



Amalgamating the Supplementary Learning Support (SLS) and Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) services

– a discussion document

April, 2012

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Introduction

The Ministry of Education (the Ministry) is planning to amalgamate the Supplementary Learning Support (SLS) and Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) services.

This discussion document sets out two proposed models for amalgamating the SLS and RTLB services for feedback by **5.00 pm, Thursday 31 May 2012**.

Give feedback

Have your say by reading the discussion document, considering the two proposed amalgamation models and responding (in writing) to the following questions, using the feedback form provided.

1. Which is your preferred model?
2. What are the strengths/advantages of your preferred model?
3. How could your preferred model be improved or strengthened?
4. What are the limitations/disadvantages of your preferred model?
5. How could the limitations/disadvantages of your preferred model be overcome?
6. What would an effective amalgamated service look like (regardless of which model is implemented)?
7. Do you have any other comments?

All feedback will be logged, analysed and considered by a team at the Ministry's national office in Wellington. It will be summarised and published online in a summary report¹ and used to inform the amalgamation of the SLS and RTLB services.

Contact us

Contact the Ministry with any questions about the amalgamation or get extra copies of the discussion document and feedback form by:

- visiting the Ministry's website at www.minedu.govt.nz
- emailing the Ministry at SLSRTLB.Amalgamation@minedu.govt.nz
- calling 0800-622 222
- faxing 04-463 8254.

¹ The Ministry will seek to remove all personal or identifying information from the online summary report.

Section 1: Amalgamation – the context

In this section, you will read about the SLS service, including when it started, who it was for and how it is changing in response to public feedback and the latest research evidence. This section also summarises the impact of, and rationale for, amalgamating the SLS and RTLB services.

Background

The SLS service was introduced by the Ministry in 2003 to help students with high ongoing needs be present, participate and achieve at school.

It was initially aimed at a group of 500 students who did not meet the criteria for the Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Scheme and who were working within level one of the National Curriculum long term.

The service gave students regular access to a specialist SLS teacher², as well as Ministry support from specialists such as psychologists or special education advisors.

Today, 150 full time equivalent SLS teachers are employed by 66 host schools to work with 1,500 students throughout New Zealand. SLS teachers are not formally required to have a specialist teaching qualification.

The role of the SLS teacher role (similar to other specialist teacher roles such as an RTLB) is to identify and analyse a student's needs and to work regularly with the student and his or her teacher to help the student learn within the classroom setting.

The SLS teacher and the student's classroom teacher involve others such as a teacher's aide, specialists, family and whānau as and when needed.

This approach is validated by the best evidence research³, which emphasises the importance of high-quality teaching and the role of a student's teachers in helping all students participate and achieve at school.

Review of Special Education

In 2010, the public were invited to provide feedback on the effectiveness of services such as the SLS service and the role of specialist and classroom teachers as part of the Review of Special Education.

² SLS teachers are also referred to as Learning Support Teachers.

³ *Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration (BES)*. Adrienne Alton-Lee. Ministry of Education. June, 2003.

Overall, feedback highlighted:

- concerns about a fragmented and (at times) confusing system of specialist teaching services
- support for reducing any duplication resulting from running multiple specialist teaching services (eg, systems of governance, management, monitoring, reporting and professional practice)
- support for well-trained, qualified specialist teachers able to upskill and involve others in a student's education
- support for giving teachers the support, advice and resources they need to teach the range of children and young people within their classrooms.

Subsequent feedback has also noted the inflexible nature of the SLS service model, which means students tend to stay within the service long term once they receive a service. This results in very few opportunities for new students to gain access to the service, despite meeting the criteria⁴.

Success for All – Every School, Every Child

Success for All – Every School, Every Child (Success for All) was launched in October 2010 as the Government's four-year commitment to achieve a fully-inclusive education system by 2014.

Success for All draws on the latest research evidence on inclusive education systems⁵. Both *Success for All* and the research (on which it is based) emphasise the importance of high-quality teaching and supporting all students to learn and achieve in the classroom, alongside their peers.

They also highlight the need for specialist teachers to focus on a student's specific needs, as well as his or her learning context.

