bounce ideas off. If you’re not in the right mood, it can be horrendous, because it’s just her and me. You can get a bit down really, as she sort of throws things at you, and you think ‘I can’t handle this today.’ I might put her on the swing and push her a bit. And not talk much."

When the student rejects the activities Shirley has ready-to-hand, she finds herself unprepared and resorts to repetitive activities that are soothing for both. Shirley uses the silence to retreat. As she lives each day in a constant state of flux, she is unsure of her ability to stay afloat.

"FOR THESE TEACHER AIDES IT SEEMS THAT UNPREDICTABILITY SITS ALONGSIDE THEM FOR THE GREATER PART OF THE DAY."

When these teacher aides have resources and strategies ready-to-hand, they feel prepared for most eventualities and in control. The day has some predictability, and they can support the student positively. Conversely, when they don’t have adequate resources or strategies to use, they feel anxious, uncomfortable, and stressed. Being unprepared leaves them exposed to risks of being unsafe and sometimes gives rise to despair. The responsibility they feel demands that they remain on the alert and ready to respond, despite their own fatigue and anxiety.

Temporality: Living by a different clock.

Temporality is a notion showing how time is subjective, experienced differently depending on the situation. For these teacher aides, time both flies, leaving insufficient time, yet on other occasions it can drag. Teacher aides also experience being out of time with others. In addition, they find that asking for time from others in the school to discuss concerns is difficult. This often results in catching people on the run, while preparing for class or on the way to morning tea or lunch. This gives a pervasive sense of not being valued, of being less important than others.

Finding time for things others take for granted is also difficult when it depends on someone else being available to keep an eye on the student. Sharon reported:

"I remember asking one teacher if she could sit with Peter, as I needed to go to the toilet. I thought, “This is ridiculous, having to ask to go to the toilet.” When I got back she said “This can’t happen again, the minute you went out he tried to run away.” But at times I need the loo. I know he used to play up when I went out, so as I left the classroom I’d think to myself “If I run to the toilet, and I run back, I will only be gone two minutes.”

Sharon fears the havoc she creates by leaving her student and feels guilty for disrupting the teacher. She runs, worrying all the time about what may be occurring in the classroom. She goes, then runs back, but the responsibility travels with her.

When fearing for a student’s safety, as in running to the toilet or when a student goes missing in the playground, time has a different perspective. Two minutes can feel like an enormous expanse of time when it is filled with images of things that might be occurring. Within this unreality of time, multitudes of possibilities are created in the thoughts of the teacher aide.

These experiences of lived time being out of time with others are paralleled by the past and future having different meanings for many of the students supported by those in this study. As these teacher aides reflect back on where their student has come from to where they are now, they often see the gap widening between their student’s learning and that of their peers.

Spatiality: Being always present.

Spatiality, which refers to the way we experience or feel space, is of particular relevance to teacher aides as they move about the classroom, the playground and the toilet. They alter space to support their student’s learning and independence; they both create space, and confine it.
“WHEN FEARING FOR A STUDENT’S SAFETY, TIME HAS A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE, TWO MINUTES CAN FEEL LIKE AN ENORMOUS EXPANSE.”

Space can be experienced through a range of emotions. It can feel safe, or unsafe, comfortable and “at home” or uncomfortable. It changes when viewed through the eyes of another, yet for these teacher aides the private space of the student’s toilet and separate teaching area is often considered as if viewed through the eyes of another. They are conscious of how others might see the situation. Repeated references to the media “hearing about it” and misinterpreting the situation suggest that these teacher aides feel in an unsafe space, even though they believe their actions are safe.

In addition, how classroom spaces are experienced depends on where they and their student work in relation to the rest of the class and whether the student is doing the same learning activity as the other students.

In the classroom, we used to sit with the other kids when they were younger. I was right there alongside the teacher’s desk, with the other students around us. This year we’ve got the computers behind us, and the book place in front of us. As she gets older, we get more and more detached, because what they’re doing is way beyond what we’re doing. As you’re getting up in class and the more structured it is, it is just way above Julie’s head. The gap gets wider, and we move further away.

Shirley and her student now find themselves moved from having other students and the teacher around them, to having furniture to keep them company. The book place and computers have replaced bodies, shutting them off. They have been detached, severed.

“AS SHE GETS OLDER WE GET MORE AND MORE DETACHED (FROM THE OTHER STUDENTS). AS THE GAP GETS WIDER WE MOVE FURTHER AWAY."

The outdoor space of the playground can also be problematic. Its expanse of space can provide opportunity to relax and temporarily shed the burden of controlling the student’s every movement. However, if their student has no personal boundaries or awareness of danger, this space confronts the teacher aide with a plethora of anticipated dangers.

Relationality: The caring encounter with the student.
The relationships between teacher aides form with the teacher and other school staff, visiting professionals, the parents, and particularly the student were highly significant in this study. While the nature of these relationships varies, they are experienced by teacher aides through interactions with the student or conversely lack of interaction. How relationships are viewed often depends on whether people come and spend time alongside the student, showing willingness to get to know his or her reality. Sharing this reality connected others to teacher aides as they had experienced what it is like for the student and for them. This created some shared understanding.

The nature of the teacher aides’ relationship with students can be typified as a “caring encounter”. While many were initially unsure of their willingness to work with a student with high needs, once the child’s vulnerability was encountered there was a commitment to supporting the student. Many felt “called” or “chosen”. Levinas (1998) describes this as the original caring encounter, where the other is experienced as making an appeal on them. The very core of these teacher aides had been touched. The child had made a claim on them before they had a chance to cognitively process or think about it. They had already experienced responsibility before they knew it. As a result, they are totally there for the child. They have been taken hostage: the more they care, the more they worry, and the more their commitment to continuing to work with the student strengthens.

For example, Joan experienced the pain of her student separating from his mother, so took on the mothering role of “being there” in the way he seemed to immediately need.

When I started with him, on the first day, he sat outside the room. He just sat up against the wall and screamed. I thought, “Oh, no, what have I done?” Then we went through this phase of him clutching at me, and he wouldn’t let me out of his sight. For morning tea, for lunch, he was just like a limpet, stuck to me. And I couldn’t do a thing, I couldn’t move. In the end the teacher said I had to leave him and take a break. I felt really guilty walking out with him screaming. I really struggled with that, but I had to, as much for me as for him.

She stays with him, attached physically and emotionally as he clings to her. It’s as though a string pulls her towards him. She feels his pain as her own as she walks away, feeling responsible for his distress.

This commitment grips teacher aides in a way they would never have predicted when they agreed to work with the student. What impacts on one, impacts on the other. When one is banned from the class, so is the other. Teacher aides embody the student’s feelings as their own. For instance, Sharon felt “really hurt when [other students] laughed” at ‘her student’ when he did as they said and pulled down his pants.

Being so in tune with their student, teacher aides are directly affected by their moods. They try to read the student’s mood as soon as he or she arrives at school, to predict how their day might be. When the student doesn’t say anything, nor looks them in the eye, “it’s going to be a tough day”. There is little sense of choice, nor do teacher aides feel able to change it. They share the mood. It invades both their beings.

Much of their caring involves a sense of knowing their students: connecting with them, sensing their needs and feelings. Teacher aides believe they know the student better than anyone else in the school. In attempting to describe
their relationship, the nearest many can come to defining it is "one step away from mother." Shirley describes this intimate way of knowing how it is for her student. "I'm quite attached to her. You get to understand each other, and because I'm "one step away from mother", I've got that control. We've just bonded really; you have this little separate bond, so you know."

"THE VERY CORE OF THE TEACHER AIDES HAD BEEN TOUCHED. THE CHILD HAD MADE A CLAIM ON THEM BEFORE THEY HAD A CHANCE TO COGNITIVELY PROCESS OR THINK ABOUT IT."

The bond that is created with the student holds the teacher aide and demands of them in ways that encompass their thoughts, their time and their emotions. They feel responsible for the student's being and assume responsibility for the student's deeds and misdeeds. This bonding to the student creates a responsibility that many teacher aides find themselves unable to voluntarily relinquish. For many, it means having the student "with them" at all times, as they think about the student outside the nine to three school day. They carry them, taking them home with them, constantly in their minds. Their hearts are shackled. It would seem that their being is so entwined with that of the student that the "commitment to the other" is felt like "being as one." This appears to be the essence of the relationship between these teacher aides and their students, and one that impacts on all dimensions of their role in supporting the student.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study support the concern others have expressed, that having a teacher aide assigned for the greater part of the day to one student may be counter-productive to inclusion (Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman & Schattman, 1993; Giangreco et al, 1997; Hemmingsson, Borell & Gustavsson, 2003; Meyer & Fisher, 1999; Rose, 2000). It raises the question of whether this is best practice. The study also provides insight into the relationship between the teacher aide and the student, and how this relationship impacts on the way teacher aides provide support. There are implications here for all concerned with the student and the teacher aide.

Implications for outside service providers.

For those from Special Education or any other outside service provider, making a difference for students means taking time to be part of and participate in the day-to-day happenings and the student's life at school, which is also the life of the teacher aide. The study reveals that asking teacher aides what is important, and listening to their stories of how it is, will allow a more enlightened perspective on what is occurring and why. Making a difference may depend on teacher aides perceiving there is mutual respect and shared understanding of their reality because this is the starting point for working collaboratively. However, working directly with teacher aides as the primary source of information about the student and recipient of educational and behavioural strategies, may perpetuate a situation of teachers being unable to take responsibility for students. The current funding model of dedicated teacher aides would seem to make this quandary insoluble. One strategy to ensure that teacher aides are not further isolated by their lack of responsibility for educational collaboration may be to plan and implement professional seminars for school staff that require teacher aides and teachers to attend together.

Implications for schools.

It seems that in focusing on the student and his or her needs, concern for the welfare of teacher aides and how they might be incorporated into school-wide and class-wide practice has been limited. However, understanding the nature of the initial encounter of teacher aide and student, where the teacher aide meets the student in their vulnerability, means awareness of teacher aides' own vulnerability. Putting steps in place to shift this focus might avoid the teacher aide feeling the need to assume total responsibility.

Alongside this, careful consideration needs to be given to how the teacher aide can primarily support the teacher, rather than the student (Downing et al, 2000). In this way strategies for including the student and avoiding dependence on one adult can be created, with greater opportunities for the teacher to work with the student while the teacher aide supports others.

Implications for planning: Individual Education Plans.

An IEP is a prime opportunity for collaboration, with the teacher aide being a vital member of the team. Creative practice and problem solving through IEPs regarding goals for increasing participation might mean a reduced need for one on one teacher aide support. Small group work with the student included would decrease opportunity for the student to become over-dependent on the teacher aide.

The implication for teachers and specialist teachers is that they might consider alternative strategies within the class to include all students and to encourage equal participation. If the specialist teacher worked more within the classroom, sharing responsibility for the student's learning and participation, this would allow the teacher to work more with the student.

Limitations of this study.

This study drew from a small sample of seven teacher aides, in different schools with different students, therefore the extent to which these findings can be generalized to other areas and other teacher aides is unknown. A particular limitation of this study was that all participants were women. While this is indicative of the majority of teacher aides, there are some men in this role, and their experience may be different. In addition, there was only one participant who identified as Maori, therefore the cultural mix of this study is not representative of the New Zealand population nor the cultural mix of teacher aides.

A further limitation is that the study focused on teacher aides supporting students in Year One to Six classrooms. It is
anticipated that the situation in secondary school, where there are multiple teachers and classrooms, might be very different. Similarly, many teacher aides work in other educational contexts, including special schools, satellite units, physically disabled units, and Kura Kaupapa Maori*. Research in these areas would add another dimension to knowledge and understanding of how teacher aides support students.

CONCLUSION

Interpretive analysis of the experiences of seven female teacher aides employed to support students with high or very high needs in regular classrooms in New Zealand revealed concerns similar to those identified in overseas studies. Current practice of providing a dedicated teacher aide to work with individual students results in a high level of isolation within the school setting. As they sit alongside their student, ever present to support learning and manage their behaviour, a close relationship develops. Teacher aides take on personal responsibility for all their student’s needs and emotions.

“WHAT IMPACTS ON ONE, IMPACTS ON THE OTHER. WHEN ONE IS BANNED FROM THE CLASS, SO IS THE OTHER.”

In addition to supporting the student’s educational achievements, teacher aides divert the student into activities designed to reduce disruption to the teacher and other students. They provide assistance with eating and toileting and ensure the safety of both the student they support and other students in the playground. They provide a protective cocoon against teasing by other students and reprimands by the teacher, feeling they are also hurt and reprimanded. They feel unprepared for the responsibility they are given, frequently finding themselves in situations where they must react quickly with no time or ability to grasp the full consequences of their actions.

Nonetheless they sense that the things they do are open to misinterpretation and they feel vulnerable because of this. The work is experienced as physically and emotionally demanding, yet teacher aides are committed to supporting their student, frequently thinking and worrying about them, and preparing activities for them outside the paid school hours.

While the findings of this study may not generalize to other situations, and may not reflect the experience of male teacher aides and those working with older students or in other settings, they are nonetheless worrying. They imply that outside service providers must work closely with teacher aides but that doing so may perpetuate the tendency for teacher aides to come between teachers and students with high needs. They also suggest that inclusion of teachers and teacher aides in professional development seminars and school-based strategies to integrate teacher aides into the wider school community, are required. However, whether such strategies can effectively address the extent to which teacher aides become emotionally shackled to the student they work with is unclear. The fundamental issue raised by this study is whether the practice of having teacher aides assist a single student, rather than assisting the teacher to provide learning to a class that includes a student with high needs, needs urgent consideration.

REFERENCES


* Kura Kaupapa Maori – Primary schools where teaching and learning includes the culture and language of Maori.


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Bringing up Father

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On Saturday night our family went out for dinner and my eighteen year old son ordered a bottle of beer. This was a courageous act because we are (or were) a family of teetotallers and the abstention goes back through the generations.

The situation was well handled with only a little ragging to relieve the surprise and tension. During the disturbed night that followed I came to several conclusions. Firstly, it was apparent that a significant step had been taken with all sorts of reverberations, both petty and profound. Amongst the trivial considerations, I now asked myself whether I would need to continue buying Coca Cola with the weekly shop. The larger issues included the impact of the solitary bottle of beer on the conduct of the younger members of the family.

The second set of conclusions was more philosophical, as I endeavoured to place the evening’s event into some sort of larger context and to derive some lessons from it. It seemed to me that the beer-drinking episode was but the most recent of a long series of educative experiences that my offspring have inflicted upon me.

“AMONGST THE TRIVIAL CONSIDERATIONS, I NOW ASKED MYSELF WHETHER I WOULD NEED TO CONTINUE BUYING COCOA COLA WITH THE WEEKLY SHOP.”

To the extent that parenting is thought about seriously at all, it is something that adults do to children. Parents model and manage behaviour and children conform (and rebel) accordingly. Very true, but as well, children are major modifiers of their parents’ behaviour.

In the human development literature this is referred to an interaction effect, a bi-directional influence, or reciprocal socialisation. The process starts at the child’s birth (or before) and it probably continues until the parent dies, when the parenting role is finally relinquished. The points I would like to make here concern the significance, both personal and social, of the contributions that children make to adult development.

What do parents think they get from parenting? Answers to this question probably cover opportunities to care and nurture, to rediscover childhood joys and reaffirm family connections, and to achieve continuity and have purpose. In fact, the pre-eminent gains of parenting may not be in terms of these satisfactions and, rather, have more to do with the knowledge and behaviour change that experience provides and demands.

“AS WELL AS BEING MORE IN TOUCH THROUGH THEIR CHILDREN, EXPERIENCED PARENTS COULD ALSO BE MORE PSYCHOLOGICALLY RESILIENT INDIVIDUALS. CARE GIVING IS A COMPREHENSIVE STRESSOR….”

Of course, parenting is not some sort of standard treatment for the adult involved. People will get different things from it depending on their situation, and this includes the extent of their involvement. Raising a number children, both boys and girls, is obviously quite different from being the parent of a singleton.

Oftentimes, parenting prompts new social involvements and important relationships are formed. Indeed, the connections that are made around a child’s birth and in the preschool years can be extraordinarily enduring. The positive consequences associated with the new social relationships include support for parenting and important knowledge about the child’s world.

It is suggested that parents are particularly ‘in touch’ people. Sons and daughters introduce them, successively, to the current interests and concerns of babyhood, infancy, childhood, adolescence, young adulthood and beyond. This is more than head knowledge that might be obtained indirectly. It is a felt experience, as we share our children’s hopes and attainments, and disappointments and losses.

As well as being more in touch through their children, experienced parents could also be more psychologically resilient individuals. Care giving is a comprehensive stressor with continuing and changing physical, emotional, and intellectual demands. Those who meet the trials and tests of child rearing may cope better with subsequent challenges and adversities.

Other careers (i.e. in the paid workforce) can also confer psychological resilience. However, parenting is distinct in the extent of its demands for selflessness and in the regularity with which adults respond to these demands. Hence, the resilience that is achieved at home is likely to be different too and perhaps it is in an increased capacity to cope with obligations to other people. Mothers and Fathers can report enhanced time management abilities and by this they usually mean that they are better able to balance the expectations of a job and the requirements of a family.

To social relevance and psychological resilience I would now like to add wisdom as a possible outcome of parenthood.
Wisdom is more than knowing a thing or two in the evening of life. It is exceptional insight and judgement concerning human affairs. This advanced practical intelligence depends on an understanding of people's needs and motives, on an appreciation of the importance of context to decision making, and on a commitment to the wellbeing of others.

Parenting is probably unparalleled in its potential to provide training in wisdom's prerequisite abilities. Caring for children and adolescents offers close and graduated perceptions about people and circumstances and the upshot can be greater empathy and acceptance. Like the other attributes that have been discussed, wisdom blends knowledge and emotion and it is an answer to the dangers associated with unfettered intellect and unbridled sentiment.

The case that parenting contributes to adult development has important implications for society. Aside from the colossally significant task of providing for the next generation, parenting very probably empowers and enables adults and it ensures that there is a wellspring of caring within the community.

We might acknowledge that society is richer for parenting by seeing employees with children, including people returning to the workforce, as possessing an additional qualification. Some jobs and positions will benefit more than others from the experience of parenting and it would seem especially relevant to human service occupations and to leadership roles.

"PARENTING IS PROBABLY UNPARALLELED IN ITS POTENTIAL TO PROVIDE TRAINING IN WISDOM'S PREREQUISITE ABILITIES."

At the least, the choice to have children is not on the same level as the decision to travel overseas or to buy a boat, where it currently seems to languish. Parenting is often a choice behaviour but it comes with substantial physical, financial and emotional costs. It also brings frightening risks. Ask any mother with postnatal depression or caregivers of an antisocial adolescent. Another difference between parenting and lifestyle choices is that the community generally benefits and, again, this is quite apart from the fact that parents produce new people.

And what of my eighteen year old and his initiation of our family into drinking? I make no claim to wisdom or resilience related to the event. I may now have a few more insights about young people and alcohol. There's also the germ of a conviction that what is good enough for my son to do is worthy of closer consideration by the older generation. Now, that would be a radical shift in social behaviour, prompted by a rarely acknowledged source.

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ABSTRACT
The Ministry of Education’s policy, Special Education 2000 (SE 2000) was intended to promote a model that ensured all students received an education that involved successful experiences (Ministry of Education, 1996). Students with Asperger Syndrome (AS) often have difficulty adapting to and achieving these successful experiences in their educational environment. This paper summarises the findings from a research project that was designed to investigate the issues that arise for students with AS, determine whether or not these experiences are generally positive or negative, and examine to what extent teachers have knowledge of AS. Data was gathered from interviews with three students, their parents and their teachers and a survey to examine teacher knowledge. Data was also gathered from nine interviews and twenty-nine questionnaires. This paper reports on the data gathered from the interviews. The emerging issues were: Difficulties accessing the curriculum, social difficulties, misunderstanding of parents’ roles, teacher responsibility, bullying, lack of teacher aide support, placement difficulties and sensory and environmental factors. The study concluded that the educational experience of the students was generally negative. The level of teacher knowledge was low, although the majority of teachers expressed an interest in gaining further knowledge.

