

Summary of findings from the Amalgamation of the Supplementary Learning Support and Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour Services report –

Evaluation of the transition planning and implementation process

Background

During 2012 the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) amalgamated the Supplementary Learning Support (SLS) service with the Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTLKB) service for the start of the 2013 school year. This report presents findings on the evaluation of the transition planning and implementation process using data collected from an online survey of RTLKB cluster managers, administrative sources and the RTLKB Term One Snapshot.

Findings

Individual Transition Plans (ITPs)

In general most students in most of the clusters had plans in place for the start of the 2013 school year (on average, 80% of students across the clusters). However, this data should be seen as indicative given the fluidity of student numbers.

Meetings held as part of the transition process

Almost all respondents (94%) had attended meetings with SLS host schools and or SLS teachers. Over half of the respondents (58%) had attended meetings with Ministry of Education special education staff and SLS students' family/whānau members.

Usefulness of ITPs and meetings

All 36 RTLKB cluster managers who responded to the survey considered the SLS students' ITPs useful to some degree for planning programmes for 2013. The most useful aspects of the plans and meetings were: building relationships and developing understanding; exchanging information; and planning the transition.

Additional support that clusters are providing to students, schools and RTLKB

Almost all respondents (94%) were offering professional development and programme development to teachers and teacher's aides. Respondents also described having regular meetings with Special Education Needs Co-ordinators (SENCO) and class teachers to build relationships, assess the needs schools have, and to discuss school wide systems to support learners. A quarter of respondents commented on using Learning Support Funding (LSF) to provide additional support to students with high learning needs.

Respondents also gave examples of support for RTLKB, including professional development to up-skill RTLKB, resource packs, and a 'Supported Learning' Advisory Group.

Support provided for the transitioned SLS students who used to receive SLS managed pool support

Former managed pool students were receiving support in the same way as other students who had received SLS services; that is, they received individualised services depending on the needs presented by students, teachers and schools. Respondents generally commented that these students now had an RTLB assigned, with students from kura/wharekura having RTLB with strong Te Reo skills. Several respondents noted that LSF was being used to support students who had previously been managed pool.

Guidelines for the Model of Practice

Over 90% of respondents considered the *Guidelines for the Model of Practice* to be helpful (34% 'very helpful', and 57% 'of some help'). Less than 10% of respondents rated the guidelines as 'not helpful'. Suggestions about what else could have been included in the Guidelines were largely focused around the need for clarity to provide a consistent service and to manage service expectations.

Activities of supernumerary and/or fixed-term teachers

Between half and three quarters of respondents had experience of supernumerary and fixed-term teachers carrying out a wide range of activities to help with the transition. Most commonly:

- adapting and preparing learning materials and resources appropriate for a student's needs (64% of respondents)
- monitoring students' progress and achievement (61% of respondents).

Least commonly:

- modelling teaching strategies or practices for working with students with high learning needs (42% of respondents)
- working in a special project related to the transition of SLS students to a cluster (22% of respondents).

Overall view of the transition planning

On a three-point scale of 'not well', 'OK' and 'very well', half of all respondents considered the transition planning to have been 'OK', and over a third considered it to have worked 'very well'. Twelve percent of respondents considered it had not worked well.

The key concern with the planning of the amalgamation expressed by respondents related to the short timeframe for SLS clusters handing over to RTLB. Additionally, some respondents commented that better information and communication would have improved the process as the amalgamation was more complex in practice than theory. For some respondents there were difficulties establishing 'inclusion' policies and practices, and ongoing issues with being 'oversubscribed' with students.

The findings from this report will be used to inform reporting and operational policy development for similar projects in the future. In addition, further evaluative activities may take place in 2014 to assess the impact of the amalgamation on outcomes for high learning needs students and the RTLB service more generally.