Both reinforce the need for a workforce of highly-skilled specialist teachers whose focus is to help classroom teachers and schools meet the needs of all the students within their communities.

Transforming the RTLB service

In 2011, the Ministry began the process of transforming the RTLB service after a 2009 Education Review Office report found issues with practice quality and the way the service was governed and managed.

Today, the RTLB service has fewer clusters, offers full time leadership and support to RTLB and aims to provide schools with nationally-consistent, better coordinated services.

Work is under way to improve the processes for identifying eligible students and monitoring and reporting on resource use and outcomes. RTLB now have a clearer career pathway,

⁴ The Ministry will seek to address this issue later this year, as the detail of the amalgamation is worked through and developed.

⁵ *The Child – the Heart of the Matter, Including Students with High Needs*, Education Review Office (ERO), June, 2010.

more opportunities for leadership and specialisation, as well as a consistent approach to professional supervision.

Government approval

In March 2012, the Minister of Education, Hon. Hekia Parata gave the Ministry approval to amalgamate the SLS service with the newly-transformed RTLB service.

She requested the amalgamation maintain continuity of service throughout the transition period and that service improvements focus on enhanced student achievement. She also requested the amalgamation improve key areas such as governance, management, service quality and service accessibility.

The Minister agreed to a timeline for the work, starting with the publication of a public discussion document for feedback in April (to work out what the new, amalgamated service would look like) and concluding with the roll-out of a new, amalgamated SLS and RTLB service at the start of the 2013 school year.

Impact of the amalgamation

It is important to note the amalgamation of the SLS and RTLB services:

- is focused on giving all students the opportunity and support they need to learn and achieve at school
- provides a nationally-consistent model of practice that can be tailored to meet the needs of students and the context in which they participate and learn
- creates additional RTLB positions to carry out the existing SLS function within an RTLB cluster. These positions will remunerated as RTLB and require applicants to have (or be working towards) the relevant RTLB qualifications and training
- means the additional RTLB positions will be advertised and people recruited to the positions using a formal appointment process. Teachers currently employed as SLS teachers will need to apply for the new RTLB positions.

Read section 2 of this discussion document for more information on how the additional RTLB will work within their RTLB clusters to meet students' needs.

Rationale for change

The Minister's decision to approve the amalgamation of the SLS and RTLB services is underpinned by the following research evidence.

- Findings from the Review of Special Education published in August, 2010.
- Research on inclusive education by the Education Review Office published in 2010, which forms the basis of *Success for All*.
- Research on the RTLB service by the Education Review Office published in 2009 and the subsequent transformation of the RTLB service implemented in 2011.

Section 2: Amalgamation – two proposed models

This section reflects on the current SLS service model and outlines the Ministry's proposals for amalgamating the SLS and RTLB services.

Supplementary Learning Support – the current service model

Here is an overview of the SLS service model as it looks today.

Governance and management structure

66 host schools manage SLS staffing and funding for a cluster of schools and manage the performance of the SLS teachers who work for their cluster.

16 special education district offices manage a small pool of SLS teacher staffing, which is allocated to schools and used to provide a service to students located in rural areas and students learning in Māori medium (or Māori language) settings.

66 cluster management committees work with SLS teachers, RTLB and others to identify students who are eligible for the SLS service and to monitor and report on the service within their cluster.

Cluster structure

66 school clusters, each with a host school.

Workforce

150 full time equivalent teaching positions (made up of part time and full time SLS teachers whose experience and qualifications vary).

Ministry specialists such as psychologists and special education advisors located throughout New Zealand who provide advice and support to SLS teachers and students.

Practice model

The model of practice varies across New Zealand.

However, the SLS service typically results in one full time equivalent SLS teacher working with approximately 10 students on a weekly basis.

Two proposed models

Here are the common characteristics of the two models the Ministry has developed for amalgamating the SLS and RTLB services.

Both options maintain continuity of service to all students currently accessing the SLS service throughout the transition period.

Both options focus on improving key areas such as governance, management, service quality and service accessibility.

They both aim to develop a stronger community of practice among RTLB clusters. In both options, the RTLB lead school is the employer.