INTRODUCTION
In the last few years in New Zealand the significance of AS has been recognised. It is only now that research is taking place which will identify effective teaching practise that will enable students with AS to have more successful educational experiences. This project was undertaken as a contribution towards the research of effective practise in the classrooms of New Zealand schools.

According to Tony Attwood, (1998) the prevailing view of Asperger Syndrome is that it is a variant of Autism and a Pervasive Developmental Disorder. That is, it affects the development of the student across a wide range of abilities. The characteristics of AS vary between each individual in degrees and unique combinations (Ministry of Education, 2000; Tsai, 1997). Diagnostic criteria include difficulties in the areas of social communication, social interaction and social imagination (Cumine, Leach & Stevenson, 1998). There are also difficulties in motor co-ordination skills (Attwood, 1998). As diagnostic procedures are improving, more students are being identified with AS (Tsai, 1997). In a study in 1993, Ehlers and Gillberg indicated the incidence of AS to be around one in 300 children (cited in Attwood, 1998). There is some discussion that this may be a conservative estimate and the incidence may be even greater (Attwood, 1998; Bauer, 1996; Myles & Adreon, 2001; Tsai, 1997).

The majority of students with AS are educated in regular classes in New Zealand, where an inclusive education philosophy determines that all classrooms will have an array of diversity. In this environment some students require additional support (Stainback & Stainback, 1998; Rymer, 2002). In the Education Guidelines for Implementing Special Education 2000, Special Education is defined as “…the provision of extra assistance, adapted programmes or learning environments, specialised equipment or materials to support young children and school children with accessing the curriculum in a range of settings” (cited in Rymer, 2002. p. 5). Students with AS have been identified as needing the provision of ‘Special Education’, (Attwood, 1998; Ministry of Education, 2000) and therefore it is imperative they are provided with the means to access the curriculum in their classrooms. At the time of this research there was very little literature available on the experience of students with AS and that of their parents and teachers in regular classroom settings. The inclusion of AS students in the everyday classroom environment although common in New Zealand is less common overseas.
From the author’s experience in Special Education in New Zealand, there is a critical gap between the needs of the students with AS and the support provided to enable equal access to the curriculum. Therefore the issues that arise for these students and their parents and teachers need to be identified and addressed.

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The project had specific aims:

1. To identify the major issues and factors that emerge as significant for students with AS in their educational experiences and setting.
2. To identify whether the educational experience has been positive or negative for students with AS.

The research questions included:

1. What are the common issues that emerge from the educational experiences of students with AS?
   - What is the nature of these issues?
   - Are they generally positive or negative?
2. How is the educational experience of students with AS influenced by:
   a. Teacher knowledge of AS
   b. Social difficulties experienced by the student
   c. Environmental factors
   d. Learning difficulties

The original research project had two phases. The first phase involved interviewing three students with AS, their parents and teachers. The transcripts were recorded and reported verbatim. There were nine participants in total. The students were boys aged 12, 8 and 6 years. The names of the students have been changed to protect anonymity. The pseudonyms are Peter, Daniel and John. The research sample was obtained through the local Asperger and Autism Support group and participants were chosen to represent a cross-section of ages and school environments. The students had all received a medical diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome. The second phase involved a questionnaire which was distributed to teachers at the schools at which the participant students attended. This paper will report on the first phase of the research.

RESULTS

Eight common issues were identified.

These were:
1. Accessing the curriculum
2. Environmental and sensory factors
3. Social skills/friendships
4. Teacher Aide support
5. Parents role and relationships
6. Teachers role and responsibilities
7. Placement difficulties
8. Bullying

1. Accessing the Curriculum

It is necessary to make some major adaptations to how the curriculum is presented to allow students with Asperger Syndrome to access it successfully (Atwood, 1998). Peter’s mother pointed out the implications of Asperger Syndrome for him:

“He would be a bit more up there with what everyone else is doing if he were normal. He would know routines and be doing what the others are doing, like writing and reading, opening his lunch box and things. I don’t think he would be a genius but he tries the best with what he’s got… Everything he does is going to take a lot more effort. He needs directions for everything, like sit on a chair, pick up your pen. Then there’s all the step by step stuff before he can write. It just takes so long. He needs to have someone direct him for all of that” (Parent 3).

People with AS are often intelligent and talented (Atwood, 1998). A person with little knowledge of AS may assume there is no disability and the person is being ‘naughty’ when in reality they are reacting to stress or anxiety or are unable to communicate their needs effectively. It is not unusual for a student with AS to be a very able reader or mathematician, but be unable to write their ideas down on paper, to sequence their thoughts or to express an informed opinion on a subject that holds no real interest to them. Teacher instructions are commonly perceived as meaningless by students with AS.

Resulting non-compliance can cause a level of frustration both from the student’s and the teacher’s perspective that can be intense and the cause of much anxiety.

“I don’t think he has any learning difficulties really. Just that problem with his writing. He’s a bit lazy though. He’ll avoid doing anything he can but sometimes he’ll do some really great stuff” (Teacher 1).

“When he is tired he tends to get stressed and agitated. He doesn’t like it when things don’t go his way. He likes routine but he likes to do what he wants to do, he wants to set the routine” (Teacher 3).

Access to technology such as a laptop or Alpha-Smart has given students with AS with fine-motor and organising difficulties the opportunity to succeed. A resistant attitude to the provision of this support is common as the student who needs it is often very competent in other areas.

Students with AS may find it difficult to make the transition from one area of the curriculum to another (Atwood, 1998). The use of strategies such as visual schedules assists the student to cope but this requires some knowledge on the part of the teacher. Preparing the student for change by the use of visual schedules or timers can be effective in reducing anxiety but can also increase anxiety if the student is worried about completing a specific task in the time allowed. The student may be more concerned with the schedule or timer than with the activity they are expected to complete (Cumine, Leach & Stevenson, 1998).
Physical Education appeared to be a source of anxiety for one student. It was not uncommon to find the student ‘forgetting’ his PE gear whenever he could get away with it.

“If I could change anything I’d take PE out of the picture because it’s a major cause of stress” (Teacher 1).

An alternative programme to develop skills and learn the rules of the games could assist the student to feel more confident and able to join in the class programme.

Two of the three students indicated that they would like to leave school and be educated at home. Both indicated it would be easier for them to learn if they didn’t have the distractions of the classroom to contend with.

2. Environmental /Sensory


All three students indicated a problem. It is difficult for students with this sensitivity to focus and remain on task if they are in a noisy environment.

“That’s why I get earache. It hurts my ears” (Daniel). “I’m always sitting at the front and that’s annoying. I’m forced to sit there. I get too distracted. There are too many loud noises at the front” (John).

Sensory sensitivity with touch, light, smell and taste commonly causes difficulties in the classroom. Teachers need to be aware of seating arrangements to cater for light, noise and visual distractions. Difficulties with eating, particularly at a younger age, can affect lunchtimes. For Daniel, lunchtime was so unpleasant he didn’t want to discuss it at all.

3. Social skills/Friendships

All students in the study had difficulty working with others, as the following teacher quote indicates.

“I don’t usually work him in a group because he can’t seem to get it done, although he’s OK working with just one other boy. He tends to take over a bit though.” (Parent 2).

All nine participants emphasised the importance of friends. The three students mentioned the fun they had with friends. Attwood, (1990) stresses the importance of helping to find friends with common interests and suggests friendships with other children with AS with similar areas of special interest are worth exploring. It is important to provide the assistance to promote these friendships and to develop the necessary skills to communicate and maintain relationships (Howlin, Baron-Cohen & Hadwin, 1999). The dissonance of wanting to belong but not being able to understand what is required to do so, may easily create a situation where the student with AS finds school a very negative environment in which to spend their days. Also the anti-social behaviours and frustrations that arise from the syndrome may be sufficient to prompt the school to reject the student. Although AS may be regarded as undesirable, special talents or interests as a result of the syndrome may provide increased social acceptance (Attwood, 1998).

4. Teacher Aide support

Seven of the nine participants stressed the difficulties arising from a lack of teacher aide support. Generally interventions require some form of 1-1 support either by a skilled specialist or a teacher aide who often develops the most supportive relationship with the student (Cumine, Leach & Stevenson, 1998). It is surprising then to note that in some cases the teacher aide was excluded from IEPs. The lack of support was a major issue to emerge from the transcripts and was seen by teachers and parents alike as the answer to many of the difficulties their children have in accessing the curriculum.

Daniel’s parent noted,

“I think he’s doing OK but he could be doing better. If an avenue could be found for him to succeed I think a lot of his anxiety would go. He’s got the ability. He under-achieves, has distractibility, inability to focus. He has really poor organisational skills. He focuses on the detail rather than the big picture. Perfectionism is a real problem. I think we should give them more support and teacher aides. They need more flexibility and more choices. The schools should be able to use more funding to be flexible with. Most of the Asperger kids are not ORRS funded” (Parent 2).

All three teachers expressed frustration at not being able to provide the specific programme they thought the students should be having. Peter’s teacher commented, “Time. He needs a lot more time… one on one than the other children do” (Teacher 2).

The source of special needs funding support for students who are in regular classes in New Zealand is generally limited to the Special Education Grant (SEG), Ongoing Reviewable Resourcing Scheme (ORRS) and Learning Support funding (LSF). Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) are frequently involved but the needs of AS students are generally not recognised as severe enough to attract individual funding such as ORRS.

5. Parents Role and Relationships.

All three parents were advocates for their children’s support and actively involved in the IEP process. They had developed an extensive knowledge of AS. All expressed concern over staff attitudes toward them. The parents had played an important role in providing information, but the general perception of the parents was that they were not appreciated as supports. Two teachers stated the students would benefit from less involvement with their parents at school. One mother, discouraged by the teacher from being in the classroom, reluctantly kept her distance. All parents wanted to be more involved with providing information and skills for the people involved in teaching their children.

6. Teachers Role and Responsibility

Parents all felt the teacher’s responsibility was to provide a special programme that met the particular needs of their child. They expected the teacher to be interested enough to want to learn. They wanted the teacher to provide a safe environment to teach social skills to the student.
Communication about what was happening at school was also a high priority as the parents thought the students were unable to give enough information. One parent stated, “My major concern is communication between home and school. Peter won’t tell me what is happening. I can only tell by his behaviour” (Parent 3).

The students expected the teachers to keep them safe from bullying by doing something about the other students. There was a high correlation between positive student comments and relationships with teachers. “It feels good when you meet someone who does understand you” (Daniel). “I like Mr Greg cos he keeps everything the same and doesn’t change anything” (John).

The teachers’ main expectations for themselves revolved around meeting the students’ academic and social needs. They were all concerned with learning about the syndrome and were considering the student’s special needs e.g. seating, noise levels and curriculum expectations. All teachers felt there was more they should be doing.

7. Placement
All three students had a negative start to their educational experience. The difficulties Peter’s parents had finding a suitable placement for him started at pre-school. They then visited seven schools before choosing Manu. John’s parents moved him to a different school after the first year. At the time of the interview they talked about moving to another city to find somewhere where his developing needs would be addressed. Daniel’s parents had moved him to several schools and at the time of the interview were resigned to the level of support he was receiving.

“The first four years were terrible, lots of problems. I transferred him to another school. That was much, much better. They concentrated more on trying to meet Daniel’s needs rather than trying to fit him into the model they were presenting” (Parent 2).

There are very few placement choices for parents who have children with special needs in New Zealand other than the regular classroom. However, the needs they have will not be addressed in a regular classroom without support. The parents all expressed sincere concern about their options and two of the students expressed an interest in being educated at home. All three parents considered social and friendship needs as more critical than academic priorities when considering placements, although opportunities for academic achievement were important also.

8. Bullying
Bullying was a major problem to the students and is in one case the main focus of his school memories.

“My school life is mostly negative because all throughout my school life I've been bullied, bullied, bullied. And I've been the number one person who's been picked on. The teachers didn’t do anything at my old school. I was tortured. I used to hide” (John).

The teacher of this student comments that a major problem this student has is that he ‘winds’ the other boys up and calls them names. Although it is difficult, children with Asperger Syndrome can be taught appropriate means of managing and preventing bullying (Attwood, 1990).

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES
As well as the eight themes resulting from the research, a number of common positive and negative experiences were also identified. The common positive experiences were: friendships, computers, being listened to, teacher aide help, playing with others, sharing achievements, joining in, learning how to resolve conflicts, positive feedback from teachers, the library, reading books, favourite teachers who share common interests, art, information technology, poetry, science experiments, practical work and quiet desk time.

The common negative experiences were: bullying, writing, being left out, aggression, group work, lunchtime, noise, teasing, distraction, incomplete work, losing gear, anxiety, getting angry, change in routine, harming others, mathematics, too many rules, lack of understanding, no friends, eating lunch, not being liked, bright sunlight, confusion in class, the uniform, name calling, sitting at the front, boredom, fitness and PE, depression, school bells, taking turns, no space to yourself, no teacher aide support and teachers misunderstanding.

INFLUENCE OF TEACHER KNOWLEDGE
As well as identifying the common issues in relation to the educational experiences of students with AS, this study also sought to find out how the educational experiences of students with AS were influenced by their teachers’ knowledge of AS. As accurate identification of AS is relatively new in New Zealand, the level of teacher knowledge is not high. There is therefore much to be done in the area of professional development. According to Attwood, (2000) the prevalence of AS is relatively high, 1/300 students at least, therefore 1/10 classrooms (based on 30 students per class) or most schools will have at least one student with AS. Teacher knowledge is critical in the management of AS as correct interventions are necessary to achieve success (Cumine, Leach & Stevenson, 1998; Howlin, Baron-Cohen & Hadlin, 1999). In this study, parents were more concerned with the teacher’s attitude rather than the depth of their knowledge. However all three teachers were concerned with their lack of knowledge and were unsure how or where to remedy this. Having these students in their classes had generated curiosity about the syndrome.

“I wasn’t aware Daniel had Asperger Syndrome until the first IEP. I was led to believe there was actually not much wrong with him that a bit of discipline wouldn’t fix. I’m quite interested in finding out a bit more” (Teacher 2).

Two students in the study indicated a good understanding of the syndrome but only one teacher thought to seek further information from these students. Both students knew very clearly what would enhance their educational experiences.
"I try to tell them but no, they won’t listen to me". Many students with AS are articulate and it may be a useful strategy for teachers to ask the students what is happening for them and apply this information to their practice.

There has been an effort by the Ministry of Education and the National Autistic Association to provide training to Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour and thereby increase teacher knowledge. The next important stage is to acknowledge the need for resourcing to support that knowledge.

CONCLUSION
The purpose of this paper is to discuss the educational experiences of AS students and the level of teacher knowledge of AS. The findings have shown that student experiences were generally negative. The emerging issues of concern are: Difficulties in accessing the curriculum, environmental and sensory complications, social communication and interaction difficulties, lack of teacher aide support, communication between parents and school staff, lack of teacher knowledge and confidence, placement difficulties and bullying. Teachers generally had little knowledge of strategies to manage the students although most teachers surveyed were interested in further training. Teachers did not ask students directly for information to improve their practice or knowledge. Lack of academic achievement and poor social interactions were of concern. Lack of teacher aide support was a major issue with access to funding very limited. The impact on the classroom is high with other students having little empathetic understanding of AS. Although the parents and teachers identified the deficits in the students, the students themselves had little understanding of the part their attitudes and behaviours played in the problems. Teacher, student and parent perspectives were often very different.

The results indicate there is much work to do towards improving the educational experience for these students. There is growing awareness of AS and the need to adapt the system and provide funding support for this to happen. It is the responsibility of educators to provide an environment that gives these students their best chance to achieve. Problems are often behavioural, but these students are generally not deliberately ‘naughty’. Effective strategies and interventions are not difficult but they are also not typical of other behavioural strategies (Howlin, Baron-Cohen & Hadlin, 1999). Social skills programmes for the students and access to support and technology are areas that need focus to improve the educational experiences of students with AS. Information gathered directly from students with AS, their families and teachers must be used in the development of educational supports. Further research on the actual outcomes of the educational experience for AS students would be helpful.

REFERENCES

PERSONAL PROFILE
I am a Resource Teaching Learning and Behaviour who is regularly working with many students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and their families. I have a special interest in Asperger Syndrome in the school environment and have worked in the field of Special Education in New Zealand for many years. I am also the parent of a son with Asperger Syndrome who was diagnosed at the age of 14 years.

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND DATA COLLECTION

A. What are the common issues that emerge from the educational experiences of students with Asperger Syndrome?
   • What is the nature of these issues?
   • Are they generally positive or negative?

Parent:
1. Tell me about your experiences with X educational experience.
2. What involvement do you have with X school and teachers?
3. What are some of the main difficulties X has at school?
4. What are some of the more positive factors involving X school experience?
5. How has AS affected X at school?
6. If you could change anything to do with school what would it be?
7. How would you go about changing things to make the educational experience better for X?
8. Is school generally a positive or a negative experience for X?

Teacher:
1. Tell me about having X in your classroom.
2. What specific difficulties or concerns have you noticed X has with school?
3. What particular aspects of school do you feel X enjoys?
4. Were you aware X had AS prior to my contact with you?
5. What changes if any did you need to make in your classroom or teaching style?
6. What differences have you noted in X needs compared to other students?
7. What contact do you have with the parents/caregivers of X?
8. Describe any issues you have with having X in your classroom?
9. Have you received any extra support with X in your classroom?
10. What, in your opinion could improve the educational experiences of students with AS?
11. Is school generally a positive or a negative experience for X?

Student:
1. Tell me what it is like in your school.
2. What are some of the cool things about being at your school?
3. What are some of the things that are not so good?
4. If there was something you could change to make your school better what would it be?
5. What would you keep the same?
6. What difference does having AS make to you at school?
7. Is going to school fun?
8. If it’s not, what would you rather do?

B. How is the educational experience of students with Asperger Syndrome influenced by:
   1. Teacher knowledge of Asperger Syndrome
   2. Social difficulties
   3. Environmental factors
   4. Learning difficulties

Parents:
1. Does X teacher know about AS?
2. Have you had any meetings with X teacher about AS?
3. How has X teacher found out about AS?
4. Does X have friends at school?
5. Does X have difficulties getting on with the other students?
6. Does X relate better to the adults in his school environment than other students?
7. Does he have friends home from school?
8. Are there any special relationships X has with other students or teachers?
9. Does X receive any extra support at school?

Teacher:
1. What prior knowledge did you have of AS before X came into your room?
2. What training have you had in Autistic Spectrum Disorder?
3. Where did you gain your knowledge of the disorder?
4. Do you think you need further information or training?
5. Where do you think you could get further information when you need it?
6. What specific support have you received for X?
7. Have you noted any difficulties between X and other students?
8. Does X work well in group work?
9. Does X have friends at school?
10. What does X do at lunch-time?
11. Where in the room is X seated?
12. What type of work environment does X prefer?
13. What difficulties, if any have you noted in the classroom environment?
14. What difficulties, if any have you noted in the classroom environment?
15. Does X have any other learning difficulties in addition to those you know are related to AS?
Student
1. Does your teacher know about AS?
2. Do other students know you have AS?
3. How does this make a difference?
4. Do you have any favourite teachers?
5. What makes them your favourite?
6. What do you do if someone is annoying you?
7. Tell me about lunch-time at your school.
8. Do you have friends at your school?
9. What sort of things do you do with your friends?
10. What do you do when you need help?
11. Are you happy about where you sit in class?
12. What do you do when you need help in class?
13. What would your ideal classroom be like?

C. How is academic achievement affected by the above factors?

Parent:
1. Do you feel X is achieving well at school?
2. How do you think AS impacts X achievement?
3. What do you think could improve his achievement?

Teacher:
1. Do you feel X is achieving well at school?
2. What are the factors that limit his academic achievement?
3. What do you think could improve his achievement?
4. What particular curriculum areas does X have difficulty with?

Students:
1. What is hard for you at school?
2. Why do you think this is hard for you?
3. What is easy for you at school?
4. Why is this easy for you?
5. What extra support would help you at school?
6. Do you do your best work in school?
7. What helps you do your best work?
8. What stops you from doing your best work?
9. Do you work well in groups?
10. Do you prefer to work on your own.
11. Do you have access to a computer for your learning?
12. How does this help you?
Bullying: What do students say?

