

Amalgamation of Supplementary Learning Support (SLS) and Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) services

Terms of reference

Background

Feedback to the Ministry in the Review of Special Education (2010) indicated that the special education system could be made simpler and easier for schools and families and whānau to understand by amalgamating some of the special education initiatives. The Supplementary Learning Support (SLS) and the Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) services support many students but in a way that makes it complicated for schools to know who to approach to get the support they need and how to access it. Combining the services will provide more unified, flexible and responsive support to students, their schools, families and whānau.

In March 2012, the Minister of Education, Hon. Hekia Parata gave the Ministry of Education approval to begin work to amalgamate the Supplementary Learning Support (SLS) service with the newly transformed Resource Teacher: Learning and Support (RTLBS) service. She 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 by May 31, 2012 (to work out what the new, amalgamated service would look like) and concluding with the rollout of an amalgamated SLS and RTLBS service at the start of the 2013 school year.

The amalgamation will bring together the two teaching roles that are supporting students with learning and behaviour needs who do not receive the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) rather than duplicating the services across a cluster of schools.

Objective

The proposed models for the amalgamated service will provide:

- An expanded service for a bigger number and more diverse range of students.
- A bigger emphasis on working alongside classroom teachers and specialist services, such as speech-language therapists, and families and whānau.
- All teachers in the RTLBS roles working as one professional group with a principal, cluster manager and practice leader to provide leadership and guidance, with opportunities for similar professional development and supervision. (The change will build on the early and positive progress being made through the new RTLBS clusters in their new management and leadership roles.)
- A consistent model of specialist teaching practice that will support the range of students with special learning and behaviour needs in schools within a localised area.

Purpose

The purpose of the reference group is to provide advice and feedback to the Ministry of Education's 'Amalgamation of Supplementary Learning Support (SLS) and

Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTLb) services' and 'RTLb transformation' project teams on the:

- two proposed options for the amalgamation of the services as outlined in the discussion document and
- feedback received through responses to the questions in the discussion document from individuals and groups.

These Terms of Reference outline the function of the Amalgamation of SLS and RTLb services reference group.

Scope

The reference group will provide advice and feedback to the Ministry on:

- The strengths and advantages of each of the proposed models
- The limitations and disadvantages of each of the proposed models
- How each model could be improved or strengthened
- The key elements that an effective amalgamated SLS and RTLb service should have.

The advice and feedback received from the reference group to the proposed options in the 'Amalgamating the SLS and RTLb services' discussion document will be considered and analysed alongside the other responses received by May 31. This feedback will inform the advice and recommendations for the Minister of Education to make a decision on the preferred model for the amalgamation of the SLS and RTLb services.

Note:

Employment issues related to the amalgamation of the services are outside the scope of the reference group. The discussion document outlines two proposed options and the Ministry is seeking feedback about these options. Any issues related to the employment of teachers as a result of the final decision, would need to be worked through by the Ministry with the unions and the NZ Schools Trustees Association.

Confidentiality and Official Information

- Members of the group will provide free and frank advice to the Ministry.
- Members will not disclose any information obtained or discussed in the course of the meetings.
- Members will agree at each meeting on key messages to be communicated and fed back to their respective professional bodies, associations and schools.
- The Official Information Act 1982 will apply to the activities of the group. The Ministry will make sure the members are aware of the provisions of the Act and the extent to which material from meetings is discoverable under the Act.