

VOLUME 7, SPECIAL EDITION 2006

Kairaranga

Weaving educational threads. Weaving educational practice.



Special Edition
Learning for All

FRONT COVER

Sapphire Vaivela
Tawhero School, Wanganui



The cover art is a crayon and dye picture by Sapphire Vaivela, an eight-year-old in Year 4 at Tawhero School in Wanganui. Walking in the rain was the theme of Sapphire's work. The dye was applied using a cotton bud to help her develop fine motor skills, and the background dye wash gave her practice at using long brush strokes.

Sapphire enjoys being part of her "cool class", completes lots of work at school, and says reading is her favourite school activity.

Tawhero School is a decile 1, suburban school with 204 pupils, 9 classrooms, an attached satellite class, and four attached resource teachers: learning and behaviour and two supplementary learning support teachers. Situated in the lovely river city of Wanganui, the school focuses on improving students' outcomes through relationship based teaching.

Teachers provide programmes that specifically meet students' learning needs, using learning intentions with success criteria to assist students' self assessment. The school took part in the Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education (EePiSE) programme to give teachers more skills to enhance student achievement. The focus was on peer and self-assessment to improve students' knowledge of how and what they need to learn, and to give them more responsibility for their learning.

Tawhero School encourages parents, caregivers and whānau to support their children in their learning. An open door policy encourages parents and teachers to work together and encourage students to achieve. Tawhero School maintains a positive learning environment for all its stakeholders – students, teachers, support staff and parents/caregivers.



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga

Table of Contents

Editorial, Editorial Board and contact details	2
Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education (EPEiSE)	
In it together – <i>Vijaya Dharan</i>	
Practice paper.....	3
Enhancing Effective Inclusive Practice	
Knowing, doing and believing – <i>Martyn Rouse</i>	
Keynote address.....	8
Teaching Māori Children with Special Education Needs	
Getting rid of the too hard basket – <i>Jill Bevan-Brown</i>	
Keynote address.....	14
Teaching Strategies: For some or for all? – <i>Lani Florian</i>	
Keynote address.....	24
A Torrent of Change: Enhancing effective change in special education – one school's journey – <i>Chris Morris and Shirley Katon</i>	
Practice paper.....	28
Within our Circle of Influence – <i>Namratha Hirannah and Bernadette Mahoney</i>	
Practice paper.....	33
Reflections on an Action Research Project	
An interview with staff at Mt Richmond Special School – <i>Savi Bhupala, Gurjeet Toor and Kathy Dooley</i>	
Personal experience.....	39
Putting Enjoyment into the Lunch Break	
Enhancing effective practice at Ferndale School – <i>Dorothy Wilson and Stephen Evans</i>	
Practice paper.....	43
Raising the Bar in Reading – <i>Taryn Naidoo and Roshilla Naicker</i>	
Practice paper.....	48
Building Resiliency in Students with Special Education Needs	
A journey of discovery – <i>Alan Mears and Rosalie Stevenson</i>	
Practice paper.....	53
Motueka High School Storied Experience: Teaching and learning strategies – <i>Tracey Ellery and Jan Trafford</i>	
Practice paper.....	56
What Does it Take to Facilitate? – <i>Bruce Kent</i>	
Research/practice paper.....	59
Challenging Teachers' Practice through Learning	
Reflections on the Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education programme of research and professional practice – <i>Roseanna Bourke</i>	
Research/practice paper.....	64
Kairaranga Book Reviews	69
Kairaranga goes Digital	71
Submission Guidelines	72
Subscription	74

Editorial

This special edition of *Kairaranga* celebrates experiences from the Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education (EePiSE) programme. Coordinated by the Ministry of Education and running from 2003 to 2006, the goal of EePiSE was to improve students' learning, social, and cultural outcomes by supporting and enhancing teaching practice. Participants included students, parents, whānau, classroom and specialist teachers, principals and other school leaders, researchers, facilitators and school communities. The accounts in this special edition illustrate how research and effective use of evidence, when supported by professional learning and development, led to enhanced teaching practice and improved student outcomes.

Learning for All was the title of the four regional symposia which marked the end of the EePiSE programme. Learning for (and by) all continues as a key theme throughout this special issue with many contributors sharing their presentations from the symposia. Some schools made use of digital media to such powerful effect that any attempt to translate their presentations into prose would lose at least part of the impact. Marking a first for *Kairaranga*, three of these presentations are included on a DVD with this special issue.

Teachers who took part in EePiSE have exemplified the importance of their own learning and of sharing their learning. This occurred in many ways and included leading professional learning and development across their schools, supporting their colleagues to reflect on and make changes to their practice, presenting at the symposia and writing articles for this journal.

The accounts from teachers are complemented by the national and international keynote addresses from the *Learning for All* symposia. They are joined by reflections from the EePiSE project team. Together, the articles illustrate the range and diversity of learning experiences and the multiple levels at which learning occurs.

Just as children and young people have many different starting points for learning, so did the learning communities involved in EePiSE. Participation was a challenge requiring all those involved to demonstrate a level of courage; courage to start the learning journey but also the courage to present at symposia and to develop the articles. This edition celebrates that courage.

