

Frequently asked questions

About the SLS and RTLB amalgamation

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1. Why are the Supplementary Learning Support (SLS) and the Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) services being amalgamated? The amalgamated SLS and RTLB services will create a single seamless support system for schools with students with learning and behaviour needs who are not supported through the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS). The amalgamated service will be easier to understand and access, and more flexible and responsive to students' ongoing needs.

2. What will happen next in the amalgamation process? The Ministry of Education (the Ministry) has released a discussion document about the amalgamation and invites feedback from interested people. You can have your say by responding to the questions in the introduction of the discussion document. The deadline for feedback is 5.00 pm, Thursday 31 May 2012.

An education sector reference group will be established to assist the Ministry to work through the details of the SLS and RTLB amalgamation.

3. Where can I send my feedback on the SLS and RTLB amalgamation discussion document? Feedback to the proposed options outlined in the Amalgamating the SLS and RTLB services discussion document to SLSRTLBAmalgamation@minedu.govt.nz.

4. What is the rationale for the amalgamation of the services? The Government is committed to providing high-quality special education services to all students who need them. The Review of Special Education (2010) showed that current services are too fragmented and hard to understand for schools. The RTLB and SLS services support many students but in an over-complicated way for schools. Combining the services will provide more unified, flexible, and responsive support to students, their schools, families, and whānau.

These findings were supported by the inclusive education research by the Education Review Office (ERO) that forms the basis for *Success for All – Every School, Every Child*; the review of the RTLB service by ERO (2009) and subsequent transformation of the RTLB service implemented in 2011. *Success for All* is the Government's four-year commitment to achieve a fully-inclusive education system by 2014.

5. Who will be in the reference group? This group will be made up of representatives from key education sector groups involved with SLS and RTLB, including union representatives and the Ministry.

6. What will the reference group do? The reference group will provide feedback on the proposed options for amalgamation outlined in the discussion document on TKI, review and provide advice on the feedback to the document.

7. When will the amalgamation of SLS and RTLB happen? The work towards the amalgamation of the SLS and RTLB services has begun and will be in place for the beginning of the 2013 school year.

8. What will happen for SLS this year (2012)? There will be no changes to the SLS service for 2012 while the amalgamation work is undertaken.

9. What would happen to the SLS managed pool of staffing under the proposed options? The managed pool of SLS staffing is allocated to Special Education districts across New Zealand and used to support SLS students who are enrolled in kura, rural, or isolated schools. It is proposed that this staffing be made available to each RTLB cluster to provide support to students in these kura and schools who currently meet the criteria for SLS. Each RTLB cluster will need to work with the local Ministry on how it will effectively meet the needs of those students.

10. What will happen to the specialist services support SLS students currently get from the Ministry? Under the proposed options, students who previously met the criteria for SLS support will still be able to access the Ministry's specialist services according to their level of needs. The Ministry will be looking at how we can best provide these specialist services in the amalgamated service model.

11. How will the amalgamation impact on teachers currently employed as SLS teachers? Both the proposed options outlined in the discussion document create additional RTLB positions to carry out the existing SLS function 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. 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.

12. Are the unions involved in addressing any employment issues? Yes, the Ministry will be working through all employment issues related to the amalgamation of the services with the relevant unions.

13. From my reading of the changes, the amalgamation means that there will be additional RTLB positions SLS teachers can apply for? Under the proposed options for amalgamation, there will be additional RTLB positions in each RTLB cluster across the country. RTLB trained teachers will carry out the existing SLS teaching functions within the cluster so students who currently meet the criteria for SLS learning and support will have their needs met. SLS teachers can apply for these positions which will be remunerated as RTLB and require applicants to have (or be working towards) the relevant RTLB qualifications.

No final decision about the amalgamation of the SLS and RTLB services has been made yet. The discussion document outlines two proposed options and the Ministry is seeking feedback from the education sector about these options. Subsequent to decisions, any issues related to the employment of teachers would need to be worked through with the unions and the Schools Trustees Association. The Ministry does not have the direct employment responsibility for SLS teachers. This is the responsibility of the employing Board of Trustees.

14. What happens if boards do make SLS positions surplus? The relevant teachers' collective (employment) agreements provide the process for how this occurs, should that be an outcome of the final decision for amalgamation.