Janis Carroll-Lind, & Alison Kearney,
Massey University College of Education.

ABSTRACT

Bullying occurs in most schools and happens to students no matter how capable, popular and well-adjusted they are. This paper reports on a study that examines the nature and extent of bullying and explores the context of bullying and school violence in New Zealand schools. Approximately 1370 students from seven primary and three secondary schools participated in the study. Using a survey approach, a questionnaire was designed to examine the prevalence and incidence of different types of bullying; the nature of the actual bullying and where it is most likely to happen; schools’ responses to bullying, including the issues of reporting and why students choose not to tell. Results indicate that all of the participating schools reported bullying to a greater or lesser extent. Listening to the voices of students in this study extends understanding of the issues around bullying. The results led to recommendations based on issues of policy, supervision (particularly in the areas identified by the students as being “hot spots”) and communication, with an emphasis on reporting and the need to create a culture of “safe telling” to ensure safe emotional learning environments for all students.

INTRODUCTION

Bullying is deliberately harmful behaviour, repeated over a period of time, by a person or group, who target a less powerful person as the victim. The hurtful actions can be (1) physical, such as hitting and punching; (2) verbal assaults, such as teasing and name calling; or (3) indirect, such as psychological exclusion from friendship groups or spreading rumours (Demaray & Malecki, 2003).

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Research into the phenomenon of bullying began in the 1970s with a seminal study by Olweus (1972). Subsequent studies have extended his work (Ahmad, Whitney, & Smith, 1991; Besag, 1989; Olweus, 1992, 1993; Smith, 1994; Smith & Ahmad, 1990; Whitney & Smith, 1993). In 1992, building on his earlier research, Olweus conducted a nationwide survey of over 140,000 junior and senior high school pupils from 8 to 16 years. This Norwegian study found that 15% of children self reported involvement in bullying. Of this fifteen percent, 9 to 10% were involved as victims and 5 to 6% as bullies. Similarly, a British study (Smith, 1994; Whitney & Smith, 1993) found that in primary schools up to a quarter of the pupils reported experiences of bullying. Approximately one in every ten cases was persistent. There was less, but more serious bullying in secondary schools, with about one in twenty five suffering persistent bullying.

Early New Zealand studies mirror these international statistics. Kearney (1993), surveyed 300 pupils, aged nine years and over, from primary, intermediate and secondary schools within one provincial city. She found that half of the children reported being either physically or emotionally bullied two to four times a year. Ten percent of the students said that they had been bullied at least once a week. Cram, Doherty, and Pocock’s (1995) major survey of nearly 1000 children from primary, intermediate and secondary schools in South Auckland showed an even higher prevalence of bullying than Kearney. Seventy-six percent of children in the South Auckland schools reported being bullied and a similar percentage reported that they have witnessed bullying. Approximately one in ten children reported that they were bullied several times a week during the school term. The frequency of bullying was highest for boys and among those aged 7 to 12 years.

Maxwell and Carroll-Lind (1997) found that within any given year it is likely that at least half of all school children are bullied and 10% are bullied weekly. Keenan’s (1995) study found similarly high levels of both physical and emotional bullying in a New Zealand provincial secondary school. Findings from Nash and Harker’s (1998) study of 37 secondary schools indicate that some schools jeopardise the safety of their students. The reasons cited were poor relationships between staff and students and the school’s failure to prevent bullying. Boys’ schools with a large ‘working class’ intake were particularly vulnerable. Nash and Harker concluded “the bullying that goes on in such schools scars more students than we like to think about” (1998, p. 51).

“RECENT LITERATURE INDICATES THAT BULLYING REMAINS A MAJOR ISSUE FACING SCHOOLS TODAY.”

CURRENT RESEARCH

Since Olweus (1972) first highlighted the problem of bullying in schools, research has continued to advance knowledge in this area. Recent literature indicates that bullying remains a major issue facing schools today (for example, Orpinas, Horne & Staniszewski, 2003; Rodkin & Hodges, 2003). A large New Zealand study by Adair, Dixon, Moore and Sutherland (2000) revealed that 75% of the 2066 secondary students surveyed stated they had been bullied during that year and 44% had bullied others.
So what is to be done about bullying? A decade ago Besag (1989) identified qualities in schools that promote a culture of non-violence. She suggested strategies to alleviate bullying and to support victims through a positive school climate. Tattum and Tattum (1992) stated that schools have an obligation to provide a safe environment for children and eradicate bullying. They considered that adults within schools should supply positive role models, encourage the development of social skills and provide support for individual children at risk. Qualities such as consistent and fair rules, the recognition and acknowledgment of the impact of bullying, a rapid response to it and responses that minimise the victim’s feelings of responsibility are essential elements of effective schools in this country (Maxwell & Carroll-Lind, 1997). Sullivan (2000b) stresses too, that when schools do develop such approaches, where expectations are clearly stated and reinforced and a whole school initiative is developed, bullying is more likely to be dealt with effectively.

“WHERE EXPECTATIONS ARE CLEARLY STATED AND REINFORCED AND A WHOLE SCHOOL INITIATIVE IS DEVELOPED, BULLYING IS MORE LIKELY TO BE DEALT WITH EFFECTIVELY.”

Eslea and Smith (1998) also showed that it is possible to reduce the incidence of bullying through the use of whole school anti-bullying policies; curriculum activities; environmental improvements as well as individual work with both bullies and victims. They also cautioned, however, that schools must maintain the momentum of their anti-bullying work as well as continuing to respond to the reporting of bullying by children. Interventions bring about increased awareness of bullying. As stated by Orpinas, Horne and Staniszewski (2003) “bullying prevention programmes are more likely to be incorporated into sustained practice when teachers and administrators have played a key role in the development and implementation of the programme” (p. 441).

The literature underlines the important relationship between bullying and learning because as stated by Massey (1998), cognitive skills are so critical to academic success, self-esteem, coping skills and resilience. According to Cicchetti, Toth, and Lynch (1993) “integration into the peer group, acceptable performance in the classroom, and appropriate motivational orientations for achievement are all part of the task of successful adaptation to school” (p. 54). In a New Zealand report Safe Students in Safe Schools, the Education Review Office (2000) make a policy statement that:

the educational and social development of students at school is closely linked to their physical and emotional safety. Students cannot learn effectively if they are physically or verbally abused, victims of violence or bullying, or if their school surroundings are unsafe. (p. 1).

The purpose of this study was to examine the nature and extent of bullying and to explore the context of bullying in New Zealand schools. The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the prevalence and incidence of bullying?
2. What types of bullying do students experience?
3. Where is bullying most likely to happen at school?
4. How do schools respond to bullying?
5. Do victims of bullying tell anyone and if so, who?

METHOD

Contrary to the more usual method of selecting a research sample, the participating schools in this study all requested their inclusion in the project as a result of interest generated by an article about school bullying written by the researchers. These schools accepted the invitation to enter a collaborative research project to find out about the nature and extent of bullying in their own schools and to be proactive in addressing this critical aspect of school life. In return for an individual analysis of their own school, they understood that the researchers would disseminate a report on the combined results of all the participating schools. Approximately 1480 male and female students from eight primary and three secondary schools participated in the study during the final school term of 2002. While not a large representative sample of New Zealand schools, nevertheless, the participating schools and their students did reflect a variety of size, socioeconomic status, ages (7-18 year olds), geographical areas (both North and South Island) as well as including both urban and rural schools.

Using a survey approach, Sullivan’s (2000a) questionnaire was adapted to examine the prevalence and incidence of different types of bullying; the nature of the actual bullying and where it is most likely to happen; schools’ responses to bullying, including the issues of reporting; and why students choose not to tell. All participating schools were invited to make adaptations to the questionnaire to best suit the specific needs of their school. Schools were given the autonomy to add their own questions to the base questionnaire and these were analysed for that specific school’s report. Most of the adaptations were made to the questionnaire in light of schools’ suggestions to “fine tune” the wording of the questions. If adaptations were made, they were minor in nature and did not affect the data processing. For example, one school might have used the word cloak bay and another the word, cloak room or locker room. Some schools included the names of areas within their school where bullying possibly could take place. The majority of questions, however, were standardised to all schools. Only the questions that were consistent to all schools have been included in the combined data analysis.

“BULLYING PREVENTION PROGRAMMES ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE INCORPORATED INTO SUSTAINED PRACTICE WHEN TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS HAVE PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME.”
The questionnaires were administered in the students’ natural setting, their classrooms. Schools were given the choice to administer the questionnaire to their students themselves or use the researchers. Only one school asked the researchers to do this and in many instances, principals conducted the questionnaire within their own school.

The questionnaire provided the respondents with the following definition of bullying:

Bullying can be hitting, kicking, or the use of force in any way. It can be teasing, making rude gestures, name-calling, or leaving you out. Bullying means that these things happened more than once and were done by the same person or persons. Bullying means to hurt either physically or so that you feel very bad.

RESULTS
The individual school results were analysed first and each participating school was given a full report of the findings for their school. The results were then combined to give an overall picture of the nature and extent of bullying in these New Zealand schools. The combined results of the ten schools (1370 students) are presented below.

Prevalence and Incidence
While 37% of students said they had never been bullied, the majority (63%) reported one or more experiences of bullying within the past year.
• 50% were bullied “once in a while”;
• 8% were bullied “about once a week”; and
• 5% were bullied “more than once a week”.

TABLE 1: I have been bullied in the following ways within the current year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF BULLYING</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>% OF CASES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean teasing</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposely left out</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rude gestures, mean faces made at me</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things said to make others dislike me</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Untrue, mean gossip spread about me</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had my things damaged or stolen</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitting, punching, kicking, shaving</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horribly sworn at</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasty racial remarks</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received nasty letter(s)</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was threatened</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offensive sexual suggestions</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knife, or some kind of weapon*</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The totals of both the frequency and percentage of cases reflect the fact that respondents may have ticked more than one category of bullying.

* Students were not asked to specify weapons, although some responses identified sticks and other similar objects as the type of weapon used.

TABLE 2: Who did you tell that you were being bullied?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>% OF CASES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents or guardians</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No-one*</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duty teacher</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class teacher</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other school staff</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*2 schools did not answer the “told no-one” box.

Reporting Bullying
If victims of bullying told someone about their bullying experiences, they most likely disclosed to their friends. As one student said “I have been threatened not to tell anyone but I told my friend anyway.” It seems that teachers are often the last to be told about bullying at school. This finding has implications for the development of effective communication channels within schools.

When asked the question: “If you did not tell anyone about the bullying, why not?” the majority of respondents cited the reasons that it would make it worse or that they didn’t want to be a ‘nark’. Some indicative explanations include:

• “The only reason I don’t tell is because it gets ten times as worse.”
• “Because then the people would get in trouble and want to beat you up.”
• “Didn’t want to be a little nark.”
• “I thought it would just make things worse and it would make me soft.”
• “I was scared about telling an adult because the person might deny doing it.”
• “I didn’t tell because they are my friends who I knew for a long time.”
• “They would give me another hiding if I told.”
• “I didn’t think it was important and my parents might not believe me or do anything about it.”
• “Because I was too upset and I didn’t want to tell anyone.”
• “Some teachers don’t do anything about it. If I’ve been bullied in [name of previous school] my brother’s mates come to help.”

Most of the bullies came from the same class as the victims, or were of the same age but from a different class. This dispels the long held myth that bullies are the bigger, older student.
Teachers need to act on someone they see being bullied

I know this boy who gets bullied at [name of College] and they do it around the teachers but teachers don’t do anything about it.

Teachers need to act on someone they see being bullied in class. Also more staff on duty.

**TABLE 3: Who bullied you?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHERE ARE THE BULLIES FROM?</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>% OF RESPONDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From my class</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From a different class/same age</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From an older class</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From another school</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From a younger class</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Witnessing Bullying**

Fewer students reported witnessing bullying than admitted to experiencing bullying. Table 4 reports the number of students who had witnessed bullying in the year of the survey.

**TABLE 4:**

**Witnessing Bullying**

During the current year I have seen bullying happen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOW OFTEN</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once in a while</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About once a week</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than once a week</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bullying Locations**

Students were asked to list the danger spots around the school where they considered most of the bullying to occur. Their comments provided an insight into school life and provided valuable information to the individual schools, in terms of increasing supervision in the locations identified within their own school. However a clear pattern emerged in that the playground was identified (to a lesser or greater degree, depending on the bullying culture within the school) as the main danger spot in all of the participating schools. Furthermore students from every school commented that bullying happened in the locations where there were no teachers. For example: “In the classroom when the teacher is not in the room”, “In the playground with no duty teachers around”, and “Where the teachers aren’t!”

**The Role of Teachers**

Teachers can make either a positive or negative difference for victims of bullying. Students in this study reported that they were more likely to be bullied in places where teachers weren’t, but of more concern is the incidence of reported bullying in the presence of teachers who do nothing to stop it. For example:

I know this boy who gets bullied at [name of College] and they do it around the teachers but teachers don’t do anything about it.

Teachers need to act on someone they see being bullied in class. Also more staff on duty.

**DISCUSSION**

Findings indicate that all of the participating schools experienced some degree of bullying and supports previous research that few schools are immune to bullying (for example, Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Furlong, Morrison & Greif, 2003; Sullivan, 2000b). No matter how capable, popular and well-adjusted students are, there are many of them experience bullying in one form or another. This study, where 63% of the participants said they had been bullied, validates the other studies reporting high rates of bullying within our New Zealand schools.

The results from this study thus led to recommendations based on issues of policy, supervision (particularly in the areas identified by the students as being “hot spots”) and communication, with an emphasis on reporting and the need to create a culture of “safe telling”, not only by the victims of bullying but also by those who observe the bullying as well.

“STUDENTS NEED TO BE ENCOURAGED TO STAND TALL TOGETHER, TO VOICE THEIR DISAPPROVAL AND TO INTERVENE.”

Many students reported that bullying happens in places where teachers are not present. This is in keeping with research which indicates many bullying episodes happen in unstructured contexts such as the playground (Leff, Power, Costigan & Manz, 2003). The quick solution may be to advise schools to increase their supervisory procedures, however that is not the only answer. We know that both the victims and witnesses of bullying are choosing not to tell their teachers, for whatever reason. Perhaps friends and peers hold the key to turning around the culture of bullying. The New Zealand study by Adair, Dixon, Moore and Sutherland (2000) found that when bullying was observed by other students, they were just as likely to ignore it as to take action. With bullying, there are no neutral observers (Sullivan, 2000b). This study adds weight to the work done by Adair et al., (2000) and Sullivan (2000b) by showing that peers are likely to witness bullying incidents that happen at school - therefore they can play a large part in overturning the peer culture of condoning inappropriate behaviour. Based on these findings, we suggest that students need to be encouraged to stand tall together, to voice their disapproval and to intervene. While this may raise the debate regarding just how much responsibility should be given to peers in these circumstances, our recommendation is supported in the literature, for example, Rodkin and Hodges, (2003) see students as the most valuable resource for combating bullying.

Systems could be introduced to raise the likelihood of teachers being informed about the bullying happening at the school. Similarly, when teachers are approachable and willing to act on what they hear, victims of bullying are more likely to disclose their experiences to them. Results from this study indicate that there is a clear link between student belief that teachers are making an effort regarding bullying
and the occurrence of bullying within a school. In this regard, Rodkin and Hodges (2003) suggest that it is teachers who get to know their students and the “peer ecologies” (p. 391) in which they operate who are most successful in reducing the incidence of bullying. Similarly, Demaray and Malecki (2003) write of the importance of social support for both victims and bullies.

National and international literature consistently points to the need for whole school policy and procedures to address issues of bullying (see Olweus, 1993, Sullivan, 2000b). Orpina, Home and Staniszewski (2003) provocatively advise “changing the problem by changing the school” (p.431) thus rightly pointing out that the problem of bullying is not one that will be solved by focusing solely on the students themselves.

We believe that even if policies are already written, they need to be communicated clearly to students, teachers and the wider school community. They also need to be regularly reviewed for their effectiveness. Student and parent voices are imperative in this process.

CONCLUSION

The way bullying is handled can make a difference to how it is coped with. Too often bullying is viewed as the ‘rough and tumble’ of childhood or simply ‘as part of growing up’. We entrust our children to our schools for 12-13 years of their lives, therefore schools have a responsibility to provide safe physical and emotional learning environments for their students. Recognising the need to create a safe learning environment is the first step. Uncovering the nature and extent of bullying in schools and taking steps to address issues, particularly through whole school policy is also important. By extending knowledge and understanding of students’ experiences of bullying from their perspective, school cultures can be created that prohibit rather than sanction violence.

“TEACHERS WHO GET TO KNOW THEIR STUDENTS AND THE ‘PEER ECΟLOGIES’ IN WHICH THEY OPERATE ARE THE MOST SUCCESSFUL IN REDUCING THE INCIDENCE OF BULLYING.”

REFERENCES


**Janis Carroll-Lind**

Janis is a senior lecturer in inclusive education at Massey University College of Education. She teaches in both pre-service and in-service teacher education for early childhood, primary and secondary programmes. Prior to her current position at Massey, Janis has been a classroom teacher, adjustment class teacher for children with behaviour difficulties and a resource teacher of special needs. Her current research interests include projects involving children’s experiences of violence and bullying; special education policy and provisions; effective practices for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder; school-based action research to improve whole school practices for students with behaviour difficulties; and a national stock take of identification and provisions for gifted and talented students in New Zealand schools.

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**Alison Kearney**

Alison Kearney is a senior lecturer in the Department of Learning and Teaching at Massey University College of Education. As a researcher, she has been involved in a range of projects including the monitoring and evaluation of the policy, Special Education 2000 (1999 – 2001); A ‘stock-take’ of school provisions for gifted and talented learners in New Zealand schools (2004) and two action research projects aimed at improving practices for students on the Autistic Spectrum, (2003-2004). She is the paper coordinator for a compulsory inclusive education paper that is part of the BEd (tchg) degree at Massey University and also teaches Educational Psychology at graduate level. Prior to taking up her present position at the College of Education, Alison was a primary school teacher; a Guidance and Learning Teacher; and a Resource Teacher, Special Needs.

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ABSTRACT
As Physiotherapist and Occupational Therapist in Tai Tokerau we have worked in collaboration with CCS Northland over the last two years to facilitate two day workshops for students attending mainstream schools that have moderate to severe physical disabilities. We chose venues that were community based so that the students could be out of their normal school environments. We used worksheets, discussion, guest speakers, group games and activities, the performing arts and adventure as tools to reach our objectives. The aim is to bring students together for mutual sharing and support to strengthen and empower. Students and their parents acknowledged and appreciated the advantages of time together to share experiences, struggles and aspirations. This has led to friendships, networking for all and a request for continued workshops.

In our roles as Physiotherapist and Occupational Therapist for Special Education we are involved with students in the mainstream schools under the Ongoing Reviewable Resource Scheme (ORRS) and the Moderate Physical Disabilities contract. Our caseload covers a wide spectrum of disorders encompassing congenital abnormalities, global delay and a diversity of syndromes. Our working area covers from Kaiwaka (this is approximately one hours drive north of Auckland,) to the top of the North Island.

As therapists we identified a special group of students with physical disabilities because of their motivating attitude to life. These are students who require only intermittent intervention from us as therapists even though they may have quite severe physical disabilities. The young people need support for areas such as accessing the curriculum through Assistive Technology making adaptations to the Physical Education Curriculum and Technology, and having ready access to the classrooms, school and surrounds which necessitate property modifications. Our role in supporting these young people is to facilitate, consult and support this process.

The physical disabilities of this particular group of students includes shortened or absence of limbs or bones, congenital conditions that have resulted in some form of deformity, arthritis or cerebral palsy.

The students are cognitively able and all have supportive parents who are determined that their children will get a good education and make the very best they can out of their lives. One of these parents planted the seed of an idea when...
she mentioned her son (who has cerebral palsy) had enquired if there was any way he could meet up with other students similar to himself. He attends a primary school and felt he was ‘different’ as he was the only child with a physical disability.