They provide a nationally-consistent model of practice that can be tailored to meet the needs of students and the context in which they participate and learn.

Both options focus on giving students the opportunity and support they need to learn and achieve at school. They do this by giving students working within level one of the National Curriculum continued access to ongoing specialist teacher support and specialist services.

The two proposed models also seek to reflect the findings of the Review of Special Education, *Success for All* and the latest research on inclusive education. They also aim to strongly align with and reflect the new RTLB service model⁶.

It is important to note the amalgamation creates additional RTLB positions within an RTLB cluster. These positions will be remunerated as RTLB and require applicants to have (or be working towards) the relevant RTLB qualifications and training.

This means the additional RTLB positions will be advertised and people recruited to the positions using a formal appointment process. It means teachers currently employed as SLS teachers will need to apply for the new RTLB positions.

(1) Model one, expanded RTLB service

In this model, full time RTLB support students who previously met the criteria for the SLS service. In turn, the RTLB service expands to become a service for a bigger number and more diverse range of students.

The RTLB cluster will include students who previously met the criteria for the SLS service, with an increased emphasis on working alongside classroom teachers, specialist service providers, families and whānau.

All RTLB in this model are responsible for supporting and upskilling the range of people focused on helping a student participate and achieve in the classroom and in the life of that student's school.

All RTLB are employed by one of the 40 RTLB lead schools and work within one of the 40 RTLB clusters, set up during the transformation of the RTLB service.

They all have a post-graduate Diploma in Specialist Teaching – endorsed in learning and behaviour or are studying towards the diploma. They work under professional supervision and within a nationally-consistent model of practice.

⁶ Refer to the online RTLB toolkit available from <http://rtlb.tki.org.nz> for more detail on the RTLB service model.

Their career pathway changes in this model, too. This model gives them an opportunity to work across a broader spectrum of students and student need. It gives them an opportunity to move into a new leadership role, the role of practice leader. It also gives them an opportunity to become part of a bigger, stronger professional workforce.

Governance and management structure

40 RTLB lead schools, responsible for:

- managing a single staffing and funding pool (comprising SLS and RTLB staffing and funding) allocated to a cluster of schools
- meeting the needs of the students within their cluster
- employing and managing the performance of the cluster's RTLB, cluster manager and practice leaders
- reporting on RTLB service funding, operation and outcomes.

40 cluster advisory groups, responsible for:

- identifying who meets the criteria for their RTLB services
- monitoring and reporting on the services within their cluster.

Cluster structure

40 clusters, each with:

- an employing school for all RTLB in the cluster
- a cluster advisory group
- a cluster manager
- practice leaders
- a workforce of RTLB.

Workforce

Approximately 900 full time RTLB, responsible for:

- providing services to a range of students with special education needs, including students with high ongoing needs who do not meet the criteria for the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme and who work within level one of the National Curriculum long term
- supporting schools, teachers and communities to meet the needs of these students.

Practice model

All RTLB are expected to:

- study towards or have gained a post-graduate Diploma in Specialist Teaching – endorsed in learning and behaviour
- work within a nationally-consistent model of practice
- take part in professional supervision.

(2) Model two, designated RTLB service

In this model, like model one, full time RTLB work with students who previously met the criteria for the SLS service.

However, in model two, an agreed number of RTLB positions (the additional positions) are formally delegated responsibility for this group of students, which means they are expected to share their specialist knowledge and skills in the course of their day-to-day work. It also means they become the 'go to' person within a cluster for their particular specialist knowledge and skills.

In turn, the RTLB service changes to become a service for a bigger number and more diverse range of students.

All RTLB in this model work alongside classroom teachers and parents, within schools and with the relevant specialists.

Their primary role is to work with their specific group of students and support and upskill the people who help these students participate and achieve in the classroom and in the life of the students' schools.

They are employed by one of 40 RTLB lead schools and work within one of the 40 RTLB clusters, set up during the transformation of the RTLB service.

They all have a post-graduate Diploma in Specialist Teaching – endorsed in learning and behaviour or are studying towards the diploma. They work under professional supervision and within a nationally-consistent model of practice.