15. Will students who currently receive SLS services still get support? Yes. Students receiving SLS services will continue to be able to access support in the usual way through 2012. Under the proposed amalgamated services options, students will still be able to access and receive a special education service to meet their needs.

16. How will students move from SLS to the new amalgamated service? There will be a transition process for students receiving SLS when the amalgamation takes place at the beginning of 2013.

17. How will the amalgamation of SLS and RTLB affect the host/lead schools? The proposed options will have implications for SLS host schools and RTLB lead schools. The Ministry will work with schools once a final decision about the amalgamation is made to ensure that the transition to the amalgamated service is as smooth as possible.

18. Would RTLB lead schools take on additional teachers without additional resourcing? No. It is proposed that the administration and travel grants currently available to support the SLS service will be transferred to the RTLB lead schools to cover the additional RTLB positions. It is also anticipated that the Ministry will be able to make available additional “leadership payments” to the RTLB lead schools to recognise the additional leadership responsibility. SLS currently generates the equivalent of about seven full time management positions across the employing schools.

19. How many new RTLB positions are likely to be created for 2013? These details are still being worked through. However, there is likely to be approximately 140 additional RTLB positions across the country. These positions will also include coverage of the previous SLS managed pool staffing for kura, rural, or isolated areas. It is also anticipated that the Ministry will be able to make available additional “leadership payments” to the RTLB lead schools to recognise the additional leadership responsibility.

20. What will happen to the teaching resources that have been purchased by SLS host schools? Resources purchased through SLS funding should continue to be available for learners in the RTLB clusters. These resources would move to the relevant RTLB clusters as part of the amalgamation process.

21. Should SLS teacher vacancies in 2012 be filled with permanent appointments? In this period of change, it is recommended that SLS teacher vacancies be filled with fixed term appointments.

22. Will the additional RTLB positions be located in the same schools as they are currently? It is proposed that the new RTLB positions will shift to the RTLB lead school as additional RTLB positions. The lead school will need to work with the Ministry, and their cluster advisory group, to decide the best location for the additional RTLB positions within their cluster. It may be possible for some current SLS host schools to accommodate the additional RTLB positions.

23. Is the Government simply cutting costs and/or services for students with special education needs? No. The Government is confident the new amalgamated services will lead to more effective and responsive services and better outcomes for more students with learning and behaviour needs.

24. What is the rationale behind the proposal to make new additional RTLB positions? The Review of Special Education (2010) showed that current special education services are too fragmented and hard for school, families, and whānau to understand and for students to access. The amalgamation of the SLS and RTLB services will provide a more unified, flexible, and responsive service, and a well qualified work-force of specialist teachers, to support students and schools.

The two proposed models for the amalgamation create additional RTLB positions to carry out the existing SLS function within the RTLB clusters. They will be:

- remunerated as RTLB
- required to hold (or be working towards) the Post-Graduate Diploma in Specialist Teaching (Learning and Behaviour)
- part of a nationally consistent service

- able to access the community of practice and career progression opportunities available within a RTLB cluster
- permanent full time positions.

Therefore, appointments will need to follow a formal appointment process and teachers currently employed as SLS teachers will need to apply for the new RTLB positions.

25. I have a postgraduate qualification in teaching that is different to a RTLB one. Can I cross-credit this to the Postgraduate Diploma in Specialist Teaching (Learning and Behaviour)? Massey University and Canterbury University both provide the Postgraduate Diploma in Specialist Teaching course to become a RTLB. If you contact these universities, they will be able to help you with any cross-crediting related information.

26. How can I study towards becoming an RTLB? The Postgraduate Diploma in Specialist Teaching: Learning and Behaviour is offered by both Massey University and the University of Canterbury. This diploma is delivered part-time over two years by distance study combined with some block course sessions at the university campus. There are two one-week block courses each year (one in February/March and one in August/September). The diploma is made up of four papers.

The Ministry of Education Special Education provides funded training towards the Postgraduate Diploma in Specialist Teaching: Learning and Behaviour. Information about 2013 awards will be available on the Ministry website during the month of June 2012 <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/sestudyawards>.

27. How will teachers/parents/schools be kept informed of developments? Parents/whānau, teachers, and schools will be kept informed of developments via letters and email, as well as through material published on the Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI) website.

28. Where can I send any further questions? Further enquiries about the amalgamation of the SLS and RTLB services can be sent to rtlb.enquiries@minedu.govt.nz.