The idea materialized into a two-day workshop in March 2003 run collaboratively with CCS Northland. We named the workshop “just Do it” with the theme of Past, Present and Future Achievements. Our goals for the workshop were primarily to facilitate opportunities to enable the students to:

• make new friends
• meet up with old friends
• learn strategies for coping
• set personal goals
• promote Leadership and mentoring
• have adventure and fun
• develop strategies to overcome hurdles
• meet adults with similar disabilities
• achieve clear learning outcomes in the essential skills area of the New Zealand school curriculum
• increase self esteem & confidence make the objectives in the NZ Disabilities Strategy happen.

The workshop was designed around giving students an opportunity to share goals. In the first session students spoke about their own past achievements and shared with others what they felt proud of. This included sporting, academic and travelling type achievements.

The second part of the workshop held at the local gym was around current goal setting with the challenge to climb, abseil, swing or assist by belaying (provide rope support) at the climbing wall. Students set their own personal goals which ranged from swinging in the sling to climbing to the top of the wall. This was an incredible time of encouragement and courage as different students aimed to reach their goals. It was noted that students willingly helped one another, they were quick to offer to belay for another student while they climbed. In fact, this was a key activity necessary in the process of climbing the wall and it created great team building and leadership opportunities, empowering and encouraging the students to help each other.

The third session was goal setting for the future. This allowed students to plan and voice their aspirations. For some, their goals were around problem solving current concerns like bullying, learning to swim and for others it was planning for tertiary education and world travel. This process acknowledged the great feeling of hope and ambition for the future within the group.

Two adult guest speakers spoke on life for them with a disability. One explained that it was only as she entered high school she realised she actually had a disability (she was born without lower limbs). The second speaker has a visual impairment and brought her Seeing Eye dog with her and shared how life is as a blind person. The students felt free to talk and ask questions. There were detailed discussions on bullying and strategies on how to cope, employment opportunities, driving and transporting wheelchairs independently in cars.

Direct comments and formal feedback confirmed for us that we had achieved our aims and we had had a fun and successful workshop.

Examples of some comments on the workshop evaluation forms:

• “all of the children were team players and built up relationships on trust and support”
• “to hear what the children perceived as obstacles to achieving their goals-interesting and encouraging”
• “boosted Matt’s confidence in just two days, I hope it lasts”
• “it’s fun and it is good to meet other people with disabilities”
• “I had fun and I learnt a lot”.

Requests from the students participating and their parents resulted in another workshop being one year later, which we named “just Do It Again.”

We had a larger group this time and included most of those who attended in 2003, our aims were similar but we changed our theme to “Celebrating Who We Are” with a focus on the Performing Arts. We invited guests from CCS in Auckland who use puppets in schools to create discussion around disabilities. The students had earlier completed worksheets in groups on what they felt were their own strengths and difficulties. These were used to develop and write possible puppet plays to share with other school students.

Key issues identified through the young people’s feedback were:

• being stared at
• being talked over or talked about in earshot
• expectations to do things that would be quite impossible to do
• shyness around lots of people.

The second day was even more interactive and definitely fun and challenging. We had invited a troupe of talented artists from “Hot spot Productions” based in Dargaville) who demonstrated their skills in acrobatics and juggling. The troupe presented many participatory opportunities. The students set for themselves challenges which were awe inspiring. Some chose to attempt acrobatic feats, others tried juggling; others participated as volunteers while wild juggling displays happened around and over them. They then worked in groups to produce three different dramatic performances entitled, The Past, The Present and The Future. These dramatic performances, along with some of their acrobatic achievements were presented to their parents in the afternoon.
The success of invited speakers at the first workshop prompted us to select further guest speakers who spoke on life with disabilities. The first was the producer of a radio show that airs views and news items centered on people with disabilities. He spoke of how life is for him with a disability and how he manages to overcome some of his problems and reach his goals. He gave the students an opportunity to be interviewed for his programme giving their views on life to be aired at a later date.

The second speaker was a senior student from one of our local schools. He presented a power point show with the assistance of a school friend. His focus was ‘Just Doing It’ and had many photos of himself participating in challenging situations. He emphasised the value of good friends and a positive attitude. He inspired the students to give everything in life a go. He also discussed the benefits of having a disability and the great opportunities it had given him to travel and meet people, some of them well known celebrities from sports and entertainment.

In summary, all who participated in or observed these two workshops expressed very positive outcomes, some of which were:

- students meeting and sharing with other students
- increasing their self confidence and acceptance of who they are
- networking with other parents and professionals and sharing of concerns
- the opportunity for students to support and exchange experiences
- students from all parts of Northland having the opportunity to meet and develop friendships.

The workshops were developed as a result of a parent listening to the needs of her child and us listening to her. Cindy (Occupational Therapist) and I (Physiotherapist) feel privileged to have had the opportunity to facilitate these. In addition to being great fun and supporting these young people to achieve their goals, we came away from these days with such a “buzz” of how truly special these students are and how proud we are to be part of their community.

Eileen Diamond - Physiotherapist
Cindy Fox - Occupational Therapist

PROFILE OF AUTHORS

Eileen Diamond, Physiotherapist and Cindy Fox, Occupational therapist work for G.S.E. in Tai Tokerau.

Our core work is to support children with physical disabilities access school and the New Zealand Curriculum by removing barriers to their learning. We service a large area, incorporating rural and urban schools. “Just do it” workshops are a way to bring some of these children together to share experiences, make new friends and support each other in their lives.
ABSTRACT

The Seeds for Success pilot project involved RTLB, Ministry of Education - Special Education staff, and classroom teachers. It successfully developed and trialed a school entry screening and intervention programme for young children who were identified by teachers as having behaviour difficulties across three school clusters. Collaboration between professionals was a key part of the pilot. Seeds for Success was then introduced to a number of other clusters in different parts of New Zealand.

"EARLY INTERVENTION IS WIDELY SEEN BY RESEARCHERS AS AN EFFECTIVE MODEL FOR LEARNERS WITH BEHAVIOURAL AND EMOTIONAL DIFFICULTIES."

There are many potential adverse outcomes for young children who have behavioural difficulties early in school. They may participate less in classroom activities, are less likely to be accepted by their peers and teachers, and may receive a reduced level of positive teacher attention and instruction. These children may lose opportunities to learn cooperatively from other children, and can develop a negative attitude to school and learning (Raver & Knitzer, 2002; Stage & Quiroz, 1997). Social skills such as cooperation, as well as social - emotional factors, can be predictive of academic success in the early school years (Agostin & Bain, 1997).

Early intervention is widely seen as an effective model when working with children with disability and learning difficulties. For example the Early Intervention Service in early childhood settings, and Reading Recovery in schools, are important features of New Zealand education. Sixty-eight percent of New Zealand schools operated Reading Recovery in 2002 (Ministry of Education, 2004). Early intervention is also widely seen by researchers as an effective model for learners with behavioural and emotional difficulties (Church, 2003, Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey 1995), but our experience is that much of the existing service provision regarding behaviour problems in schools in New Zealand is reactive rather than proactive.

Overseas research suggests that, although parents of many children recognize emotional and behavioural problems in the early childhood years, "there is a predictable multi-year lag between that recognition and getting the children and families linked to appropriate services, thus losing the potential efficacy of intensive early intervention for these young children" (Raver & Knitzer, 2002).

Early intervention with behaviour difficulties is informed by a significant body of research that describes developmental pathways that children may follow that lead to further behavioural difficulties and antisocial or criminal behaviour as adolescents and adults (Broidy et al, 2003; Church, 2003; Loeber & Farrington, 2000; Nagan & Tremblay, 1999; Shaw, Gilliom, Ingoldsby & Nagan, 2003; Walker et al., 1995). Prediction on an individual basis will, however, always be problematic. Predictive accuracy using behaviour rating scales, for example, can reach a positive predictive value of 60% over a year, although typically studies have reported lower values of around 50% (Van Lier, Verhulst & Crijnen, 2003). Efforts to improve the predictive ability of screening instruments by “multiple gating,” that is, by including a range of different child, environmental or familial factors, appear to increase prediction, but this increase may be only marginal and needs to be balanced against the costs of doing so (Van Lier et al., 2003). However, as the Scottish Inspectorate of Schools put it “early signs should not be ignored simply because the child was still young and his/her disruptive behaviour was relatively easy to manage” (HM Inspectorate of Education, 2002).

"EARLY SIGNS SHOULD NOT BE Ignored SIMPLY BECAUSE THE CHILD WAS STILL YOUNG AND HIS/HER BEHAVIOUR WAS REASONABLY EASY TO MANAGE."

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CONTEXT

The essential importance of context in influencing children’s behaviour is described by many writers. For example, Barth et al., (2004) described the importance of the classroom environment, and in particular peers, on the development
of children’s behaviour over time. High levels of aggression in first grade classrooms increase the risk of males being highly aggressive from first grade to middle school (Kellam et al., 1998).

“THERE IS A REALITY THAT TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS EXPERIENCE: THAT SOME CHILDREN ARE ‘TROUBLED’ AND NOT MERELY ‘TROUBLESOME’ AND THAT THESE CHILDREN, THEIR TEACHERS AND PARENTS CAN BENEFIT FROM ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE.”

The importance of the developmental and interactional nature of learners with behaviour difficulties needs to be emphasized (Van Lier et al., 2003). Considering context, and intervention that may change that context, is essential if we are to take an ecological approach to behavioural difficulties. At the same time, there is a reality that teachers and schools experience; that some children are “troubled” and not merely “troublesome” and that these children, their teachers and parents can benefit from additional targeted assistance (Jones, 2003).

INvolvement OF parents AND WHANAU
Parenting practices, parent adjustment, and parenting satisfaction have been shown to play a key role in the early development of disruptive behaviour and adaptive functioning, including social behaviour (Barkey et al., 2002; Stormont, 2001). There is a growing body of evidence that early interventions with parents can prevent later antisocial behaviour by their children (Scott et al., 2001; Department of Corrections, 2001). Mothers’ interactions with their children at school entry have some unique predictive value in terms of later social and academic outcomes (Morrison et al., 2002).

In education support programmes, research shows that ‘home support’ programmes are a critical factor at this stage if long term changes are to be effected (Project Early, 1999). Evaluation of the Severe Behaviour Initiative indicated that the family is an integral link to successful implementation of the programme (Bourke et al., 2001). Berryman (2000) challenges us to think about power relationships between parents, whanau, and professionals. Rutter and Maughan (2002) stated that “there is no doubt that parental support for children’s learning can be instrumental in fostering progress but that there can be minuses if the involvement makes some parents feel deskillled”. Innovative approaches such as Hei Awhina Matua (Berryman & Glynn, 2004) have created real and significant benefits from genuine collaborative approaches between parents and teachers. The essential nature of the home school connection is discussed in detail by Ryan and Adams (1995).

We believe that these findings emphasise the importance of a holistic role for those working in special education such as RTLB and Ministry of Education – special education staff.

SCHOOL ENTRY SCREENING
The first year at school provides a valuable period for early identification and intervention (Walker et al., 1995). Transition to school is a complex experience and presents challenges for many children. Discontinuities between the child’s previous environments and school may be significant. Adjustment to school depends to a large extent on the child possessing the necessary social, behavioural and academic skills to respond to the demands of the new environment. The nature of the support children receive and the connections between family, teachers and peers is of great importance (Margetts, 1999; Peters, 2000).

“THE PERIOD SOON AFTER SCHOOL ENTRY PROVIDES A LOGICAL, COST EFFECTIVE WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY FOR EFFECTIVE SCREENING AND INTERVENTION FOR THOSE WORKING IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM.”

Schools in New Zealand are aware of the importance of this time, and class sizes are typically smaller at the year one to three level, assisting a focus on the individual needs of children. New entrant teachers in New Zealand schools take part in early academic assessment. School Entry Assessment was used in well over half (59%) of primary schools during 2001 (Dewar & Telford, 2003). The period soon after school entry provides a logical, cost effective window of opportunity for effective screening and intervention for those working in the school system. The Department of Corrections has suggested a cost benefit (cost of crime versus cost of intervention) of 51/1 for school entry screening and intervention, compared to 25:1 for 10-14 year olds (Department of Corrections, 2001).

The concept of screening developed in medical settings with populations at risk for highly specific conditions (Van Lier, Verhulst & Crijnen, 2003). Behaviour problems are not this specific. However, although there are potential risks associated with inappropriate use of screening programmes, such as the possible negative impacts of labeling children as “disordered”, and some writers have criticised the inappropriate use of screening instruments to delay school entry or make exclusionary placement decisions, there are appropriate programme goals for screening that include curriculum planning, child find activities and follow up procedures (Rafoth, 1997).

“TEACHERS ARE VERY WELL PLACED TO MAKE COMPARISONS BETWEEN CHILDREN ON BEHAVIOURAL ISSUES AT SCHOOL BECAUSE OF THEIR EXTENSIVE EXPOSURE TO STUDENTS AS THEY TEACH.”

(WALKER, 1995).

Teachers are very well placed to make comparisons between children on behavioural issues at school because of their extensive exposure to students as they teach (Walker, 1995). From an ecological perspective, "teachers are uniquely positioned to obtain a coherent picture of children’s functioning and adjustment” (Stanley, Rodeka, & Laurence, 1999). Teacher ratings are a widely used and valid method for assessing behavioural adjustment at school (Margetts, 2000; O’Neil & Liljequest, 2002).
However, a systematic model of identification and intervention early in the school life of children who have behavioural difficulties that utilizes teacher assessment does not exist in New Zealand at this time. Some successful models for intervention that show we can make a difference with young children do exist in New Zealand, such as Project Early in Christchurch (Church 1997; Project Early, 1999; Department for Corrections, 2001; Ministry of Education, 2003). The Special Education, MOE Early Intervention Service intervenes with some children with behaviour difficulties during early childhood and may assist at school entry. A limited number of referrals for assistance at the school entry level may come to the Resource Teacher of Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) or the Ministry of Education (MOE) - Special Education.

Proactive approaches are needed in the school setting because research shows that teachers can be highly selective in these referrals and this can lead to less desirable outcomes (Algaze et al 1991; Walker et al 1994) and also because teachers are less inclined to refer children for antisocial behaviour in their first year of school (Walker, 1995).

Recent research by Abidin and Robinson (2002) suggests that while teachers may generally act professionally in their referral decisions, a substantial degree of variance still exists in those decisions.

We also believe that proactive early identification and intervention may have an important preventative role to play for girls, who are less likely to follow chronic offending pathways (Fergusson & Horwood, 2002) but have a higher rate of some mental health problems as adults (National Advisory Committee on Health and Disability, 1996). Girls exhibit a higher rate of internalizing behaviours than boys (Merrell, Crowley, & Walters, 1997) and low socio-economic status girls may enter school displaying greater apprehensive behaviour (Child & McKay 2001). Although research indicates that girls with early conduct problems are not at the same risk for exhibiting the same types of later delinquency as boys, research needs to examine the connection with other deviant outcomes girls may experience, such as drug or alcohol dependence, disordered eating, depression or early pregnancy (Broidy et al, 2003).

A proactive focus that goes beyond externalising behaviour to include a wider social emotional domain may assist girls (Merrell, 2002). There may be some substantial issues of equity in the way special education behaviour services respond reactively to the needs of boys and are largely uninvolved with the needs of girls.

Research by Hill Walker and his associates has indicated the efficacy of an approach to screening called "Systematic Screening for Behaviour Disorders" (Walker et al, 1994), and of early intervention at this school entry stage (Golly, Stiller, & Walker, 1996); Walker, Stiller, Severson, Feil, & Golly, (1998); Walker 1998; Leff, et al., (2001). This intervention programme is called “First Steps to Success”. Hill Walker visited New Zealand in 2000 to speak at the Special Education Conference in Canterbury.

However, these procedures derive from the United States school system and use American instruments and methods. It appears to have a descriptive format and a focus on individual remediation rather than ecological interventions, and may not reflect the culture(s) of New Zealand schools. Consequently, the Seeds for Success pilot project sought to develop and trial a model of screening and intervention with children soon after school entry that would be valid and useful for New Zealand school clusters, using existing special education services.

Reflective practice and collaborative enquiry can integrate research and practice (Buysse, 2003; Campbell, 2003). Communities of Practice networks can involve numbers of educators who agree to collaborate to collect and report data, gathered in the real world over periods of time, to inform their practice. In developing the Seeds for Success pilot, and in work since that time, we have wanted to build collaborative relationships between MOE staff, RTLB and teachers. We have been assisted by the concept of Communities of Practice. Ryba et al., (2000) identified moderating factors that can assist the development of a “Community of Practice” between RTLB and MOE. These included collaborative development of systems, shared experience, and compatibility of models of practice.

PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

The three key elements of the pilot project were

1. The development and trial of a screening and intervention model for children at risk for behaviour difficulties in their first year at school.
2. Collaboration between schools, RTLB, and MOE – Special Education. Collaboration across geographical areas, including urban and rural schools.
3. The implementation of this pilot using the existing service framework.

The Pilot Programme contained three stages.

Stage 1: Initial consultation with RTLB, principals, junior class teachers, SES and MOE, leading to the development of draft screening materials and draft intervention protocols.

Stage 2: Trial and development of screening procedures leading to evidence of efficacy and satisfaction and selection of children for intervention.

Stage 3: Trial and development of intervention procedures leading to:

- Evidence of efficacy and satisfaction
- Good behaviour interventions provided for children

Two screening instruments were produced, following consultation and item analysis. The Brief Behaviour Screening Checklist is a five-item checklist for use by teachers after a child has been at school for six to eight weeks. It provides five positively framed areas of behaviour on which to briefly consider children’s
adaptation to school. For example, one item is “plays appropriately in the playground.” It provides a three point scale on which to rank each item.

The Behaviour Screening Checklist is a 28-item checklist arranged around the same five key areas. It provides a range of positively framed skill items that can be used as a basis for teaching plans. For example one item is “accepts playground boundaries and bell times.” It provides a three point scale on which to rank each item. It has space and categories for additional information.

**Outcomes of consultation meetings**

Consultation meetings with principals, teachers, MOE staff, and RTLB provided a great deal of support and guidance to the project. In particular, these meetings suggested:

- Strong support for a proactive model that recognises the skills of teachers
- Professional decision making on a need-based model
- The importance of parent involvement and partnership
- The importance of a positive skills based focus and the avoidance of labelling, which can suggest that deficits lie within individual children and may lead to reduced expectations, social isolation, or exclusionary practices
- The acceptability of a time limited intervention but also the ability to refer on to ensure children access other appropriate services quickly.

**THE PROGRAMME PROCESS**

**Overview of the programme**

Seeds for Success is a programme for screening and intervening at the new entrant level (five to six years) with children who may be at risk for behavioural difficulties.

Seeds for Success uses:

1. A systematic screening process near the start of year one which ensures all children are considered for intervention.
2. A time limited intervention aimed at skill development dependant on need which may involve in-class support and playground support and will involve a home support component with parents.

The screening process ensures that every child in the new entrant classroom is considered by using:

1. A collaborative interview (Proactive Screening Meeting - PSM) between the teacher(s) and the keyworker.
2. A brief screening instrument that assists teachers to consider skill areas for development for every child at the six week check or during the PSM.
3. A longer screening instrument for use with children who may be of concern during the PSM.

The intervention process:

1. Involves initial and final observations.
2. Utilises professional skills and knowledge collaboratively with teachers to design an appropriate plan for teaching and encouraging adaptive skills, and assists teachers to implement the plan over a ten week period.
3. Involves the parents in the intervention process as appropriate and maintains regular contact with parents over the ten weeks.
4. Evaluates the programme collaboratively at the end of the ten week period and makes appropriate decisions for further action at that time.

Keyworkers (RTLB, MOE special education staff) were provided with a practice manual.

The manual contained:

- An overview of the programme
- Two flow diagrams of the programme process
- A description of the screening checklists
- A description of the proactive screening meeting and a list of tasks for this meeting
- Practice notes suggesting good practice for various stages of the programme
- Criteria for selection for intervention
- Notes regarding parent permission and participation
- A set of programme principles derived from the previous consultation rounds
- Screening checklists
- Evaluation forms.