The reflections in this special issue of *Kairaranga* remind us that learning is about change, and that change occurs at both individual and systems levels. We hope that schools and wider education systems support the continuation of the learning journeys shared here, and that readers take the opportunity to reflect on their own notions of teaching and learning.

Happy reading!

Alison, Bruce, Cath, Liz, Joanna, Valerie and Vijaya.

Kairaranga

Editorial Board

Alison Kearney	Senior Lecturer, Massey University
Bernie Holden	Senior Advisor, Ministry of Education, Special Education (GSE)
Carol Watts	RTLb, Ngaruawahia/Raglan Cluster
Cath Steeghs	RTLb, Fairfield Cluster
Graeme Nobilo	RTLb, Fairfield Cluster
Dr Jean Annan	Senior Lecturer, Massey University
Dr Jill Bevan-Brown	Associate Professor, Massey University
Jo Cunningham	Psychologist, Wellington GSE
Jo Davies	Project Manager, Early Intervention, GSE
Mere Berryman	Manager, Poutama Pounamu Research Centre, GSE
Merrolee Penman	Senior Lecturer, Otago Polytechnic
Michael Gaffney	Lecturer, Children's Issues Centre, University of Otago
Paul Mitchell	RTLb Huntly/Te Kauwhata Cluster
Dr Roseanna Bourke	Director, Centre for Educational Development, Massey University, College of Education
Sonja Bateman	Practice Advisor Māori, GSE
Dr Valerie Margrain	Coordinator, Kairaranga, GSE
Vanesse Geel	Lead Practitioner Psychologist, Pakuranga GSE

Editing Team

Alison Kearney*	
Dr Bruce Kent	Senior Advisor, GSE
Cath Steeghs*	
Liz Brady	Coordinator, Special Edition, Kairaranga
Joanna Curzon	Team Leader – Research, GSE
Dr Valerie Margrain*	
Vijaya Dharan	Former Senior Advisor EePiSE Project, GSE

*Denotes current Editorial Board member

Cultural Advisor

Dr Angus H Macfarlane

Typesetting and Design

Typeface, Wellington

Printing

Bryce Francis Graphics, Wellington

Kairaranga

Two issues per year

Subscription Information

- For RTLb: Kairaranga
PO Box 12-383, Chartwell
Hamilton
Email: gnobilo@xtra.co.nz
- For all others: Kairaranga.journal@minedu.govt.nz

ISSN 1175-9232

The Kairaranga Editorial Board has made every effort to ensure that all items in this journal are accurate and culturally appropriate. Views expressed or implied in this journal are not necessarily the views of the Editorial Board, Ministry of Education and the New Zealand RTLb Association.

Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education (EePiSE)

In it together

Vijaya Dharan

Psychologist, Ministry of Education, Special Education, Lower Hutt and former Senior Advisor – EePiSE Project.



ABSTRACT

This article provides an overview of the process of EePiSE from conception to conclusion. It attempts to outline the extent of cooperation and collaboration among educators across sectors in identifying what works for children and young people who require significant adaptation to the curriculum. Outlined are the sequence of events, and the people involved, in a project which was the first of its kind in the field of special education in New Zealand.

Practice Paper

Keywords

Action research, collaboration, effective practices, professional development, research project, teacher development.

INTRODUCTION

The basis of this article was the numerous queries around how the project came to be. As the longest serving project team member on the scene, I felt compelled to share the birth and growth of the EePiSE project with you all in this special edition. The project, as you will see by the articles in it, was a fine example of collaboration between researchers and practitioners.

Where did it Begin?

The project was one of the initiatives of the Ministry of Education aimed at supporting and enhancing teacher capability to meet the growing diversity among students. The main purpose of the project was to *explore what works and why* for students who require significant adaptation to the curriculum, and to identify ways to sustain the effectiveness of teachers that will result in improved outcomes for these students in whatever settings they are educated.

SET UP PHASE

The project team led by Dr Roseanna Bourke, who was then the Professional Practice Manager - Ministry of Education, Special Education (GSE), worked on setting up the initial infrastructure for this initiative, originally called "Building Capability in Special Education". However, the title caused some confusion in some parts of the sector as it was mistakenly linked to school property modifications. There were also other reasons, as cited in a later article by Roseanna Bourke, that led to a change of the project title to Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education or what is now fondly referred to as EePiSE. As one of their main tasks at the very beginning, the project team set up an internal Ministry steering group and an external advisory group, with both groups playing an important role in plotting and shaping the course of the EePiSE project.

Steering Group

The steering group was made up mainly of cross-Ministry staff from policy, curriculum, special education, and the schooling improvement division. The steering group contributed to the overall research questions addressed through the different phases of the project. The key role of the steering group was to contribute towards the project design and to ensure that the intent of the funding was adhered to throughout the project.

Advisory Group

The advisory group comprised of principals from primary, secondary and special schools, and representatives from disability and parent advocacy groups, the New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI), and the Post Primary Teachers Association (PPTA). The advisory group continued to inform the project until its completion. The role of the advisory group was to focus on and inform the project team on the practical aspects of the project from their perspectives – a kind of reality check of sorts.