Their career pathway gives them an opportunity to work across a broader spectrum of students and student need. It gives them an opportunity to move into a new leadership role, the role of practice leader. It also gives them an opportunity to become part of a bigger, stronger professional workforce.

Governance and management structure

40 RTLB lead schools, responsible for:

- managing a single staffing and funding pool (comprising SLS and RTLB staffing and funding) allocated to a cluster of schools
- meeting the needs of the students within their cluster
- employing and managing the performance of the cluster's RTLB, cluster manager and practice leaders
- reporting on RTLB service funding, operation and outcomes.

40 cluster advisory groups, responsible for:

- identifying who meets the criteria for their RTLB services
- monitoring and reporting on the services within their cluster.

Cluster structure

40 clusters, each with:

- an employing school for all RTLB in the cluster
- a cluster advisory group
- a cluster manager
- practice leaders
- a workforce of RTLB.

Workforce

Approximately 900 full time RTLB, responsible for:

- providing services to a range of students with special education needs, including students with high ongoing needs who do not meet the criteria for the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme and who work within level one of the National Curriculum long term
- supporting schools, teachers and communities to meet the needs of these students.

Practice model

All designated RTLB are expected to:

- study towards or to have gained a post-graduate Diploma in Specialist Teaching – endorsed in learning and behaviour
- work within a nationally-consistent model of practice
- take part in professional supervision
- work with a designated group of students, their teachers, schools, families and whānau
- provide the cluster with specialist knowledge and skills in their designated area of expertise.

In summary

Both models create additional RTLB positions within RTLB clusters, as part of the SLS and RTLB service amalgamation.

Students who previously met the criteria for SLS services will receive a service from, and have their needs met by, an RTLB cluster. It is likely that these students will receive a longer term service than other students receiving an RTLB service and will be seen more frequently.

The model of practice for the additional RTLB positions focuses on working with teachers, specialist service providers, families and whānau and using Individual Education Plans for students.

The additional positions created by the amalgamation process are RTLB positions, with particular requirements for training and gaining qualifications.

In model one, all RTLB provide a service to students who previously met the criteria for the SLS service. In model two, the additional RTLB positions are formally designated to work with these students (the numbers of RTLB and students will be determined by lead schools and the Ministry) and advise others about working with and supporting these students.

Section 3: Appendices

Glossary

Cluster

A group of schools that share staffing and funding.

Cluster advisory groups

Committees of principals, cluster managers, board representatives, specialist teachers and members of the community who are elected to monitor and report on the activities of a cluster.

Cluster manager

Someone appointed to manage cluster funding, resourcing and employer obligations of a cluster.

Designated RTLB service

A proposed model for amalgamating the SLS and RTLB services.

Education Review Office

Also called ERO. The Government agency responsible for reporting on all New Zealand schools and early childhood centres.

Expanded RTLB service

A proposed model for amalgamating the SLS and RTLB services.

High ongoing needs

Ministry language for describing the learning needs of some students such as the students eligible for the SLS service.

Inclusive education system

An inclusive education system has schools that enable all children and young people to successfully enrol, participate and achieve in the academic, extra-curricular and social life of their school.

Māori medium

Education settings such as kura kaupapa Māori where te reo Māori is the primary language of teaching and learning.

Model of practice

An effective, nationally-consistent, evidence-based way of working.

National Curriculum

Documents that set the direction for student learning in New Zealand schools.

Official Information Act

Law governing the request and receipt of information held by government officials and bodies.

Ongoing Resourcing Scheme

Resources for a very small group of school students who have the highest need for special education support. Formerly called the Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Scheme.

Paraprofessional

People who provide general help and assistance to classroom teachers and students with special education needs.

Post-graduate Diploma in Specialist Teaching – endorsed in learning and behaviour

A qualification specially designed for RTLB.

Practice leaders

Practice leaders are RTLB who have additional delegated leadership responsibilities.

Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB)

A specially-trained teacher who works in schools to support staff to meet the needs of students with learning and behaviour needs.

RTLB lead schools

Schools that employ RTLB within a cluster.

Review of Special Education 2010

A year-long Government review of special education that sought feedback on a range of issues and has resulted in *Success for All*. 2,000 public submissions were received.