**RESULTS**

The Seeds for Success pilot project was conducted in three school clusters - Rangiora in North Canterbury, Dunedin West, and Invercargill South. This involved a mix of rural and urban schools, with an average decile rating of six. Seven RTLB were involved from these three clusters, with three Special Education, MOE staff. Fifteen children were included in the pilot.

**Screening**

The proactive screening meeting was seen as being very useful and easy to set up, with an average of six children (range 1-30) discussed at each meeting. There was a range of presenting issues ranging from isolation to aggression. Both checklists were rated as useful and no major changes were suggested. Of interest was that although all children selected were of some concern to teachers, only one child had involvement with another agency at this time.

**Intervention**

Interventions lasted an average of eight weeks. A wide variety of skills were chosen for development, and interventions at school involved a range of individual, group, class and schoolwide strategies, dependent on the needs of the children and the context.
Keyworkers and New Entrant teachers valued the opportunity to work co-operatively together. Issues of concern included “finding the time,” home problems affecting the school programme, changing teachers, and high caseloads.

Home interventions included both one and two parent families and averaged six visits. Evaluations showed:

- Building rapport was seen as a critical factor.
- Collaborative problem solving was the most common approach, covering a range of different topics.
- Both keyworkers and parents believed the home programme was useful, but some thought the time frame to be a little too short.
- Parents rated keyworkers as knowledgeable and understanding of children’s issues, and both believed they were able to work well together.
- Parents mentioned improved relationships with their children.
- Issues mentioned by keyworkers included parent difficulties such as mental health problems, and a difficulty getting to the “real” issues.
- Keyworkers appreciated getting a holistic view of the child.

Positive outcomes were experienced by most of the children who participated in the project. One child commented that now he “is as good as gold”. The collaborative approach of the project allowed relationships between teachers, pupils, and parents to be enhanced.

Focus Group Meeting

A number of the keyworkers involved in the Pilot Project were able to meet following the completion of the project to discuss their experiences. Positive features of the Seeds for Success model that were mentioned during this meeting included:

- The proactive screening process which was seen as effective and helpful.
- The value of visiting homes, building rapport, providing helpful information and building links between home and school, and the importance of building trust and rapport in a short time frame.
- The value of working with New Entrant teachers, their skills, the positive environment, and using co-operative learning strategies.
- The usefulness of relatively simple, unobtrusive and flexible interventions at this level.
- Building links to other agencies, at this early stage.

Issues identified included:

- Time constraints.
- The pressure observed on some teachers to achieve academic gains early in a child’s school career.
- The relationship between RTLB and Early Intervention (Ministry of Education) services.

DISCUSSION

This paper describes how we successfully developed and trialed a programme for school entry screening and intervention for behaviour difficulties, and produced positive results for children and schools in three school clusters. This was a successful collaboration between RTLB, MOE staff, and schools.

“OUR EXPERIENCE WAS THAT USING POSITIVELY FRAMED SKILLS CHECKLISTS ALSO CREATED A POSITIVE TEACHING MODEL.”

The idea of screening children for behavioural difficulties was very well received. Keyworkers were involved with a number of children who would probably not have received additional services at this level. Therefore, they were able to intervene earlier, with positive results.

The screening meeting and two screening checklists formed the basis of a simple method of screening and also described positive social and classroom skills that could form the basis of intervention plans. The pilot project highlighted the variety of children’s presenting issues, the variation in school and teacher expectations, as well as parental needs. This emphasized the importance of an individualized needs based approach.

This experience of success within a prescribed time frame is consistent with Walker’s (1998) “First Steps to Success” programme, which shows that within this time significant and enduring changes can be made. Other research such as Rohrbeck et al., (2002) suggests that in several different educational areas, shorter, intensive interventions may show greater effects than less intensive long term interventions.

Some additional follow up referrals were made, meaning that these children were not subject to large time delays before additional services are brought into play. The methods of involvement with children varied significantly from individual work to large group interventions and teacher support. Our experience was that using positively framed skills checklists also created a positive teaching model. This suggests that this educational and ecological way of working fits well with our clusters and that labeling at this level may be less of a concern because this model avoids excessive focus on individual child deficits.

Parent involvement was in general a very positive feature of this pilot programme. The experience was that at this age level, presumably before there is a history of negative communication about behaviour difficulties between home and school, parents were happy to participate. The degree of home school liaison was variable during these cases and is an issue to address in future work.

“THE EXPERIENCE WAS THAT AT THIS AGE LEVEL, PRESUMABLY BEFORE THERE IS A HISTORY OF NEGATIVE COMMUNICATION ABOUT BEHAVIOUR DIFFICULTIES BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL, PARENTS ARE HAPPY TO PARTICIPATE.”
The children worked with during this pilot programme all displayed some behaviour that meant that they stood out from their peers in order to be prioritised for intervention. Clearly it is not possible to make accurate predictions on an individual basis about which children would have gone on to develop more serious problems. However these were legitimate referrals at this level and keyworkers were able to contribute positively to their situations and to their teachers and parents at this stage.

Although enthusiasm among keyworkers and teachers was high for this model of working, workload commitments among keyworkers, to children with higher, more urgent needs provided difficulties in prioritising time. This showed especially in delays in beginning the work, as other work took top priority. This work was carried out with the agreement of management committees and Ministry of Education management. A systemic commitment to proactive work is essential if competing demands are to be managed.

REFERENCES


**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The authors wish to acknowledge the contributions and assistance of the RTLB, teachers, principals, parents and Ministry of Education staff who have been involved in and supported this work.
ABSTRACT
This research article summarises a study that set out to collect information about the actions that three primary schools have taken to develop a more positive school culture. The aim was to identify in what ways a change in culture could contribute to an improvement in school relationships and a reduction in bullying.

The research questions focused on what the schools were like previously, how change was initiated, what programmes and community support were used, what the outcomes have been for adults and students, and what were the current challenges and goals that each school faced. A researcher was assigned to each school where they undertook interviews with a range of adults in the school and facilitated focus groups with students.

The results of the comparative analysis show that there are identifiable factors common to the approaches used by all three schools. These factors were the importance of leadership, the centrality of relationships, the nature of the programmes adopted, and finally, the nature of the change process itself. While there were many differences between the schools, these differences did not alter the relevance of the factors identified above.

INTRODUCTION
School culture is a relatively new concept in understanding schools as organisations. The development of the term began with anthropological understandings of schools and the way they work.

Neville (1998) used a case study approach to explore what it was that two New Zealand secondary schools were doing to achieve higher than expected outcomes for their students when other information about the schools indicated that this was going to be difficult to do. This study was able to identify why the schools were exemplary, and yet the same outcomes could not be achieved by using the structures and routines within these schools as a blueprint for other schools. That is, it was not a matter of student timetabling, departmental organisation, decision-making hierarchies or curriculum management and provision, but rather the quality of the leadership and interpersonal relationships within the schools.

It was shown that this was because the structures and routines in the schools were the outcome of the schools’ culture. This study identified the values that underpin the individual culture of two schools and gave their culture coherence.

But what is school culture? Stoll (2000) says that:

Culture describes how things are and acts as a screen or lens through which the world is viewed. In essence, it defines reality for those within a social organisation, gives them support and identity and creates a framework for occupational learning. Each school has a different reality or mindset of school life, often captured in the simple phrase, ‘the way we do things around here’ (p. 9).

A common set of understandings that form the basis of ‘the way we do things around here’ manifests itself across the school at different levels, from people’s beliefs about teaching and learning to the practices and routines that develop into school systems and structures. Once some of these have been identified then researchers can look at how pervasive they are, how they support power relationships and to what extent they are interdependent (Petigrew, 1990). Our interest in this project was to summarize ‘the way things are done around here’ to see if there are important understandings that can be gained from seeing how people went about changing ‘the way things are done around here’ and what implications it has for ‘how the way things are done around here’ in the future.

There are other ways of understanding schools as organisations which have elements of overlap. Much of the focus is on how schools can change or be changed. For example, ideas such as quality schools (Doig, 2000), school improvement and school effectiveness (Rintoul & Rosnowski, 2000), and schools as learning communities (Wenger, 1998). We chose school culture because it gave us a wide scope in describing where schools have been and where they are at rather than focussing on on school effectiveness that other frameworks use (Reichers & Schneider, 1990).

We set out to explore the significant factors that influence a school’s culture (also referred to as school ethos or school climate) that in turn can lead to, amongst other things, a reduction in the prevalence of bullying. Researchers should be able to identify the important school structures and routines that hold particular values and beliefs.

We expect that these values and beliefs will also be reflected in the factors we identify as influencing the school culture (see MacArthur & Gaffney, 2001; Sullivan, 2000). Our notion of what school culture includes is shown in the diagram below in Figure One.
FIGURE ONE: School culture includes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL CULTURE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School structures and routines</td>
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<tr>
<td>School values and beliefs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationships between those in</td>
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<tr>
<td>the school and those outside</td>
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<tr>
<td>the school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Factors important to school</td>
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</tbody>
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This is still an oversimplification but it gives us a starting point. For example, we acknowledge that it is people that hold values and beliefs, and our interest is in how those values and beliefs come to typify the school. Likewise, there are issues of power when considering how values and beliefs are shared amongst those who make up a school. We have also avoided complicating matters by not looking directly at classroom culture, which also has important implications for how staff’s experience their school day (Macfarlane, 2004). That said, it is possible to see how school culture influences what goes on in the classroom.

Research Aim

The purpose of this study was to collect information about the approaches that three primary schools have taken to develop a more positive school culture, which as a result led to a reduction in bullying. In particular, the study examined the factors within each school that gave rise to a change in their school culture. This article summarizes a full report available from the Ministry of Social Development (Children’s Issues Centre, 2004). It describes how the schools went about improving their school culture and identifies the similarities and differences in their approaches. The reason for sharing this information with other schools is to assist them in their own journey of school development.

This study was commissioned by the Ministry of Social Development to assist in implementing Action Area Four of New Zealand’s Agenda for Children, which aims to address violence in children’s lives with a particular focus on bullying. The Ministry was keen to see how improving school culture might reduce bullying in schools. It should be noted that reducing bullying is not the only reason that schools set out explicitly develop their school culture and this is the case in the schools presented in this article. We wanted to showcase schools that had successfully improved their school culture in a way that might provoke or support those wanting to facilitate change in other schools.

METHOD

Description of Case Studies and Research Participants

In Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin educational personnel (psychologists and RTLBS) who were familiar with schools in their regions were asked to identify a school that had changed its school culture in the past 2-3 years or more. Successful change was defined as improved outcomes in terms of student achievement, students’ and teachers’ social relationships (including a reduction in bullying), and parent and community opinion of the school. Evidence of this was likely to be anecdotal, but ERO reports written at the right time could support anecdotal evidence.

When agreement of the principal or board of trustees had been obtained for school participation the principal was asked to identify staff, Resource Teachers Learning and Behaviour (RTLB), Board of Trustees members, and external professionals who should be invited to participate. These participants were preferably those who had a long enough association with the school to see changes take place. Teaching staff identified students (8-12 years old) to be invited to participate in the study.

Each of the Boards of Trustees were asked to consider having their school named in the report. This they did on the basis that the research would be reporting a ‘good news story’.

Auckland – Papatoetoe Intermediate School

This intermediate school (Years 7-8) in Manukau City has a current decile ranking of 3G. The school had a July 2002 roll of 977 students and 72 staff. Changes at Papatoetoe Intermediate School were initiated 10 years ago when the current principal joined the school.

Wellington – Wilford Primary School

Wilford is a full primary school (Years 1-8) in Lower Hutt with a decile ranking of 5H. The school had a July 2002 roll of 260 based on 11 classes, including two Maori immersion units. Changes began 9 years ago when the current principal joined the school.

Dunedin – Caversham Primary School

Caversham Primary is a contributing primary school (Years 1-6) in Dunedin. It had a July 2002 roll of 102 and has a decile ranking of 3H. The current principal initiated the changes when she joined the school 4 years ago.

Research Methods

A qualitative approach enabled us to gather detailed information from a range of research participants within each school. Interviews and focus groups were chosen as an appropriate means of gathering detailed personal perspectives and experiences. These provided rich data for describing the actions taken, the process followed, the outcomes achieved, and the challenges faced in changing the school culture. Adult participants took part in an individual semi-structured interview at the school. Students took part in focus groups made up of 4-8 children who were of similar age, school level and represented a mix of gender and ethnicity. It should be acknowledged that in studying school culture researcher observation would usually be included. Because of funding and time constraints this was not undertaken.

Analysis Framework

The approach to analysis was for each researcher to develop an individual case study around the school they visited based on the data they had collected. For each school a profile was
developed (Children’s Issues Centre, 2004). Profile development included sending profiles back to the school to check for accuracy, interpretation and errors.

**FIGURE TWO: Framework for Collection and Analysis of Information**

Analysis of the information drew on the elements within Figure Two. Additionally, this framework allowed for a comparative analysis of the resulting case study profiles. The key factors of beliefs, values, relationships and systems were considered in terms of history, change and outcomes. This is by no means a comprehensive list of possible approaches to examining culture, (Pettigrew, 1990), but covers many of the acknowledged factors.

**RESULTS**

In this article a comparative analysis across the three schools is made. There were some common factors identified across the schools. The four main factors from across the case studies that will be discussed here are:

- the importance of leadership in bringing about change
- the centrality of relationships to school culture
- the nature of the programmes that were used to bring about change
- the nature of the change process itself.

**Leadership**

Change was initiated in all three schools upon the appointment of a new principal. The principals, on coming into their new school, all identified a feature of the school culture that they believed should be changed. The areas identified differed across the three schools. At Papatoetoe Intermediate it was the high level of school suspensions and exclusions. At Wilford Primary it was the relative isolation of staff and the lack of collegiality. At Caversham Primary it was the overt level of violence in the playground. In all three schools the principal’s starting point for change was maintaining the belief that school life did not have to be this way. Whereas many, if not most of those in the school had become accustomed to these features being part of school life.

A major sub-theme across the three schools was that individual teachers might be doing very well within their classrooms but it was the development of school wide practices that would be central to bringing about change across the school as a whole. The principals said it was their role to keep drawing the school’s attention to the ‘big picture’.

> But within that there were teachers who were doing a remarkably good job. But I think by the time they had a classroom functioning they didn’t have time or energy for the big picture. I didn’t have a classroom so I came and got the big picture. (Principal, Caversham Primary School)

In support of this there were reports from research participants from all three schools about how the principals kept up with the latest research and ideas about learning and schooling. For example:

> Oh yeah, right up to date with everything that was going on in education. I was reading stuff from the university training, actually if you went to discuss any of that stuff, which was right up to date stuff, with (the principal), she had read it. She knew it. She was way ahead of where we were, and we were supposed to be breaking new ground. (RTLB, Caversham Primary School)

All of the principals saw one of their leadership roles as identifying potential points for initiating change and bringing the staff ‘on board’ or getting their ‘buy-in’. This meant that initial work within each school was with teachers and staff to develop a school wide vision and strategies to support the vision. In the two larger schools (Papatoetoe Intermediate and Wilford Primary) the Principals formally engaged the support of senior staff. At Papatoetoe Intermediate this was done by setting up a pastoral care team and at Wilford Primary it was the management team. In two of the schools part of the school wide work involved curriculum professional development. For the smallest school, Caversham Primary, this was done by bringing in outside advisors. At Wilford Primary, because of the principal’s desire to build collegiality, time was made available for teachers to observe each other working in their classrooms.

> One of the most powerful things we did was introduce David Stewart’s ‘Quality Learning Circles’, [whereby] teachers go into each other’s classes to learn, not to appraise that teacher but to learn. I released people and they formed three groups within the staff and they talked about what they were good at and what they wanted to learn and others said “well I would really like to come and see that”. And even doing this was hard for some people, they found it quite difficult to talk to someone about themselves in positive terms. (Principal, Wilford Primary School).
The importance of relationships

All three schools focused on developing and maintaining school wide approaches to the management of student behaviour. This involved staff in each school discussing as a group what it was that they were aiming for in terms of vision, the types of relationships they wished to have and the principles that would underpin such relationships. The key value identified by staff in each school to underpin the desired relationships was respect. At Wilford Primary staff were encouraged to focus on their own relationships first to improve collegiality. For staff at Caversham Primary the relationship focus was about teachers taking the initiative to model appropriate relationships for the students. At Papatoetoe Intermediate staff were asked to find ways to engage with more of the students. If students struggled to fit in at school then it was the school’s responsibility to consider what could be done to support the students rather than using exclusions to remove them or suggest they go elsewhere.

…But teacher buy-in is not a given. It is a process that takes time and you can’t just assume that teachers will understand and accept what we are trying to achieve here. We find that once they have been through our staff induction programme and become familiar with our approach that most of them do come on board. It may be easier in one sense to spend a minute and flick a kid on rather than spend ten minutes and try and help them resolve their problem. But it is the latter we promote here, not the former! (Principal, Papatoetoe Intermediate School)

The improvement in relationships between staff in all schools was a precursor to looking at the relationships between staff and students and between students. An important feature of improving student relationships was the setting of clear expectations. These expectations were promoted school wide as formal school rules, within school newsletters and at school gatherings. Staff were asked to model and promote the type of interactions seen as appropriate to the school. Consequences for appropriate and inappropriate behaviour were an essential means of reinforcing the expectations. Participants in this study from across the schools talked about making sure that staff were immediate, consistent and fair in their approach when responding to inappropriate behaviour.

When most students understand what is expected of them and know what the consequences will be for both appropriate and inappropriate behaviour they not only meet the expectations they sustain them. To this end at Wilford Primary School, while only some students are given the official role of peer mediator, all students are taught peer mediation skills.

Using the peer mediation model. I expect them to both agree to solve the problem. I expect them to tell the truth and not blame other people. I expect them to put themselves in other people’s shoes and to generate a solution that is going to be acceptable to both parties. Quite often, because some of them are so skilled in this, they will come to me with a conflict, four or five of them and I will sit here, they do it, very quickly and off they go. (Principal, Wilford Primary School)

Change will not be successful if enforcement is from the adults only. For example, one principal said “the students could be a lot more sneaky about their violence … because if a kid saw you they would stop being violent” (Principal—Papatoetoe Intermediate School). Once students started reinforcing expectations and supporting consequences then violence and bullying can be dealt with.

Some of the older children at Caversham Primary described how they felt there had been a big improvement in the way students interacted with each other.

Student: When I was about six years old, there was heaps of bullies here. Um They used to be on the tower. They used to fight and stuff. Used to be like a wrestling ring, they’d push everybody off.

Researcher: Mmmm. So did it change over time? Is it better now?

Student: Yep. Yep. It’s changed. Dramatically. (student, Caversham Primary School)

In all three schools the students in the research talked about what the school or classroom rules were and knew what the consequences were for inappropriate behaviour in particular. The children generally reported that they liked being at school. They reported a sense of people caring and school being a safe place to be. Students also talked about what they should do if they saw a bullying incident developing.

The programmes used to bring about change.

A feature of the programmes in the case study schools was that there was not just one. In the case of Wilford Primary, the school developed an umbrella programme they called Promoting Positive Relationships under which other programmes were placed. The thinking and decision-making about how the programme operated was the responsibility of the principal and management team. At Papatoetoe Intermediate the pastoral care team, referred to earlier, provides overall direction for student welfare within the school. As other programmes are initiated by the team they may have their own teams set up with delegated responsibilities. At Caversham Primary, the school was small enough for change to be led by the principal without requiring separate teams or groups to be set up.

In looking at the range of programmes offered, the common focus across all them at each of the schools was the focus on supporting the well-being of students (and staff). A reduction in bullying or violent behaviour was only one of the outcomes associated with improving student well-being. All three schools recognised that student well-being, both
physical and emotional, is a requirement for maximising teaching and learning opportunities. At Caversham Primary this includes providing food for some of the children. Research participants at all three schools talked about acknowledging the cultural diversity of the students within the school. Student ethnic identity and culture was supported and accepted.