THE FIRST PHASE

The first phase of the project involved the commissioning of a literature review to address three key issues:

- the learning and social outcomes for children and young people with moderate to high needs requiring significant curriculum and teaching adaptations
- features of effective interventions that improve student learning and social outcomes
- building teacher and school capability.

In addressing these questions, the review also identified some key features of effective professional development for teachers, particularly to improve the learning and social outcomes for students with special education needs. The literature review identified that for professional development of teachers to be effective it should be school-based and that it must be built into school-wide plans for improvement that supported teachers to work collaboratively and implement new ideas.

Teachers needed professional learning and development that was practical, that addressed their issues and took account of their learning context. They had to own the process of their learning and be able to draw on one another's experiences and expertise. It was important that they were given time to share and plan together.

THE PILOT STUDY

Research of this magnitude was the first of its kind in New Zealand in special education. The project team, in consultation with the steering group and advisory group, decided to undertake a pilot study in 25 schools to explore some methodological approaches. The task ahead was both exciting and challenging. While schools were facing some challenges owing to staff changes at various stages of the project, the project team too had changes of personnel at different times. However, Roseanna Bourke provided continuity through her leadership.

How did Schools get Involved?

The advisory group strongly recommended that the expressions of interest sought from schools to be part of the pilot study had to be simple and brief. As a result, a one-page *Expression of Interest* was mailed out to all schools in the country. This was preceded by an advertisement in the *Education Gazette*. There was a small technical glitch that held up the mail-out of these forms to schools. Eventually the mail-out reached schools on what was the last working day for secondary schools in 2003, and arrived later still to schools in remote areas. The lateness of information did not seem to be a deterrent. The response was overwhelming. More than 300 schools expressed an interest to be involved, out of which 25 schools, including four kura kaupapa Māori, were selected to participate in the six-month pilot study.

Criteria for Selection of Schools

Members of the steering committee were involved in establishing the selection criteria. Schools included primary, intermediate and secondary, with a wide range of decile rankings across the country. Four settings – regular schools, special schools, kura kaupapa Māori and school-based classes for the focus group of students were chosen on the basis of the number of students who were receiving additional support to access the curriculum.

Researcher Collaboration

Auckland College of Education (which has since merged with Auckland University), was selected to lead the research. They collaborated with three other colleges of education, two universities, GSE and a private researcher. While the collaboration was highly desirable, the logistics of obtaining ethical approval from the various ethics committees pushed back the start time of the pilot study by a term in 2004. Subsequently, schools were involved in Terms 2 and 3, 2004.

Overall around 96 focus groups were held in these schools with school leaders, parents, teachers and students. The focus groups were asked to: *identify relevant learning, social and cultural outcomes for all learners; how these outcomes were currently being achieved, and what would be needed to enhance these outcomes – particularly for those students who required significant curriculum adaptations*. The teachers in these focus groups clearly expressed a need for school-based professional development opportunities to enhance their expertise to support the diverse range of students in their classrooms. The result of the numerous focus groups and findings from this pilot study can be accessed through the Ministry of Education website (www.minedu.govt.nz).

The nature of professional development that teachers in the pilot study wanted mirrored the international trend. They wanted the professional development to be situated within the context of their schools in order to be meaningful and sustainable.

Teachers, while categorically stating the need for ongoing support for them to be able to meet the needs of the growing diversity within their classrooms, also identified some key features that would improve the effectiveness of the professional development. They wanted the leadership within schools to foster a culture of acceptance of diversity, which they saw as a key to sustain effective teaching practices. For the professional development and learning to be more effective they said that:

- teachers had to own and facilitate the process of their professional learning and development
- professional learning opportunities should be based on teachers' immediate needs and build upon their existing knowledge
- collaborative planning and goal setting should be a continuous process with ongoing monitoring, adaptation and review
- supporting teachers in their professional development and learning should be built into school-wide planning for raising student achievement
- supporting teachers in working with families/whānau was important for improving outcomes for all students.

ACTION RESEARCH AND ACTION LEARNING

Informed by the pilot study, an advertisement was placed in the *Education Gazette* in August 2004 inviting schools to participate in a year-long action research and action learning programme of professional learning and development during 2005. Once again, a one-page format (see Appendix 1) was used. Schools had the option to choose from either an action research process or a professional development and learning opportunity which was to be more aligned to action learning. There were more than one hundred expressions of interest. In probing the reason for the lower response to the year-long study in comparison to the overwhelming interest for the pilot study, it became clear that a number of schools across the country were already involved in other Ministry of Education initiatives such as numeracy, literacy, and information and communication technologies (ICT), and did not want to add to their work programme for the year.

The Selection Process

Schools

Similar criteria to that of the pilot study were applied in selecting schools. Forty-nine schools were selected to participate in the year-long professional learning cycle or the "EPISE journey" as the schools refer to the learning process.

Researchers

Researchers from the University of Auckland, Victoria University of Wellington, Christchurch College of Education and Poutama Pounamu research whānau (the Māori research arm of GSE) facilitated the action research in 25 schools. GSE districts were approached to identify facilitators who could work in the other 24 schools which chose professional development through an action learning process.