SLS host schools

Schools that employ SLS teachers within a cluster.

SLS teachers

Specialist teachers who support students with high ongoing needs who do not meet the criteria for the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme and who are working within level one of the National Curriculum long term.

Students eligible for the SLS service

Students identified as having high ongoing needs who do not meet the criteria for the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme and who are learning long term within level one of the National Curriculum.

Success for All – Every School, Every Child (Success for All)

Success for All is the Government's four-year commitment to achieve a fully-inclusive education system by 2014.

Supplementary Learning Support (SLS)

A service started in 2003, giving eligible students access to a specialist teacher, as well as Ministry specialist support from specialists such as psychologists or special education advisors.

Teacher's aide

Also called a paraprofessional. Someone who provides general help and assistance to classroom teachers and students with special education needs.

References

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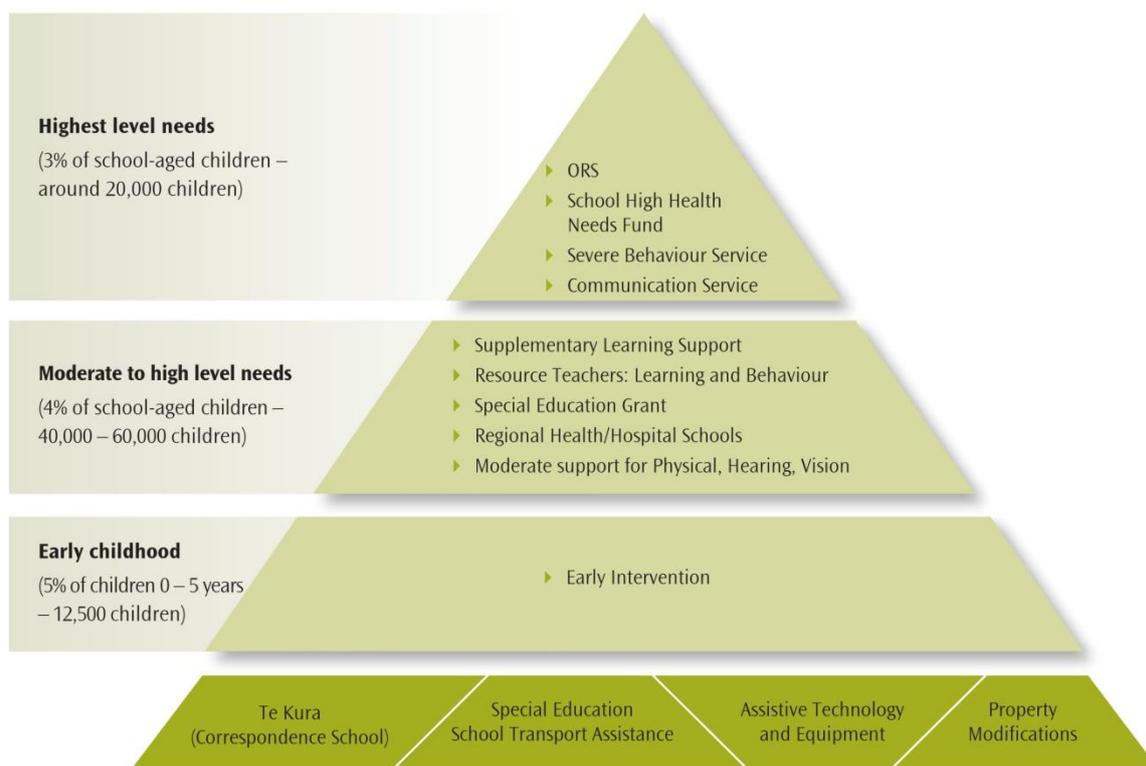
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Special education framework

The Ministry's special education framework lists the range of support available from the education system (eg, the Supplementary Learning Support service).

It also describes the students (eg, students with moderate to high level needs, representing 4% of school-aged children) each initiative, programme or fund intends to support.

For more information about the framework and the support listed in the triangle below, refer to the Ministry's website: www.minedu.govt.nz (click on the special education link).



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www.minedu.govt.nz

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