[We] celebrate diversity. The positive about this school is there is no norm. So a lot of tension that goes on in other schools, doesn’t happen because: “who’s the norm?” “Where’s the stereotype?” It doesn’t exist. So your different culture, your body shape, your accent, how you look, what clothes you wear is just accepted. You can wear the hairstyle you like, what clothes you like. The clothes here vary hugely and no-one ever says anything. (Principal, Wilford Primary School)

Students made comments that indicated a sense of belonging to their schools.

We get lots of badges with the reward system - for being in orchestra, choirs, sports teams, road patrol, librarian. (Year 8 student, Papatoetoe Intermediate School)

Student 1: They always look after you when you get hurt.

Student 2: You’re not bossed around.

Student 3: The best thing about Caversham School is when you come, you have friends and you don’t feel lonely. (Students, Caversham Primary School)

Much of the support for students comes via programmes for individual students or small groups.

All three schools had participated in the Eliminating Violence – Managing Anger programme (commonly referred to as the Eliminating Violence programme) offered by Specialist Education Services, now Ministry of Education, Special Education. When looking for schools to participate in this study we did look for schools that had participated in some form of anti-bullying programmes, but it was not known until later that all three had actually participated in the Eliminating Violence programme. This programme itself is not based on set content, but rather introduces an on-going process of whole school review with an external professional gathering data about what is happening in the school and then facilitating the school’s development of a response to the information.

Professionals external to the school were important in the implementation of programmes such as the Eliminating Violence programme in which all three schools participated. Credible external or visiting professionals can have some influence with staff by bringing the outsiders more ‘objective’ view. This view is likely to validate the change leader’s view.

It’s good because I can preach whatever I like. I drive this, I am sure that I drive this and lead it, but it becomes like, “she thinks that, the Principal thinks that but what about the rest of the world?”. It is really powerful to bring other people from outside in who say the same thing in a different way. So we have done a lot of that, we’ve had School Support Services, Special Education, Peace Foundation in the early days. (Principal, Wilford Primary School)

Another group of professionals who can be called on at any time independent of a programme includes the public health nurses, the RTLs or social worker in schools. These professionals provide on-going support to the schools over time.

The change process

Research participants, principals in particular, at all three schools commented on how developing the school culture they envisioned required lots of time and energy. Originally when looking for schools to participate in this study the aim was to find those that had been in the process for at least 2-3 years. In the case of Papatoetoe Intermediate and Wilford Primary both had initiated changes with a school culture focus that began 8-9 years ago, yet the principals reported that the time and energy required now is just as great as that needed at the beginning.

Keep it alive, keep all parties involved, keep looking at new and interesting and exciting innovations, keep looking at ways to celebrate successes, it’s a huge amount of work, so when people say send me your package well I am afraid it doesn’t work like that. This is the ninth year I have been here and in this school I see huge development to be done. (Principal, Wilford Primary School)

There does not appear to be a time when the programmes or the school culture sustains itself. This is particularly true of Papatoetoe Intermediate School where students are at the school for such a short time and there are always new staff to induct.

It can be difficult to induct new staff into the school’s ethos and systems at times. We have a large staff with 50 classroom teachers. Five left in the first half of the year, and although this is felt keenly within the school, a 10% resignation rate is really quite low. However, it still means that five new teachers need to be inducted by the syndicate leaders and deans.

Many assemblies at the beginning of the year are driven towards getting the children on board with the pastoral care and discipline aspects within the school. These messages are then reinforced by each teacher within their classroom. Over the following fortnight they talk about respect and the other things we value, especially non-violence. The students then clearly know what we are aiming for here and why we have a counsellor, high expectations, discipline – rules and consequences. (Principal, Papatoetoe Intermediate School)

Another outcome that was reported by school staff beyond the reduction in bullying and improvement in behaviour is
that teaching is easier. Classroom management and playground supervision is a more pleasant experience rather than a chore. Staff report there is more support available, issues can be talked through and teachers are not left to work out classroom management on their own. For staff this improves collegiality and for students school is a place where people care.

**Well I think the strengths are the staff work together as a unit. We support each other and we have a real dedication to our children. The children are first you know. I think the staff here go looking for what they can do to help. They don’t hide from it whatsoever. I think you only need to look at the phone calls that go in after school or weekends and things, just to check up on how this is happening and “can we help you here? And: get this meeting going.” Or whatever. And they look at the children very much as individuals and not as a group of a particular year ... And I think the staff getting on together is an important aspect too, to work as a unit, really. (Teacher, Caversham Primary School)

The students and teachers work together to create a pleasant environment in class and out of class – there is always someone who will respect you and make you feel good.

**School is a safe, fun and a nice place to go to – you don’t get up in the morning and say ‘oh, I don’t want to go to school’ (Students, Papatoetoe Intermediate School)

**DISCUSSION**

In summary, the key feature in altering school culture in each of the schools was the leadership of the school principal in deciding that change was required. In each of the schools there were practices and behaviours with which the principals were not happy and those behaviours did not fit their view of a ‘good’ school. The road to change for all three principals involved developing a ‘big picture’, sharing it with their school’s staff and then encouraging the staff to come on board and contribute to its realisation with the students.

One of the common approaches to developing the culture of each school was the implementation of a school wide system to supporting students to manage their behaviour (for further reading see NZCER, 2000). While this is the common terminology in schools, focusing on all school relationships advanced the discussion about how this was done. It was no longer about what adults did to students but about making it okay to talk about what kind of social environment people wanted and then agreeing how to share the responsibilities for making it happen. The adults in each school as well as the students were given opportunities to examine relationships within the school and decide how they would like them to be. This discussion was symbolised in the development of school rules and classroom agreements. The work was done collectively and expectations about the way in which everybody in the school should interact were formed. In order to help meet these expectations clear consequences and procedures were established within the school that acknowledged both appropriate behaviour and inappropriate behaviour. Achievements were celebrated and appropriate behaviour rewarded. Students who did not meet the expectations were not removed from the schools, but instead were provided with support and opportunities to learn how to interact within and through the school culture. These opportunities and supports made it possible for students and adults to succeed in changing the playground and classroom culture and contribute to the overall school culture. This process allowed adults and students to become committed to maintaining and improving the resulting school culture.

Across the approaches and strategies adopted by the three schools we can see a set of values and beliefs emerging that could be said to typify a good school. This would include the idea that schools should be positive environments for adults and students, where practices are inclusive. If students are struggling to establish good relationships and act appropriately then lots of support is given to them so they achieve these things. This reinforces a student’s belonging to the community and the school community’s responsibilities for their students. This is not to say that there will not be students who are eventually excluded from the community, but this happens only after every effort has been made and opportunities for change have been provided. Another value is one of ownership and participation by both adults and students. A principal may have an idea that things can be different, but it is only by getting the school staff, parents and students to collaborate in establishing what that difference may look like that sustainable change starts to occur.

These values are present even though the starting point for initiating change was based on the principals making a judgement about where to begin. At Papatoetoe Intermediate School it began with the introduction a pastoral care focus to better respond to the needs of their students rather than limit the focus to curriculum and discipline issues. At Wilford Primary School it was about improving collegiality amongst the staff and at Caversham Primary School it was about reducing school violence. The common theme across the different starting points was the focus on relationships. The common key value was the development of respect across school relationships.

Associated with a different starting point in each school was the diverse range of programmes implemented. The common feature that holds the different programmes together within the schools and makes them appear similar was the focus on improving student well-being of which the elimination of violence and bullying is only one part. The understanding being presented here is that frequent bullying within a school is the indirect or direct result of the school culture. Anti-bullying programmes that do not address the underlying aspects of school culture that support the occurrences of bullying are likely to fail. The positive message within this is that schools can address bullying by focusing on student well being. Once a school has developed
a culture of supporting student well-being (a strength based model) then occurrences of bullying can be dealt with within a wider context of “This is the way things are done around here” (appropriate behaviour) rather than just a reaction to bullying (inappropriate behaviour).

An important feature of programme management was how the schools continued to monitor the success of their programmes and then drop, alter or add to them accordingly. Programme evaluation was done on the basis of people understanding how each programme contributed to their school and its community as a whole. This ongoing refinement of individual programmes supported the development of a more positive school culture and the realisation of each school’s vision for itself. The reports from all project participants were that the schools became much better places for students and staff. But there is no sense of having ‘finally got there’ as on-going time and energy is required to sustain the culture of the schools and prepare for further development. Sustaining the culture of the schools required a recommitment to practices and beliefs each day.

Implications
The outcomes from the three schools does not necessarily offer a recipe that other schools must adopt for success. However, we would like to suggest that the principles of change identified in these three case study schools are critical for any school wanting to improve its school culture and reduce bullying. These principles are that:

1) leadership will be critical to initiating the change process, but staff support (buy-in), followed by student support, is needed to achieve school wide development;
2) the development of a more positive school culture will require people to look at the relationships that make up the school;
3) the programmes implemented, and it is unlikely to be just one, will in general need to focus on supporting the well-being of students in the school; and
4) the change process requires lots of time and energy and never becomes self sustaining.

The development that all three schools undertook, using the principles listed above, was a single school wide policy or approach to managing student behaviour and the promotion of positive relationships. Such a policy or approach included:

- creating clear expectations through discussion about what was considered as desirable school relationships and appropriate behaviour;
- setting in place consistent, immediate and fair consequences for both appropriate and inappropriate behaviour; and
- providing support for students (and adults) so they could develop positive relationships and learn to behave appropriately.

Conclusion
It is a challenge for any school to be able to provide a warm and friendly social environment for the purposes of supporting teaching and learning. Each of the schools in this project could respond to the challenges placed before them and were able to find and continue to look for solutions that worked for them. They, along with all the other schools that have taken up the challenge, now place the challenge before other schools to look at their own school culture and consider the way forward. The research team would like to acknowledge the good will shown by both adults and children in each of the schools when talking about topics that can be sensitive, especially in a context of schools agreeing to allow their names to appear in subsequent publications such as this one.

REFERENCES


Michael Gaffney has worked at the Children’s Issues Centre, University of Otago as a researcher since its inception nine years ago. Jahleh McCormack has a background in geography and has worked in a number of education projects at the Children’s Issues Centre before moving on to the Ministry of Social Development and then overseas. Dr Nancy Higgins has a background in disability studies and is now working as a research developer at the Dunedin College of Education. Nicola Taylor has a legal and social work background and has also worked at the Children’s Issues Centre since its inception.

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An Interview with Dr. Barbara Disley

Group Manager, Ministry of Education, Special Education.

When I interviewed Barbara I wanted to understand her past work experiences and try to connect this through to her views on our work in the future with the Ministry of Education – Special Education.

For Barbara, a young mother in the 70s, teaching appealed, the holidays fitted in with rearing a child and maths was the subject she intended to teach. She began a four year concurrent study and teaching degree at Macquarie University. In her second year she took a special education paper, the first of its kind for the University. She enjoyed the paper and her lecturer persuaded her to keep doing those papers. This influence saw Barbara majoring in special education. Her career working with disability in communities had begun.

The university had established a special education centre on campus where children came for learning opportunities which were linked to a research programme. Research programmes on Down Syndrome were happening around the world in the late 70s and one was established at Macquarie. As Barbara recalls this was a time of excitement when she began to see the real possibilities and opportunities in special education.

“Children with Down Syndrome came in as young babies…. it was work with an educational focus that really shifted the boundaries of what these young people could achieve. A whole new world was there that needed exploring and understanding in education.”

Following this Barbara worked at Marsden Hospital, a hospital for 500 children, only 50 of whom were deemed educable and went to school (“I cringe now”). Her next job was in the adult part of the hospital as a social educator in the rehabilitation area for 270 people. The adults living at the hospital had moved from an island in the centre of the Hawkesbury River to the middle of Parramatta. While little really changed for the residents this was the first move to de-institutionalisation. However she recalls working with some excellent forward thinking doctors and nurses who started to set up community homes for people from the hospital - an extremely innovative move for those times.

Some years later Barbara then moved to Grafton New South Wales with her husband who was the training officer at the sheltered workshop. Barbara was employed by health to be their Area Officer of Developmental Disabilities. There she had opportunities to establish Early Intervention services, work with children and their families who attended the special and mainstream schools and support young adults working in the sheltered workshop settings and their families. It was during this time that three important influences seemed to come together. Barbara and her husband lived in a community house that consisted of four independent flats in a large house. She finished her PhD which was on “teaching generalisable skills to young adults which could take them into the workplace” and she was also at the time a member of the Australian Council of Rehabilitation for people with disabilities which looked at maximising opportunities for young adults. In helping to organise a conference at this time, Barbara recalled the impact of Wolf Wolfensberger and his theories and ideas on normalisation. Many of the things he described were so true of the way things were at the time.

“They did place community homes out in the country, or near the cemetery or hospital. It seems simple to think of this now – he made us look at things differently. A lot of the base work for building really inclusive community was set back in the late 70s and early 80s. He challenged many of the professional groups because the whole disability sector was still very hospital and medically dominated.”

At that time she also has clear memories of Dennis who came to live with her and her husband at the community house when he was 45. Dennis had Down Syndrome and had lived at home with his mother all his life. When she died he did not want to live with relatives, and life in the community house with its attached sheltered workshop gave him a new social context. Barbara recalls:

“He had so many skills. He could shop, do all his clothing, was meticulous in his hygiene and his house, went to church on Sundays, and after work on Fridays he would organise himself to go and have a couple of beers and then come home and cook a meal. It just showed me that with an expectation from his mother, and with good teaching that he could do lots of things. It was a powerful lesson to me because it showed me having gone through a career in a hospital setting trying to teach social skills that here in a community town there were lots of people who were supporting people like Dennis to learn the skills for everyday life.”
"Dennis was a powerful reminder of what people can do. His life is what the New Zealand Disability Strategy is trying to convey. It is about attitudes and valuing someone for whom they are. He was valued in his community, by his family and his mother and she clearly expected him to be able to do things for himself and to participate in their community."

It is these three experiences combined - grounded experience, the background in normalisation theory and the completion of her PhD which drew on current research and thinking, that contributes to her excitement and positive feelings about evidence-based practice work being completed in the Professional Practice Unit today.

"Learning from the research, because there was a lot we learnt like, breaking tasks down, reinforcing learning moments, while at the same time looking at the lived experience of people, counting that, and professional expertise and experience and then looking at what the whole picture told us was how we were beginning to work. It is exciting to see this now all being put into the action research context."

These thoughts are linked discussions, that of the future role of educators and how we work together. Barbara’s experiences with people with disabilities contribute to her beliefs in this area but she also draws on her experiences in the mental health field to explore the complexity she attaches to this future role.

Barbara was Deputy Director and then Director of Mental Health Foundation in New Zealand, a charitable trust organisation, for seven years. The work at that time centred around violence prevention, protection of children, raising awareness of issues that had impacted on mental health, drugs and alcohol, young people’s mental health, suicide and suicide prevention, and setting up of systems of support for refugees in Auckland. She also had further opportunities to connect with schools through the Mental Health Matters curriculum, the Healthy Schools programme and the Mentally Healthy Schools programme. After seven years she took up the position of Chair of the Mental Health Commission. This role involved education regarding:

"The whole understanding of mental illness, supporting communities to better understand the needs of people, promoting the concept that people can recover from mental illness. Having a serious mental illness usually meant also not having somewhere to live, a job, family and friends. These things contributed to whether a person became well or not, and it was these things that contributed to further marginalisation."

Barbara says "you can’t work in that sector, I don’t think, without really getting around to understanding the importance of a consumer perspective because so many of the people are very capable, very articulate, very intelligent and very challenging of status quo views". She recalls the challenges this often presented to her. "I was coming from a professional base, and was very mindful of my professional responsibilities and accountabilities, and I was also very mindful of the increasing imperative to consider the views of mental health consumers, parents, providers and the community. Often the views were very different and as a sector we had to find ways to begin to listen to each other and understand where people were coming from and what they saw as a constructive way forward."

"I’ve thought a lot about where we need to go now in special education. We have a lot to contribute to the sector in terms of promoting effective teaching practice and we will take a leading role in helping the sector understand the deeper implications of the Disability Strategy. However specialist knowledge and skills alone are not enough. In order for our specialist knowledge and skills to be shared with the sector, we need to develop very effective relationships across the whole sector."

Barbara feels that relationships across the sector are going to be the means by which we do our work in the future. "There are differing and strongly held views in the education sector around special education and we have the challenge of needing to work with people who don’t have similar views, as it is only by building bridges that we will continue to move forward. Finding common ground from which to discuss our different perspectives and learning from each other, and here I mean the young person themselves, their parents, families, whanau and other educators will be our challenge."

Barbara’s views reflect professionals as sensitive agents of change, while not denying the challenge this often presents to professionals. She is also honest in her recognition at "how isolated the different parts of the New Zealand education sector are from each other and how because of this we don’t seem to collectively see ourselves as a sector galvanised for action."

The themes which come through that sustain her energy, commitment and enthusiasm to special education include, the opportunities taking an educative focus presents, and the enormous changes that have taken place in her career especially in terms of valuing people with disabilities "what could the next 20 years or so hold? I would hope that we would have people absolutely being valued." They also include the combination of research, the consumer’s voice and people’s stories along with professional input, adding value to the work we do, and the importance of building bridges with a professionalism that values people, facilitates different viewpoints, and that seeks constantly to share knowledge and skills.

INTERVIEWER’S PROFILE
Barbara Disley was interviewed by Liz Brady. Liz is a registered psychologist who is currently co-ordinating the Ministry of Education – Special Education input into the journal Kairaranga.
ABSTRACT
This study investigated the caseload characteristics and the types of intervention implemented for children with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). A survey was developed and distributed to 75 speech-language therapists working for Special Education within the New Zealand Ministry of Education. A total of 34 surveys were completed and returned. Analysis indicated that all the respondents were providing intervention for children with ASD. The majority of respondents had between one and five children with ASD on their caseload, of which, over half were aged under five-years-old. Visually based intervention methods, such as the Picture Exchange Communication System and social stories, were identified as the most frequently used and the respondents rated these interventions highly in terms of their perceived effectiveness for this population.

The need for research to examine the efficacy of intervention approaches commonly used by speech-language therapists in working with children with ASD is discussed.

INTRODUCTION
Autism is a developmental disorder characterised by difficulties with verbal and non-verbal communication, and social skills (Filipek, et al., 1999). At this time no cure has been identified, and the symptoms of autism are generally managed through a combination of behavioural, educational and biological methods (Levy & Hyman, 2002). A crucial requirement of intervention is that it is targeted at the appropriate linguistic and cognitive level for the individual and that it is motivating and relevant. Speech-language therapists play a vital role in the intervention process for this population and must ensure that people in the child’s environment are using effective and consistent strategies to facilitate communication (Howlin, 1998).

“A CRUCIAL REQUIREMENT OF INTERVENTION IS THAT IT IS TARGETED AT THE APPROPRIATE LINGUISTIC AND COGNITIVE LEVEL FOR THE INDIVIDUAL AND THAT IT IS MOTIVATING AND RELEVANT.”

Many intervention techniques have been developed for children diagnosed with ASD. However, the heterogeneous nature of autistic spectrum disorders presents difficulties in determining the most appropriate intervention for the individual child and it is unlikely that one intervention technique will be effective for all children (Howlin, 1998). Furthermore, some interventions have a stronger research base, whilst others are supported mainly by anecdotal reports. The importance of research to support intervention techniques should not be overlooked despite the heterogeneity of this group of children.

Although, the presentation of autism is variable, certain patterns of language and cognitive deficit exist. Non-verbal and non-social problem solving skills are usually relative strengths (Quill, 1998). Relatively superior abilities in associative memory, rule-based tasks and visuospatial organisation have also been identified in children with ASD when compared with other modalities (Quill, 1998). Severe difficulties are frequently observed with language development and the ability to apply abstract concepts. Repetitive and limited behaviour with an obsessive resistance to change in familiar routines or surroundings are also commonly observed behaviours in children diagnosed with ASD (Watson, Holton & Andrew, 1999). Particular weaknesses have been identified in auditory processing tasks and rapid shifting of attention (Quill, 1998; Rapin, 2001; Mundy, Sigman, Ungerer & Sherman, 1986; Coucouvanis, 1997). When required to shift attention between visual and auditory stimuli, delays are evident, along with difficulty in focusing attention to the most salient feature of the stimuli (Quill, 1997). When developing an intervention plan for children with ASD the individual’s profile of strengths and weaknesses must be considered in order to provide an effective intervention.