Facilitators

GSE district managers were asked to nominate staff who:

- had significant experience in working with students with moderate, high and very high needs who required significant adaptation to the curriculum content
- had up-to-date curriculum knowledge and were able to link research to practice
- had the interest and skills to facilitate high quality professional learning
- had the ability to use, adapt and develop resources as required
- could take the role of mentor and foster professional growth in schools
- had the competency to gather and analyse data to evaluate the impact of the professional learning process in each setting particularly as it related to the learning, social and cultural outcomes for students
- had the ability to support networking and the growth of communities of practice to enhance the effectiveness of teaching and the quality of outcomes for students with moderate, high and very high needs who required significant adaptation to the curriculum content
- had the ability to write a final report incorporating all aspects of professional learning of the schools
- could work to agreed timelines and present milestone reports on time.

Managing a Virtual Team

Not surprisingly, facilitators and researchers were located across the country. One of the most effective ways we used to communicate was through teleconferences. The facilitators found these conversations useful in the initial stages and reassuring during the later stages. Specific professional development on action learning was provided to upskill GSE facilitators.

Meeting of Schools

From the outset, this project was conceptualised to be a collaborative venture between educators. To further strengthen this notion, the 25 schools involved in action research were invited to a day-long hui in Wellington to outline the intent of the project. At the meeting schools were given an opportunity to probe what the notion of *Learning for All* meant to their schools and communities, and how they could enhance this notion through the project.

The 24 schools involved in the action learning had similar opportunities in four regional meetings.

These meetings proved to be a starting point for schools to network with one another, which continued to grow in some areas around the country throughout the project. The regional symposia provided a further platform to strengthen the connections between schools.

What the Schools Did

Although the goal for every participating school was to maximise the outcomes for students who required additional support to access the curriculum, schools took slightly different routes in trying to achieve this goal. Although the participating schools took different pathways, their learning in terms of reflective and data-informed practices, seems to be a common outcome for all teachers. Their individual narratives in this special issue of *Kairaranga* will no doubt speak to this.

Building Learning Communities

The research, as mentioned earlier, was also aimed at sustaining and supporting ongoing effective teaching practices. To build networks among practitioners it was necessary that teachers linked with their peers within their schools and also fostered links between schools. Many schools in the project have fostered professional links with their local schools, and also reached out to other schools through specialist teachers, workshops, school visits and an e-community.

The four regional symposia that showcased the learning of schools, some of which have been captured in this special issue, have provided further opportunities for schools to extend their learning communities. The enthusiasm to network among the symposia delegates was encouraging and provided further impetus to the growth of this professional learning community.

RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

Teachers were introduced to relevant literature and research material throughout their involvement in the project. Even reluctant teachers soon became avid consumers of current research information on topics relevant to their professional learning. The findings from the four kura kaupapa Māori during the initial pilot study has been developed into a teacher-friendly resource. In addition, the information contained in the literature review was extrapolated into an active resource material called *Springboards to Practice* (Ministry of Education, 2005).

Seven key themes identified in the initial literature review (*bullying, teaching, learning, friendship, social, identity and self-esteem*) have been captured in a teacher-friendly resource. The resource provides a strong basis for self-examination of teaching practices. This resource serves the dual purpose of informing teachers of what is out there, while actively engaging them to contribute to evidence from their settings on what works for students who require additional support for learning. We hope that teachers will be able to contribute effective teaching and learning strategies from their own practices to the existing richness of information in the *Springboards to Practice* (Ministry of Education, 2005).

CONCLUSION

The EEPiSE project has demonstrated the power of collaboration amongst teachers, and between facilitators and teachers, and schools and the Ministry. The participatory nature (action research/action learning) of the professional development provided the opportunity for teachers to build trustworthy relationships with external facilitators that allowed them to critically examine their existing teaching theory and practices. Although the timeframe has been short to reap the deeper benefits in terms of examining the impact of this reflective practice on student outcomes, the experiences that you are about to read will nevertheless capture the extent of collaboration that has been established among teachers, which is a necessary first step towards creating a community of practitioners who will learn and grow together.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the EEPiSE programme was one in which the Ministry and schools were “in it together”. It is the relationship and mutual trust built throughout the project in and among schools that will help sustain ongoing exchange of ideas between all those involved in teaching and learning. You will find the storied experiences of schools in the following pages demonstrate the impact of the EEPiSE project on students, teachers, school leaders and school communities.

Happy reading!

REFERENCES

Ministry of Education (2005). Springboards to Practice. Source: Donald Beasley Institute (Eds.), *Building capability in education for students with moderate and high needs*. Final draft report of a literature review commissioned by the Ministry of Education: Wellington, New Zealand.

Vijaya Dharan



AUTHOR PROFILE

Vijaya Dharan was a senior advisor with the Ministry of Education, Special Education for the EEPiSE project. She is both a teacher and psychologist by training. Optimism that all children and young people can learn given the right environment that supports their diversity, and belief in their resilience, are what sustain her in the work she does.

Email

vijaya.dharan@minedu.govt.nz

APPENDIX 1.

Expression of Interest

ENHANCING EFFECTIVE PRACTICE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Phase 2 Professional Development, Learning and Action Research

If your school is interested in being involved in this project please register your interest by completing the following details.

Name of school: _____

Address: _____

Contact details: _____

Name of contact person: _____

Please choose one of the following:

You wish to work alongside researchers and have access to professional development and learning specific to the needs of your school for students with moderate and high needs who require significant adaptations to the curriculum.

OR

You wish to be involved in professional development and learning to meet the needs of students with moderate and high needs who require significant adaptations to the curriculum.

School type:

- Primary
- Intermediate
- Secondary

Area:

- Regular
- Special
- Kura Kaupapa Māori

Please indicate the number of students currently receiving funding from the following sources:

- ORRS
- Supplementary Learning Support
- Enhanced Programme Funding
- Moderate needs support
- Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour
- Other initiatives (Literacy, Numeracy, ICT etc.)



Enhancing Effective Inclusive Practice

Knowing, doing and believing

Based on a keynote address delivered by **Professor Martyn Rouse** at the *Learning for All: Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education Symposia*, June 2006.

Keywords

Action research, effective practices, educational policy, evidence based practice, inclusion practices, inclusive classrooms, student participation, teacher development.

INTRODUCTION

This article attempts to locate recent developments in inclusive practice and learning for all in a broader discussion about the need to educate all children more effectively than we may have done in the past. In particular it will explore the ways in which teachers' thinking, beliefs and actions could be developed in ways that might enhance inclusive practice. It is based in part on a keynote lecture given by the author at the Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education (EePiSE) national workshops held in New Zealand in June 2006. During the workshops, teachers, principals, students and facilitators presented their accounts of their school-based, action research and action learning projects designed to develop inclusive practice. The EePiSE project has looked at different ways in which teachers and schools can become more inclusive of children who may have found learning and participation difficult in the past. Whilst listening to the reports from the project schools, it was apparent that the successes and difficulties encountered in the EePiSE project have clear links to the kinds of approaches that are currently being undertaken in other places throughout the world. The messages coming from the project schools were not only about how to increase access to schooling, but also about how to improve children's participation in a relevant and meaningful educational process. Central to this task is a focus on what teachers and other adults who work in schools might do to foster learning, achievement and participation. It is suggested that new ways of thinking about what teachers might need to know, do and believe, are required.

A series of key questions will be addressed in this article:

- Why learning for all?
- What is the current international policy context?
- Why is inclusive practice difficult to develop?
- What are effective inclusive schools?
- How might teachers reconceptualise the inclusion task?

LEARNING FOR ALL? THE CURRENT INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT OF INCLUSION, EXCLUSION AND UNDERACHIEVEMENT

Education for All (EFA) is one of the Millennium Development Goals, in part because education is seen as being a crucial element in human development, but also because so many children do not have access to education, UNESCO (2005). There are many reasons why some children do not attend school, including social conflict, movement of populations, child labour and exploitation, poverty, gender, and disability. It is the world's most vulnerable children who are at most risk of not attending school, or of receiving a sub-standard education. In some parts of the world, schooling is not available because of a shortage of school places, a lack of teachers, or because schools are too far from where children live. Sometimes families choose not to send their children to school because of the poor quality of schooling or because of the economic cost. Such costs might include school fees, having to buy uniforms, books and materials, and so-called "opportunity costs" that arise when young people are not economically active because they are in school.

Throughout the world there is an increased awareness of differences in education provision as well as a growing understanding of the power of education to reduce poverty, to improve the lives of individuals and to transform societies. It is acknowledged that children with disabilities and those who find learning difficult are amongst the most disadvantaged in education. Where provision for such children is available, it is often in separate, segregated facilities such as long-stay institutions, special schools or units. The continued existence of separate facilities means that significant human and material resources are unavailable to help with the development of inclusive practice. Therefore, the reconfiguration of separate facilities and the inclusion of children described as having special education needs is seen as an essential component for achieving education for all. It is hardly surprising therefore that inclusion is part of a worldwide agenda. As a result of this interest, a series of national and international initiatives intended to broaden participation for vulnerable groups of children have been enacted. These include the United Nations Education for All initiative (EFA) which was launched in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, the Dakar Declaration (UNICEF, 2000) and the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994).

Differences in educational opportunities for children depend not only on their individual circumstances, but also crucially on the country in which they live. In highly developed countries such as New Zealand and the United Kingdom, with their long histories of compulsory school attendance, such concerns may seem irrelevant, but even here, not all children are in school. And even when they are in school, they do not necessarily have positive experiences of education, nor do some children have much to show for their time in school. Most school systems have children who are excluded, who do not participate in meaningful learning, or who underachieve. The so-called “achievement gap” between those who achieve most and those who achieve least, is a major concern in many countries. Even successful school systems find some children difficult to educate. Therefore, in many countries the concern is not only about access to schooling, but it is also about ensuring meaningful participation in a system in which achievement and success is available to all. But why is there such a long tail of underachievement in so many countries? Why do so many educational systems have chronic institutional barriers to participation and achievement? And why do so many teachers and schools think that these problems should not be their concern because they are someone else’s responsibility?