“The importance of research to support intervention techniques should not be overlooked despite the heterogeneity of this group of children.”

The need to determine which interventions speech-language therapists implement with children with ASD is apparent as it allows research efforts to be targeted to ensure the efficacy of these interventions. The present report details findings from a survey regarding the intervention practices of speech-language therapists working with children with ASD in a New Zealand educational setting. Information regarding caseload, service delivery, interventions and training was sought.

A variety of intervention strategies for children with ASD have been described in the literature. The interventions that were listed in the survey for therapists to indicate whether they employed the strategy in their management of children with ASD are briefly discussed in the next section.
1. SOCIAL STORY TECHNIQUE
A “social story” is a description of a social situation, which provides relevant social cues and identifies appropriate responses for a particular individual (Hagihara & Myles, 1999). Traditionally, social stories have been presented in a book format, which provides static images of the target behaviour. Often social stories are developed using photographic images that are combined with text aimed at the appropriate language level (Gray, 1995). Although social stories are widely used in intervention, the primary support comes from anecdotal reports.

One of the few studies designed to determine the effectiveness of book style social stories, used these stories to facilitate the social interactions of an eight-year old girl with ASD (Norris & Dattilio, 1999). In an effort to decrease undesirable social behaviours, one of three social stories addressing the participant’s social interactions was presented immediately prior to the observation period. A decrease in undesirable behaviours that was correlated with the intervention was observed. However methodological flaws in the research design limit findings from this study and the authors recommended exercising caution when interpreting the results.

A few other positive findings from the use of social stories with school aged children with ASD have been reported (Lorimer, Simpson, Myles & Ganz, 2002; Hagihara & Myles 1999; Scattone, Wilezynski, Edwards & Rabian, 2002) However, results varied for the different participants with an increase in skill levels observed to be more pronounced in some participants.

2. PICTURE EXCHANGE COMMUNICATION SYSTEM
The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) is a visually based system designed as a means for children with ASD to rapidly develop functional communication. PECS integrates theoretical principles from applied behavior analysis and alternative and augmentative communication. This system can be used with children at varying developmental stages. It begins by teaching single word requests but quickly moves onto building sentence structure (Bondy & Frost, 1998). Picture cards are used to represent words and these are typically paired with speech.

There are few well-controlled studies assessing the effectiveness of this system, but anecdotal reports support the use of this system (Mirenda, 2001).

Kravits, Kamps, Kemmerer & Potucek (2002) examined the effects of PECS on the spontaneous communication skills of a six-year old girl with ASD. The child’s spontaneous language increased with the implementation of PECS. Generalisation was also demonstrated by the increased use of picture cards and verbalizations across all the environments that PECS was implemented.

Charlop-Christy, Carpenter, Le Blanc and Kellet (2002) investigated the acquisition of PECS with three young children with ASD in an early years settings. This study also looked at the effects implementation of PECS has on speech development. The findings indicated that all the children met the learning criteria for PECS and were therefore, able to use the system effectively and all the children also showed increases in speech development when PECS was implemented.

3. VISUAL AIDES/STRATEGIES
Visual aides are used for many purposes with children with ASD. PECS and social stories are both forms of visual aides, however, visual aides also encompass the use of strategies such as graphically represented schedules (Odom, Brown, Frey, & Karasu, 2003).

Schedules can be used to reduce anxiety and encourage independence in activities and transitions (www.polyox.com). Again, much of the support from these types of intervention is anecdotal, however, a study by Dettmer, Simpson, Myles & Ganz (2000), using visual supports with two school-aged children with ASD demonstrated significant improvements in transitions between activities and a decrease in the need for prompting from the teacher.

4. APPLIED BEHAVIOUR ANALYSIS (ABA)
Behaviour Analysis is the investigation of behaviour, behaviour change and the basis for the change. ABA involves using the information acquired through this process to interpret the relationship between the behaviour and the circumstances (Jensen & Sinclair, 2002). The primary emphasis in ABA is the use of intensive, instructional methods that alter particular behaviours in systematic and measurable ways (Anderson, Taras & Cannon, 1996). Correct responses and behaviours are rewarded with positive reinforcement, whilst, incorrect responses and undesirable behaviours are disregarded following which, appropriate responses are prompted and then reinforced (Anderson, et al. 1996).

Schroen (2003) reported some limitations to the use of ABA with children with ASD. First, ABA is very intense both in structure and delivery, findings from intervention studies indicate that 40 hours a week of ABA intervention results in significant improvements in communication, social skills and IQ (Harris & Delmolino, 2002). Second, generalisation to other environments may be difficult resulting in setting specific improvements. However, dramatic improvements shown in ABA intervention from some studies with preschool children and school aged children (Lovaas, 1987, McEachin, Lovaas, and Smith, 1993) provide support for the use of this intervention when time and experienced interventionists are available (Jensen & Sinclair, 2002).

5. DISCRETE TRIAL INSTRUCTION
Discrete trial instruction (DTI) is a method of instruction that is based on the ABA principles. The term DTI has frequently been used synonymously with ABA, however, DTI is an important element of ABA but does not encompass the whole ABA process. The skills that are taught through the DTI must be generalized into natural settings (Jensen & Sinclair, 2002).
DTI is an instructional procedure applied to develop predetermined skills, such as communication, play, and social skills. This procedure entails dividing the chosen skill into components and training each component individually until it’s accomplished. Intensive training is provided utilizing shaping, prompting, prompt fading and reinforcement strategies (Smith, 2001).

A discrete trial is one cycle of a behaviourally based teaching method. Each discrete trial involves four components. These are the instruction or cue for which the child will be expected to respond to, the prompt to facilitate the child’s response, the response, and the reinforcement to motivate the child (Smith, 2001).

Smith (2001) reported some limitations with DTI, these included the time required to implement the intervention and the need for specialised training in implementation. It was reported that although the exact amount of time required is still unknown, many hours of intervention each week are often required in order to see results. The need for discrete trial therapy trainers to receive specialised training in effective implementation of the method was also highlighted.

6. MILIEU/ INCIDENTAL TEACHING

Behavioural analysts have long emphasized the contribution of environmental factors to the course of a child’s language development. Hart and Rogers-Warren, (1978) termed therapy based in a natural environment as Milieu teaching. Milieu teaching is a naturalistic, conversational based teaching procedure in which the child’s interest in the environment is used as a basis for eliciting elaborated responses (Kaiser, 1993). Essentially this model is incidental learning. The common features of milieu or incidental teaching include; (a) language teaching follows the child’s lead or interests, (b) uses multiple, naturally occurring examples, (c) explicit prompting for language production is involved, (d) natural consequences to reinforce the child’s verbal behaviour are used, (e) continued utilisation of milieu teaching strategies in interactions between child and significant others (Kaiser, 1993).

Hart and Rogers-Warren (1978) carried out several studies using Milieu teaching strategies to train adjective-noun combinations and to shape compound sentences in children with ASD. Results from these studies showed significant increases in the children’s ability to produce these targets and to generalise them to other non-trained environments. This approach to intervention has been reported in intervention studies to increase the use of targeted language responses and in some cases generalisation was also observed (see Hancock and Kaiser, 2002).

7. GREENSPAN’S DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH - FLOOR TIME

This developmental play model of intervention focuses primarily on the emotional well-being of the child (Greenspan, 1992). Intervention involves participation in child directed play sessions. The aim being to achieve the optimum level of arousal to promote learning for a particular child then to build what is known as circles of communication. Reports from clinicians indicate improvements in the child’s interactions, however, research is required to support the efficacy of floor time (Levy & Hyman, 2002).

8. FACILITATED COMMUNICATION

Facilitated Communication is a manual prompting method to support the child in the use of a communication device. A facilitator supports the child’s hand and isolates a finger to point whilst providing backwards pressure to aid muscle control (Ziring, Brazdziunas, Cooley, Kastner, 1998). This support supposedly enables the child the muscle control to indicate choices or to type letters to develop a communicative statement (Ziring, Brazdziunas, Cooley, Kastner, 1998).

Kerrin, Murdock, Sharpton, Jones, (1998) investigated the use of facilitated communication with two students with ASD in alternating treatments design study with the facilitator being either blind or sighted. The data indicated that more accurate responses were made when the facilitator could see even though she did not think she was influencing the student’s responses.

American Academy of Pediatrics (1998) issued a statement pertaining to facilitated communication and auditory integration training. The statement emphasised that the evidence for these therapies does not support the implementation of them except for the purpose of research. Further, they reported that a review of current research data shows facilitated communication is ineffective (Ziring, et al., 1998).

9. AUDITORY TRAINING

Auditory integration training was developed in an attempt to reduce the symptoms of autism. Initially it was thought that it benefited only those with sound sensitivities, however, Rimland & Edelson (1995), reported that individuals who are not sound sensitive also benefit. Such benefits are reported to include; improved attention, improved auditory processing, decreased irritability, reduced lethargy, and improved expressive language and auditory comprehension, however, little research supports these claims (Ziring, et al., 1998). Auditory integration training requires a detailed audiogram, indicating auditory thresholds to a large number of frequencies. This is examined for evidence of hyperacusis, and comparisons are made in relation to the child’s history of sound sensitivities (Ziring, et al., 1998). Auditory integration treatment is reasonably intensive involving 20 half-hour sessions over ten days. Computer-modified music is used in the therapy. Frequencies that the child demonstrates hypersensitivities are removed, and the predictability of the auditory patterns is reduced.

A pilot study by Rimland & Edelson (1995) examined auditory integration therapy in eight children with ASD aged between 4 and 21 years old. For comparison nine children with ASD listened to unmodified music under identical conditions.
It was reported that the auditory integration training group demonstrated decreases in repetitive behaviours, irritability, and hyperactivity, as well as improved attention. However, as random assignment was not used and no information regarding the two groups comparability was included, comparisons are difficult to make.

Furthermore, an investigation of 80 children with ASD demonstrated that unmodified music had the same effects as auditory integration training (Bettison, 1996). Both groups of children, despite whether they had received auditory integration training or unmodified music demonstrated significant improvements in behaviour, and verbal and performance IQ. Further research is required before auditory integration training can be considered an effective therapy for use with children with ASD. The American Academy of Paediatrics (1998) suggested that the evidence for auditory integration training does not support the implementation of it except for the purpose of research.

10. FUNCTIONAL COMMUNICATION TRAINING

Functional communication training involves training alternative communication to replace problem behaviour. Functional communication training was reported to be an empirically validated approach to behavioural support (for a review see Durand & Merges, 2001). A review of interventions for children with autism by Goldstein (2002) also reported this to be a successful intervention method, showing decreases in problematic behaviours with the implementation of alternative communication.

Functional communication training is based on the premise that behavioural difficulties are a form of communication (Durand, 1990). It is assumed that if individuals can gain access to desired consequences more effectively by using the new response, they will reduce their use of the undesirable response.

Based on the research it appears to be a useful form of intervention for the reduction of problematic behaviours, which are assumed to have a communicative function.

11. SIGN (PAIRED WITH SPEECH)

Manual signing is a form of augmentative communication, which may be used to facilitate receptive language and build expressive language for children with ASD exhibiting limited functional speech. Research has investigated pairing sign with speech, compared with solely speech and with solely manual signing, to train vocabulary to children with ASD (Mirenda, 2003). The results of these studies suggest that pairing manual signing with speech achieves quicker and more comprehensive vocabulary acquisition than speech alone (see Mirenda, 2003 for review).

Mirenda (2001) noted, however, that although positive findings have been reported, not all children with ASD perform equally in learning to use manual signing, which appears to be related to fine motor control. Evidence suggests that students with poor fine motor skills are inclined

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**TABLE 1**

**Summary of speech and language therapists’ responses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>% of Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of children with ASD on SLTs’ caseloads</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. within each age range</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-18 years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of direct contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;1x per week</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weekly</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fortnightly</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 weekly</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1 x per month</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Number of children with ASD on Caseload was based on 33 responses. Number within each age range was based on 31 responses. Frequency of direct contact question includes some multiple responses from the same therapist.

to have difficulty learning and using even single signs for functional communication.

12. HOLDING THERAPY

Holding therapy involves attempts to make contact with the child with ASD in various ways. This may be in the form of comforting or alternatively, it may involve the parent holding the child for a period of time, possibly against the child’s wishes. The parent attempts to make eye contact and interact verbally with the child. Holding can be as short as a few minutes, but may last for hours at a time.

Holding therapy was designed to help the child adjust to and overcome sensory overload. However, some high functioning people with ASD have protested that this treatment is too traumatic (information from <http://www.autism-pdd.net.html>). Controlled research studies have not been undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of this treatment method.

SURVEY AIMS

The survey developed for this study investigated what intervention techniques speech-language therapists working in a New Zealand Educational setting commonly use in their management of children with ASD. The survey also sought to gather information pertaining to the percentage of the individual’s caseload with ASD, age range of children with ASD on the therapists’ caseloads, frequency of direct contact with these children and any specific postgraduate training the therapist had received in intervention for children with ASD.
METHOD
A three-page survey was designed to gather information from speech-language therapists in New Zealand regarding ASD interventions. The survey was structured in a checklist format. Respondents were initially asked to respond to questions concerning caseload characteristics. Respondents were also asked to rate a range of interventions on frequency of use and perceived effectiveness. An opportunity to add any comments concerning intervention for children with ASD was provided.

PARTICIPANTS
Surveys were sent to 75 speech-language therapists working for Group Special Education, within the New Zealand Ministry of Education. At least one survey was sent to each Special Education office in New Zealand, with multiple copies going to most offices. A cover letter included with the survey invited each potential participant to complete and return the survey in the self-addressed, stamped envelope. A completion time period of three weeks was provided. Thirty-six surveys were returned of which two were unusable, as the speech-language therapists were not currently working. Therefore, the 34 surveys gave a 45% rate of return.

RELIABILITY
Reliability of the data entry was established through an independent examiner coding the survey responses. The researcher trained the examiner on the method of data entry. The examiner then randomly selected 20% of the survey responses and independently recorded responses from the survey information provided. Agreement between the independent examiner’s recording of the survey responses and the researchers’ recordings was 100%.

RESULTS
Table one summarizes the respondent’s caseload and direct contact data. This information indicates that the majority (70%) of the respondents had between one and five children with ASD on their caseload, with a mean of 4.75 and a range of 1 to 15.

53% of the children with ASD were five years old or younger, with the smallest group of children (9%) between 11 and 18 years old.

Data regarding frequency of direct contact with the children with ASD on the respondent’s caseloads indicated that the most common (37%) frequency of direct contact was fortnightly, with a range of greater than once per week to less than once per month. Some respondents gave multiple responses in this category to represent the different management required for different children.

Frequency of use of specific interventions for children with ASD.
The responses from the survey indicated that visual aides (e.g., visual schedules) were used by 94.1% of the respondents on a regular basis. Augmentative communication (e.g., PECS)
was also reported as being used regularly by 61.7%. Social stories and functional communication training were used by 50% of respondents on a regular basis. All respondents reported using visual aides and social stories either regularly or occasionally. Holding therapy was the only intervention that no respondents used on a regular basis. However, 2 (7.6%) respondents used this intervention occasionally. Facilitated communication, Discrete Trial Therapy and Auditory Training were all used by one respondent on a regular basis, although more respondents reported using these interventions on an occasional basis (n = 5, for facilitated communication, n = 4 for Discrete Trial Therapy and Auditory Training). The responses for all the interventions included in the survey are provided in Table 2 (see over page).

**The perceived effectiveness of the interventions for children with ASD**

Perceived effectiveness was scored on a scale of one to four. In the survey a score of one was 'highly effective', two was 'effective', three was 'intervention has some useful aspects' and 4 was 'I would prefer to use other methods if available'. These scores were then reversed coded so that a higher score correlated to a higher perceived effectiveness.

A mean score for effectiveness was calculated for each intervention type, as shown in Table 2. Visual aides received the highest score for effectiveness with a mean of 3.7 on the four-point scale. All 34 respondents rated this intervention, with no responses below a 3 on the scale and 22 respondents rating this as a highly effective intervention. Augmentative communication and social stories were the next most highly rated interventions, receiving mean scores of 3.4 and 3.3 respectively.

Holding therapy was rated as the least effective form of intervention by the 10 respondents for this question. As two respondents used this intervention on an occasional basis their results were examined. One reported this to be an effective form of intervention whilst, the other marked that they would prefer to use other methods if available.

**Respondents’ specific intervention training for children with ASD**

The majority of the respondents had received training in PECS (n=22). Sixteen respondents had undergone social stories training and 15 had had training in the use of visual aides. Other interventions that respondents had received training in included Makaton sign (n = 4), Applied Behaviour Analysis (n = 4), Functional communication training (n = 2), Facilitated communication (n = 1) and Floortime (n = 1). Further to the interventions listed on the survey, responses indicated that some therapists had also had training in other methods not listed in the survey. SPELL (n = 2), The Early Bird Programme (n = 1), TIPS (n = 1), International Society of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC) (n = 1), Johansen method (n = 1), CAOS (n = 1) and Peer mediated social system (n = 1).

Five respondents had received no specific training in intervention for children with autism other than that included within their undergraduate training.

**DISCUSSION**

This report details participants’ responses to a survey developed to examine speech and language therapists’ approach to the management of children with ASD. Information regarding, caseload, intervention strategies and training were sought. Seventy-five surveys were sent to speech and language therapists working for Group Special Education - Ministry of Education in New Zealand. Thirty-four returned surveys were used in the analysis.

All the speech and language therapists that responded to the survey had at least one child with ASD on their caseloads. The majority of respondents had between one and five children with ASD. The high number of children with ASD highlights the importance of having effective and empirically validated intervention methods to facilitate the communication and social skills of this group. Prevalence data indicates approximately 1:1000 people have autism and 1:300 people have Asperger’s syndrome (which is at the higher functioning end of the autistic spectrum). It is estimated that ASD is approximately four times as common as cerebral palsy and 17 times as common as Down’s syndrome (www.autismnz.org.nz)

“SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS HAVE BEEN REPORTED FOLLOWING EARLY, SPECIALISED INTERVENTION PROGRAMMES.”

More than half (53%) of the children with ASD that were being seen by the respondents were aged five years and younger. Early referral and effective treatment from appropriate services is critical due to the pervasive nature of ASD (Butter, Wynn, Mulick, 2003). Significant improvements have been reported following early, specialised intervention programmes. For example, significant gains have been observed in IQ scores (Lovaas, 1987), and language functioning (Bondy & Frost, 1998; Harris, et al, 1991) following early intervention. Therefore, this survey data could be viewed as encouraging. It may indicate that more children are being identified at a younger age and are therefore able to receive early intervention.

The results from the current survey indicate a progressive decrease in the number of children on the caseloads of respondents, which correlated with increasing age. The numbers of children with ASD between the ages of 11 and 18 being seen by the respondents dropped to 14. Optimistically, one could hypothesise that the interventions that are being provided at the younger age ranges are effective in reducing the need for intervention at an older age. However, a recent longitudinal study of 19 children with autism who were followed-up at adulthood (Howlin and Mawhood, 2000), indicated children with autism experience persistent problems continuing into adulthood. Early language
difficulties appeared to effect social functioning in adulthood, with persistent stereotyped, repetitive behaviours and impaired social communication. Wicks-Nelson & Israel (2003) reported that although improvements in communication and social skills are often seen in childhood, delays and deviant development is still evident when compared to control groups. The long-term difficulties associated with autism demonstrate the need for continued support and intervention for children with autism through their school years.