Some would argue that the presence of segregated special facilities is a barrier because it absolves the rest of the education system from taking responsibility for all children’s learning. Such beliefs are not surprising because the “classic” special education view assumes that it is not desirable to include children with learning difficulties in mainstream settings because their needs are different. The assumption that underpins this view is that it is possible, and indeed desirable, to group children according to the nature of their abilities, disabilities or difficulties. There are those who claim that because children are different, there will be diversity of instructional needs. In turn this requires teaching groups to be formed according to these perceived individual characteristics. According to Kauffman, Landrum, Mock, Sayeski, and Sayeski (2005), teaching children well requires that they be grouped homogeneously for instructional purposes.

In spite of articulate challenges to deterministic beliefs about ability (for example, Gould, 1997; Hart, Dixon, Drummond & McIntyre, 2004), there is a widespread and persistent belief that human abilities are distributed throughout the population according to the rules of the “bell-curve”. In this view of the world, those who are located at the bottom left hand end of the curve are both qualitatively and quantitatively different from the rest. Given these assumptions, it is not surprising that many teachers and parents continue to believe that only professionals who have undertaken specialist training have the skills and knowledge to do the special needs task.

In such a context, achieving inclusion is a daunting task. The European Agency on the Development of Special Needs Education (2006) reports that dealing with differences and diversity is one of the biggest problems faced by schools across Europe, with behaviour, social and/or emotional problems presenting the biggest challenges for inclusion. It is suggested that difficulties in creating schools for all are often associated with intergenerational poverty and underachievement, and a belief that education is a privilege and not a right that should be available to all.

In addition, barriers to participation arise from inflexible or irrelevant curricula, inappropriate systems of assessment and examinations, and inadequate preparation of and support for teachers. In some countries schools are operating in a hostile policy environment that results in insufficient “capacity” because of restrictive school structures, a competitive ethos, negative cultures and a lack of human and material resources. In turn these views lead to negative attitudes, low expectations and a belief that some children are “worthy” but others are “unworthy”.

In response to concerns about under-achievement and global competitiveness, many countries have enacted “standards-based” reforms such as No Child Left Behind in the United States, and the Education Reform Act (1998) in England (McLaughlin & Rouse, 2000). At the same time, but mostly independent of the “mainstream” reform legislation, many countries have enacted educational policies designed to encourage greater inclusion of children considered to have disabilities or difficulties. The process of education reform began in many countries in the mid 1980s when concerns about global economic competitiveness and the efficiency of school systems resulted in the adoption of marketplace principles in education (Rouse & Florian, 1997). Such reforms were underpinned by the idea that competition and choice raise standards and accountability. It could be argued that competitive environments result in winners and losers and that in such a climate some children may be seen as more attractive to schools than others. Children who are considered difficult to teach and those who find learning difficult are at increased risk for exclusion when schools operate in a competitive educational marketplace (McLaughlin & Rouse, 2000).

It is important to note that this broader policy context can affect the development of inclusion. Educational reform can be both a facilitator and a barrier to the education of children with special education needs. On the one hand it can be argued that higher standards are good for all children because schools are held accountable for the progress of all learners. On the other hand, it has been argued that the difficulties children experience in learning are a consequence of unresponsive education systems. “Special education needs” are often the result of a discrepancy between what a system of schooling ordinarily provides and that which is considered “additional” because it is more than that which is generally available (Florian, 2007).

The research literature suggests that the implementation of inclusion policies has been uneven (Evans & Lunt, 2002). Whilst there are many success stories to be told about inclusion (Ainscow, 1991; Florian & Rouse, 2001), there have also been failures and difficulties. Such difficulties have been blamed on a variety of factors including competing policies that stress competition and high standards, and a lack of funding and resources. It has also been suggested that one of the greatest barriers to the development of inclusion is because teachers do not have the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to carry out this work (Forlin 2001).

Nevertheless, developing schools for all is important because schooling is linked to human, economic and social development goals. Dealing with exclusion, marginalisation and underachievement is not only the right thing to do; it makes sound economic and social sense. Failure to develop schools capable of educating all children not only leads to the creation of an educational underclass, but also a social and economic underclass which is likely to have serious consequences for society now and in the future. Therefore, the development of successful inclusive schools, “schools for all” in which the learning and participation of all children is valued, whilst difficult, is an essential task for all countries.

Therefore, although inclusion is seen as important in most countries, experience tells us that it is difficult to achieve for children with special education needs because of:

- deterministic beliefs about intelligence and fixed abilities
- a lack of resources
- the continuing existence of separate specialist facilities and institutions
- the shame and stigma associated with disability and difference
- disagreements about the nature and viability of inclusive education
- uncertainty about professional roles and the status of specialist knowledge
- inadequate preparation of and support for teachers
- inflexible curricula and examination systems
- didactic “lecture style” whole class teaching
- other policies that impinge on the development of inclusive schools such as the competitive marketplace reforms.

Clearly the development of inclusive practice is difficult, but how is it that some schools become more inclusive while others struggle?

WHAT ARE EFFECTIVE INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS?

There is now sufficient evidence from around the world to know what inclusive schools do and what they look like. A series of factors at various levels seem to facilitate inclusion. These factors include, the broader policy context, the features of schools as organisations, the leadership of the school, classroom processes, the quality of learning and teaching, and the nature of relationships. Pro-inclusion policies that value all learners, rather than just some, are an important feature of schools for all. However, I am going to concentrate on outlining the features of schools and classrooms, because that is where most teachers have some professional responsibility and power.

First it is important to remember that inclusive schools are created one at a time. All schools have their histories, traditions, strengths and areas that need improvement.

Therefore, each of the features below may evolve differently in various schools and it is important not to view these characteristics as part of a checklist for improvement. Nevertheless successful inclusive schools seem to have:

- support from inside and outside the school
- leadership from the principal and the local authority or school district
- cooperation with parents and the community
- multi-agency working and the sharing of expertise
- a positive ethos and supportive cultures
- flexible use of resources
- long-term professional development for all adults
- a range of outcomes that are valued, not only academic attainment
- involvement in action research development projects, often involving outside partners
- a belief that becoming inclusive is not only about special educational needs, but is part of a broader school improvement agenda
- engagement with self-review and audit of policies and practices
- using approaches such as the *Index for Inclusion*.

The last factor on the list is important because it provides a foundation of evidence upon which other developments can be built. The *Index for Inclusion* is more than a tool for developing inclusion. It supports a process that encourages the learning and participation of all learners. According to Booth & Black-Hawkins:

It does not focus on a particular group of learners who are disabled or categorised as having special educational needs, although it is concerned with them too. It encourages a critical examination of all aspects of schools, including approaches to teaching and learning, curricula, and relationships between and amongst teachers and learners. It asks staff to build on their own knowledge and experience and that of learners, parents and other members of communities, in identifying development priorities and implementing them. In the process of working with the materials schools adapt them to their own contexts (2005, p.5).

As can be seen there is an emphasis on using evidence as the basis for developments in learning and teaching, the curriculum and relationships. Schools cannot become more inclusive unless there are changes in classroom practices that enable children to learn successfully and help them to feel better about themselves as learners. Therefore, inclusive classrooms should emphasise:

- a positive social and emotional climate by encouraging positive behaviour
- learning as well as teaching
- classroom organisation and management
- an inclusive pedagogy and the use of a wide range of teaching strategies

- adults working together collaboratively
- cooperative learning
- building on children's interests and what they already know and can do
- the use of assessment practices that support learning.

And of course teachers are crucial in determining what happens in classrooms. Many see the development of more inclusive classrooms as requiring teachers to cater for different student learning needs through the modification or differentiation of the curriculum (Forlin, 2004). For some, this approach has been interpreted as requiring individualisation. At its most extreme, this view can be seen in the call for one-to-one teaching of students with specific learning difficulties. Questions about the sustainability of such expensive provision are rarely adequately answered. Further, there are those who argue (for example Kaufman, et al., 2005) that there are specialist teaching approaches for children with different kinds of disabilities and that specialist training is required. An unintended consequence of these views is that most mainstream teachers do not believe they have the skills and knowledge to do this kind of work and that there is an army of "experts" out there to deal with these students on a one-to-one basis or in small more manageable groups. Research carried out in England for the Department for Education and Skills challenges some of the traditional views about the nature of a specialist pedagogy (Davis & Florian, 2004) and in this issue Lani Florian explores questions about special knowledge and pedagogy in more detail.

Nevertheless, teachers do have concerns about inclusion and many surveys have found that teachers' attitudes towards inclusion are not particularly positive (Ellins & Porter, 2005). Further, they express concerns about their lack of preparation for inclusion and for teaching all learners (Forlin, 2001). But in settings where teachers are encouraged to try out a range of teaching strategies, they report that they knew more than they thought they knew and, for the most part, children learn in similar ways. Although some children might need extra support, teachers do not distinguish between "types" of special education need when planning this support (Florian & Rouse, 2001). Many teachers reported they did not think they could teach such children, but their confidence and repertoire of teaching strategies developed over time. This would suggest that by "just doing it" teachers are capable of developing knowledge and positive attitudes to inclusion.

By looking at the main findings from research that Lani Florian and I have carried out over a period of 15 years or so, it would seem that successful inclusive classroom practice depends on teachers':

- attitudes to pupils with special education needs
- capacity to enhance social relations
- willingness to deal with differences effectively
- repertoire of skills, expertise, knowledge, pedagogical approaches and confidence
- beliefs that all children can learn
- willingness to work together with specialists and other colleagues.

It could be argued that developing effective teaching is about extending teachers' knowledge, encouraging them to do things differently, getting them to reconsider their identities and their attitudes and it is also about reviewing the kinds of support they need. In other words, it is about "knowing", "doing", "being", "believing", and "having". But what does this look like in practice?

For many years both initial teacher education and continuing professional development focused on extending teachers' knowledge. Courses would often focus on the characteristics of different kinds of learners, how they should be identified, and details of any specialist teaching strategies that were considered appropriate. In other words these courses focused on:

Knowing about

- teaching strategies
- disability and special education needs
- how children learn
- what children need to learn
- classroom organisation and management
- where to get help when necessary
- the best ways to assess and monitor children's learning
- the legislative and policy context.