The frequency of intervention is probably dependent on the type of intervention being implemented with the child, the severity of the child's difficulties and the economic constraints. Findings from this survey indicated that the respondents were seeing the children with ASD with varying regularity, from more than once a week, to less than once a month. However, responses indicated that fortnightly direct contact was most common. Several therapists noted on their surveys that a large caseload size restricted their ability to see these children as frequently as they would consider ideal. Koegel (2000) reported that best practices regarding the implementation of intervention for children with ASD still require investigation to determine the optimal frequency and amount of intervention required. Research from Lovaa (1987) indicated that intensive early intervention implemented on a daily basis has a significant effect on cognitive functioning. However, the intensity level of this intervention is likely to be difficult achieve. It is necessary for research to determine the minimal amount of intervention required to make progress.

"FINDINGS FROM THIS SURVEY INDICATED THAT THE RESPONDENTS WERE SEEING THE CHILDREN WITH ASD WITH VARYING REGULARITY, FROM MORE THAN ONCE A WEEK, TO LESS THAN ONCE A MONTH."

Survey respondents were asked to identify the frequency with which they used specific interventions for children with ASD. Visually based interventions were three of the four most frequently used interventions. These included; visual aides, augmentative communication (for example, the Picture Exchange Communication System) and Social Stories. The characteristics of children with ASD, such as their increased ability to comprehend visual information (Quill, 1997), would suggest that visually based interventions would provide inherent advantages. A limited number of well designed research studies examining these interventions provide promising results (Dettmer, et al, 2000, Charlop-Christy, et al, 2002, Lorimer, et al, 2002, Hagiwara & Myles, 1999). However, further research is urgently required to fully describe the appropriate implementation and uses for these interventions. Research has not adequately described ideal candidates or targets for intervention using these techniques. Therefore increased importance should be placed on monitoring the child's progress throughout the intervention so modifications can be made when interventions do not prove beneficial for the child.

"IT IS SURPRISING THAT SOME OF THE MORE EXTENSIVELY RESEARCHED INTERVENTION, SUCH AS APPLIED BEHAVIOUR ANALYSIS AND DISCRETE TRIAL THERAPY ARE NOT USED BY MORE THERAPISTS. EVIDENCE FOR THESE TYPES OF INTERVENTIONS IS VERY PROMISING, FOLLOWING EARLY INTERVENTION."

Facilitated Communication and Auditory Training are two controversial interventions that were reported to be used by some of the respondents. Considerable evidence indicates that Facilitated Communication is not an effective form of intervention (Ziring, et al, 1998). Auditory training intervention also has very limited support and the research that does support this intervention has often been hampered by methodological problems, such as difficulties with audiological testing (Rimland & Edelson, 1995). Practitioners need to carefully consider the research evidence as to the effectiveness of an intervention approach prior to implementing the technique with children with ASD.

It is surprising that some of the more extensively researched interventions, such as applied behaviour analysis and discrete trial therapy are not used by more therapists. Evidence for these types of interventions is very promising, with improvements being seen in cognitive and educational functioning following early intervention (Lovaa, 1987, Harris, et al, 1991). In this survey 70% of the respondents reported never having used applied behaviour analysis and 80% reported never having used discrete trial therapy. A possible explanation for this is that the intensity prescribed as necessary for effective outcomes using these interventions is not achievable within the time available. A solution to this problem may be the development of an organised team approach with the parents and support workers as the main implementers of intervention under the guidance of other professionals. Further research into applied behaviour analysis is still required to determine the exact frequency and duration of therapy necessary for effective outcomes however, it should not be overlooked as to date encouraging research results have been achieved.

It is possible that respondents may have been using particular types of interventions but were not using the same terminology as used in the survey. The possibility that confusions arising from difficulties with terminology may have been solved by including a brief description of each intervention with the survey. This could be considered for future intervention practice surveys.

The survey results have provided valuable information regarding the characteristics of speech and language therapists ASD caseload and the intervention methods currently being implemented for children ASD. It is evident that more research regarding the effectiveness of treatments commonly used by speech-language therapists is urgently required. For example, the characteristics of children who will most benefit from a specific intervention, and which types of the commonly used interventions are the most...
effective. These factors are especially important given the high prevalence rates of ASD in clinical populations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:
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Retrieved 12th January, 2004, from polyox. Website: polyox.com

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DISABILITY IS NATURAL

Revolutionary Common Sense for Raising Successful Children with Disabilities –
Kathie Snow

The author is a mother of two teenagers, one of whom has a disability. In the last ten years she has been a speaker to thousands of parents in Canada and the USA who have wanted to acquire new skills for raising successful children who happen to have disabilities.

Her thesis is that disabilities are a naturally occurring phenomenon of being human and she traces the history of people with disabilities and their places in many societies over the last few millennia. This is a chequered history ranging from abandonment at birth to being required to play the roles of slaves, prostitutes, beggars or jesters. Theories of population control, the rise of asylums and the medicalisation of disability, the Nazi experiments, ‘normalisation’ moving through to self-advocacy.

The book then progresses through the ‘way things are’ (myths, conventional wisdom, special education, services and therapy), through to the ‘way things can be’. This section incorporates ideas such as self-determination, natural lives in communities, inclusive education, alternative education, promoting positive images and leadership.

The book is a compendium of case studies, ideas, contacts and helpful hints for the dynamic parent. Her emphasis is on the positive – defining your child by her assets and sharing this perspective with their support circle. She emphasises natural supports and services in the local community. She also advocates partnerships with educators to ensure that children are educated in inclusive age-appropriate regular classes.

The final section incorporates ideas for running non-profit disability organisations that actively advocate for localised solutions to employment, recreation, fitness and ideas for removing the red tape in order to find community solutions. It is a book packed full of energetic visionary ideas backed by resource studded appendices to turn them into action. Not all of the ideas are totally revolutionary in the New Zealand setting – many of them are already being implemented, but the overall feeling is one of high energy, excitement and commitment which may galvanise parents and family beyond grief to action for their children.

REVIEWS

BILINGUAL CHILDREN’S LANGUAGE AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

Edited by Roger Barnard and Ted Glynn.

RTLB will recognise the three main themes that underpin the research, discussions and case studies that Barnard and Glynn have assembled in this up-to-date book depicting recent research that has been conducted within the contexts of several New Zealand Primary schools by Teachers and Researchers who work within a multilingual and multicultural perspective.

Each of the ten chapters of the book illustrates a variety of perspectives for bilingual learners in different educational contexts. The recurring themes provide strong linkages throughout and serve to suggest that experiences discussed here will be useful in developing bicultural competence within educational settings.

These include:

- The development of trust and a sense of connection between home and school, where a strong emphasis on community relationships and identity serves to enhance student achievement and improve educational outcome. The case studies within this book where mutual understanding is co-constructed display educational benefits; however, in those where it is lacking the development of the children may be severely hindered.

- Teaching that is responsive to need and demonstrates inclusive strategies that produce positive outcomes for children – a particularly poignant chapter on how a teacher
scaffolded a Samoan 5-year-old into a mainstream classroom is but one example of the many that appear in the text.

Focused and integrated policy development that is not only receptive to the research but also enables the educational community through the provision of teacher training and education. This appeal is generated from the hearts of the researchers and educators featured in the book and alert us to their concerns over lack of a language policy and direction for schools, it suggests ‘A Way Forward for New Zealand Education’.

Educators will become aware that New Zealand has no, nor has it ever had, a national policy on languages. This is despite the fact that the ‘Maori Renaissance’ has produced increasing numbers with competence and fluency in Te Reo Maori and recent increases in immigration have boosted the multicultural population.

Chapter One provides demographic information and a discussion upon the background and need for a national languages policy. Roger Peddie sets the scene within a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural framework - awakening the reader to cultural diversity in New Zealand in the 21st Century - for the case studies that follow.

Ted Glynn and Mere Berryman focus upon literacy partnerships with parents and Whanau of Maori children using both Maori and English medium classes. They also investigate the presence of ako within a tutoring interaction (reading Maori text) between two mothers and their son's - where the sons’ fluency in Te Reo is greater than that of the mother. Despite this the learning outcomes for the child are significant.

Within the context of Pacific languages in New Zealand we visit Finlayson Park School in Maukau City, where approximately 140 out of 900 students attend one of five bilingual units (Year 1 – 8) running a programme described as ‘dual medium, dual literacy’ – O le Taiala (the world of the navigator). The programme has been running long enough for an entire cohort to pass through and exciting models of empowerment and outcomes for students are emerging.

A heart warming journey into a mainstream class with a five year old Samoan boy in Chapter 5 is followed by the gut wrenching struggle of an 11 year old new immigrant Korean boy coming to terms with the English language in a mainstream Intermediate classroom. Similarly, examples of educating deaf children (whose first language is New Zealand Sign Language and are also bilingual learners) - in a Culturally Bilingual classroom where the teacher employs inclusive instructional strategies; versus teacher based instruction and learning tasks in a Mainstreamed class, highlight two very different outcomes for the child.

As well as stressing the need for a clear and responsive language policy and the need to train teachers to work in situations where there are increasing numbers of students with English as a second language, this book provides clear guidelines and examples of effective practice in educating bilingual children.

I recommend this book as a valuable resource for all RTLB and Teachers who seek to overcome cultural marginalisation within our schools.

Atawhaitia nga kohungahunga, ko ratou hoki nga uri whakatipu.

Nurture the young for they are our future.

REVIEWER PROFILE
Karrie Lomas, M.Ed. (Hons) is an RTLB working in the Bream Bay Learning and Behaviour Centre. She is currently based at One Tree Point School in Ruia Kaka. She is also a member of the Maori RTLB Caucus.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC DATA
Title: Bilingual Children’s Language and Literacy.
Author: Roger Barnard and Ted Glynn (University of Waikato)
Publication Date: October, 2003
Publisher: Multi Lingual Matters, Frankfurt Lodge, Clendon Hall, Victoria Road, Clevedon, England, BS21 7HH
Price: $44.95 (USA)

KIA HIWA RA! LISTEN TO CULTURE - MAORI STUDENTS’ PLEA TO EDUCATORS.
Angus McFarlane

In this book, Dr Angus Macfarlane explores the role that culture plays in education and the implication that this has for teaching, teachers, learning and learners. Angus’s premise is that educators must be especially sensitive to cultural background if they are to better understand and respond to the learning needs of their students. He pays particular attention to the learning needs of Maori students in this book and proposes that schools be places in which the culture of their Maori children is the bedrock on which their education is based.

The book is divided into nine chapters. The first chapter paints the landscape for Maori learners. Angus explores two intertwining themes. The first is a history of exclusion from mainstream education, as evidenced by lower levels of achievement and high suspension rates. He laments that this has occurred because for many Maori children, the significance of their culture has not been adequately recognised or accommodated within schools and classrooms. Across this backdrop the writer describes attempts by Maori to provide educational options for Maori learners from preschool through to secondary level; attempts which put Maori language and culture first.

The title of the book is echoed in the second chapter when it is proposed how schools might ‘listen to culture’ by ascribing an authentic place for the Treaty of Waitangi. In this chapter an argument is developed around how the Treaty can be one of the tools used to inform such things as the general
directions of education, administrative control, and access to education.

But it is in the following five chapters that the writer elucidates the day-to-day implications of listening to culture for teachers and schools. By way of example, he provides an in-depth description of the Ngati Whakaue Enrichment Class at Ngongotaha Primary School including comments from teacher Bev Anaru and parents of children in her classroom, along with a host of reading and maths assessment data. These chapters are particularly powerful in grounding the reader in the experience of being part of this culturally embedded initiative. One parent said “…and the joy is there, it lights up their (the children’s) faces and their lives…you know we were thinking of moving from the district but as a result of their enrichment by going to the class we have decided not to move….the kids love it too much and we love them being there.”

Chapter Eight is a particularly high point in the book and is dedicated to the unveiling of a model of culturally-centred teaching practice that the writer has skillfully created. It is here that the key cultural discourses are introduced; four key concepts, namely rangatiratanga, kotahitanga, whanaungatanga and manaakitanga radiate out from a central hub representing the fifth key concept, pumanawatanga. Pumanawatanga, metaphorically represented as if it were the heart, essentially drives the cultural momentum of education forward. The “educultural wheel” - the catchy title that Angus gives to the model as a whole - is especially significant from a cultural point of view since by its very nature, it affords the model an intrinsically Maori authenticity. Pumanawatanga has a particular Te Arawa tribal whakapapa of its own, and the significance of this is inspired by the phrase “Ko Te Arawa e waru pumanawa.” which literally refers to the “eight beating hearts” (sub-tribes or hapu) of the Te Arawa iwi. Given that the research site described in this book Ngati Whakaue Enrichment Class) is within the Te Arawa tribal area, and that Angus himself is of Te Arawa descent, then the significance takes on even more meaning.

Throughout this book, pumanawatanga, the heart, beats with an unending pulse.

REVIEWER’S PROFILE
Hineuru Teira is of Te Atiawa and Tuhoe descent. As a psychologist with Group Special Education Service, Hineuru works in the southern part of Hamilton and the Waikato region.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC DATA
Title: Kia hiwa ra! Listen to culture – Maori student’s plea to educators
Author: Dr Angus Macfarlane
Publication date: 2004
Publisher: New Zealand Council of Educational Research (NZCER)
Price: $24.95
ISBN: 1-877293-29-6

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION
Tirohia kia mārama. Whāwhāngia kia rangona te hā. Observe to gain enlightenment. Participate to feel the essence.

The book, Professional Practice in Special Education is described by Barbara Disley (Manager of Group Special Education) as an anthology of effective practice in special education, designed as a resource for educators who are looking for alternative ways of doing things, but who don’t want to reinvent the wheel. It comprises snapshots of the work carried out by Group Special Education (GSE) practitioners as they endeavour to make a positive difference to the lives of children and young people with special education needs.

Professional Practice in Special Education was developed by a team of practice advisors from GSE over a period of nine months. It is based on the results of an in-house questionnaire and interviews with GSE staff carried out in 2003. The questionnaire and interviews covered topics such as systems level support; group and family work; child-centred intervention; and personal professional development. It is based on the responses of 236 GSE specialists.

One of the overriding aims of the project was to make explicit, the links between theory and practice. As stated by the authors of the book, “becoming an organization that promotes evidence-based practice increasingly allows us to have confidence in what we do” (p.62). In the past, education has been criticised for lack of evidence based practice (see Hemsley-Brown & Sharp, 2003 for a review of the literature in this area) and compared to other professions such as medicine, perhaps this criticism has been warranted. This resource however, is one answer to such criticism and, as described by the authors, is the first step down the road of ensuring that “robust evidence based options are being provided to young people and their support teams” (p.62). This book is very well organised around the themes that surfaced from the survey, with each theme presented as one chapter. These are: inclusive practice; teamwork and participation; wellbeing; working with Maori; transition; professional knowledge and practice; and research and training. Within each chapter, the theme is defined, the key sub themes are identified and the beliefs and values related to the theme described. Examples from people and practice; systems and practice; and project and practice are provided. At the end of each chapter is a summary of the key principles, attitudes and skills related to a theme. There is also a blank page for readers to record ideas and thoughts. The book is beautifully presented with clear text (which is jargon free), fantastic photographic work and insightful quotes from respondents, which are used in ways that support key themes. A useful glossary is provided at the back of the book.

Taking a closer look at the “inclusive practice” chapter (for the purpose of this review), highlights a number of useful findings. The key themes to emerge are centred around skills, knowledge, resources and adaptations. Respect for
others and a valuing of the uniqueness of each individual is seen as an important concept for the promotion of inclusive practice.

Examples of inclusive practice under the theme ‘people and practice’ include visual strategies, The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), the use of technology, adapting curriculum (including the physical environment), multi-element interventions and applied behaviour analysis. Surrounding these practices are a belief in the importance of effective communication skills, a belief in inclusion and inclusive practices, and a valuing of team approaches.

Examples of inclusive practice under the theme ‘systems and practice’ include the organisation of parent support groups and teacher aide training courses, the implementation of social skills programmes and surveying secondary schools about successful inclusive practices. Under the theme ‘Project and Practice’ four specific examples of inclusive projects are reported. One describes a project where schools worked together to develop systems to support students with significant cognitive delays. The second describes the joint work of two districts in the identification of students with behaviour needs. The third reports on the impact of Kindergarten staff training and the final example explores learning stories and the influence of research on GSE staff professional development.

It is pleasing to note that the resource is described not as a recipe for success, nor are the words ‘best practice’ mentioned. When working with students with disabilities and special needs, as well as their families/whanau and teachers, there is no one right way. Every student and the environments in which they live and work are individual and must be approached as such. To describe approaches as if they were the one correct way is to invite disappointment and indeed failure. This is obviously realised by the contributors to this book, as respect for the uniqueness of each context, as well as the valuing and acknowledging of the views of others was identified as a major contributor to effective inclusive practice. It is also pleasing to see that the authors have not shied away from the concept of inclusion. They describe this book as “part of their overall journey towards realising our vision of having a world-class fully inclusive education system in New Zealand” (p. 62). This is in keeping with the original intent of the policy, Special Education 2000, which aimed to create a world-class inclusive education system (Ministry of Education, 1996).

The book is compulsory reading for anyone who works within the field of special and inclusive education. It provides a valuable contribution to the small body of New Zealand research on effective practice in special and inclusive education, particularly in the climate of evidence based practice. Congratulations to all involved.

REFERENCES


PROFILE OF REVIEWER
Alison Kearney is a senior lecturer in the Department of Learning and teaching at Massey University College of Education. As a researcher, she has been involved in a range of projects including the monitoring and evaluation of the policy, Special Education 2000 (1999 – 2001); A ‘stock-take’ of school provisions for the gifted and talented learners in New Zealand schools (2004) and two action research projects aimed at improving practices for students on the Autistic Spectrum, (2003 – 2004). She is the paper coordinator for a compulsory inclusive education paper that is part of the BEd (tchg) degree at Massey University and also teaches Educational Psychology at graduate level. Prior to taking up her present position at the College of Education, Alison was a primary school teacher; a Guidance and Learning Teacher; and a Resource Teacher. Special Needs.

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DATA.
Title: Professional Practice in Special Education.
Author: Ministry of Education – Group Special Education.
Publication date: March 2004
Publisher: Contact your local Ministry of Education for details.
ISBN No: 0 – 476 – 13061 - 9

COMMUNICATE TO PARTICIPATE
Communicate to Participate is a speech and language resource developed by speech-language therapists in Specialist Education Services (SES) now known as Ministry of Education - Special Education. The resource includes a 30 minute video of typical language development, a copy of the Junior Oral Language Screening Test (JOST), screening checklists and tools to assist schools to identify children with speech and language difficulties, and information on links to the English curriculum. There is no publication date on this resource. The resource was published by Specialist Education Services as part of the speech-language initiative in 1998.

Schools received copies of Communicate to Participate by participating in a Ministry of Education (MOE) funded contract delivered by SES speech-language therapists. Initially only schools with deciles of one to four received the training. This was later opened to Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour, and all schools in most districts. “Kawea Te Rongo” a similar speech and language resource in te reo was published to sit alongside Communicate to Participate and was designed for teachers working in total immersion and bilingual settings.

These resources are no longer available, although they are still seen as a useful tool by many junior class teachers. The sections of Communicate to Participate that are particularly valued are the comprehensive checklists for
conducting observations, in speech, voice, fluency, phonological awareness, pragmatics, language, motor skills, attending/listening behaviours and play. These provided with teachers useful assessment and planning information. The checklist would benefit from being reformatted to include, increased font size so that individual pages can be photocopied easily for use with students.

The JOST (now revised, 2004) provides a formative assessment for communication skills at school entry level. The video provides teachers with a chance to reflect on typical child development from birth to eight years.

As Communicate to Participate is no longer accessible for many schools and teachers, a revised edition should be considered. Factors to consider in a revised version would be more explicit links to the oral language strand of the curriculum, and a resource list that emphasises experiential development of oral language rather than books as the only tool.

REVIEWER PROFILES:
Rebecca Sinclair and Suella Quinn
Rebecca Sinclair is a speech language therapist working in the Te Awamutu region, and she is also the Lead Practitioner Communication for the Waikato GSE District. Suella Quinn is a specialist education advisor/speech-language therapist currently working in the Thames/Coromandel region.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DATA.
Title: Communicate to Participate
Author: Specialist Education Service: Speech and Language Therapists
Publishing Date: 1998
Publishing Details: Contact your local GSE office for details of resource availability.
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