It is important to point out that such content knowledge is important, but the evidence suggests that it is insufficient because many teachers did not act upon this knowledge when they returned to the classroom. It was clear there was a big gap between what teachers know as a result of being on a course and what they do in their classrooms. In an attempt to bridge this gap, initiatives have been designed to link individual and institutional development. In other words "doing" has become an essential element of professional learning. In many cases this has involved action research-type initiatives built around school or classroom-based development projects and new ways of:

Doing

- turning knowledge into action
- using evidence to improve practice
- learning how to work with colleagues as well as with children
- using positive rewards and incentives.

Although many action research initiatives have had positive outcomes and involved changes in practice, it became apparent that some were "content-free" and only focused on process. Others ran into barriers associated with negative and deterministic attitudes about children's abilities and "worth". Sadly there are those who believe that some children will never be able to learn those things that are important to their teachers. Further, there are teachers who do not believe they have the skills to make a difference, perhaps because they "have not been on the course", and they lack confidence.

Therefore, it is also important to consider how it might be possible for teachers to develop new ways of:

Believing

- that all children are worth educating
- that all children can all learn
- that they have the capacity to make a difference to children's lives
- that such work is their responsibility and not only a task for specialists.

Changing attitudes is difficult, particularly for those teachers whose professional identities are secure. If a teacher sees themselves as a teacher of, let's say chemistry or French, it is likely that the subject they teach will play an important part in the construction of their professional identity. Further, if their subject is seen as intellectually demanding, then why would they be expected to have to teach it to all learners? But it is not only subject specialist teachers in secondary schools who have difficulty in redefining their professional identities. Some teachers of young children with special education needs see themselves as experts in dealing with children's difficulties in learning. It is an identity built upon the belief about specialist knowledge and skills for the work. Other teachers not only do not know how to do it, but they wouldn't want to do it if they did know how. Inclusion threatens assumptions that teachers have about many things. In particular it can threaten their identities. If responsibilities are to be shared and teachers are to take on new roles and responsibilities, then there have to be changes to teachers' ways of:

Being

- through exploring and extending their identity of what it means to be a teacher in inclusive settings.

And finally it is important to ensure that teachers not only have the knowledge, skills and attributes listed above, but also that they are provided with the conditions which enable them to do the job. This entails:

Having

- the materials, resources, space and place to do the work
- the time to consult with colleagues
- positive attitudes about self and others
- the confidence to try new things in the classroom.

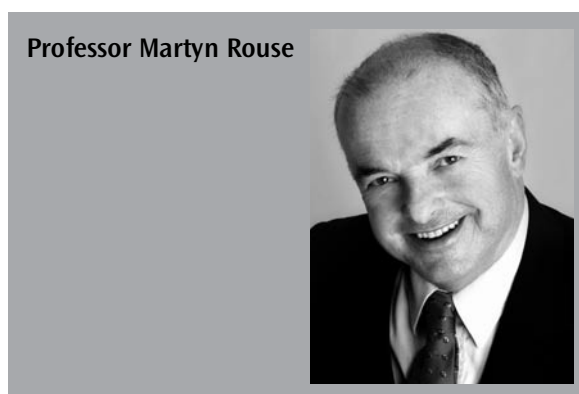
CONCLUSION

The development of inclusive schools is not an easy task and not all people are committed to the development of inclusion because they have strong beliefs about where and how different "kinds" of children should receive their schooling. In particular there are still unanswered questions about the purpose and nature of specialist knowledge. In spite of these difficulties there are sufficient examples of good practice across the world, and particularly here in New Zealand, for us to be optimistic that, if we so wish, we can create successful inclusive schools for all. The examples given at the EEPiSE workshops provide indicators of how this might be achieved. All of the examples involved teachers and principals approaching inclusion with open minds. Many reported difficulties and obstacles, but most reported about ways in which practice had changed over the life of the project. In many schools things were being done differently and teachers were trying out new ways of working. Over time, "just doing it" will lead to changes in attitudes and the development of new knowledge. It was clear from many of the project reports that there was new knowledge being developed and more positive attitudes were becoming apparent. As mentioned earlier in this article, becoming more inclusive is not only the right thing to do, but it is also in everyone's interest. It is essential that teachers and schools play their part in the creation of a fairer, more stable and more secure society in which everyone feels included.

REFERENCES

- Ainscow, M. (1997). Towards inclusive schooling. *British Journal of Special Education*, 24(1), 3-6.
- Booth, T., & Black-Hawkins, K. (2005). *Developing learning and participation in countries of the south: The role of an Index for Inclusion*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Davis, P., & Florian, L. (2004). *Teaching strategies and approaches for pupils with special educational needs: A scoping study* (Research Report 516). London: Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (available via the 'publications' section of the DfES research website: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research>).
- Ellins, J., & Porter, J. (2005). Departmental differences in attitudes to special educational needs in the secondary school. *British Journal of Special Education*, 32(4), 188-195.
- European Agency for the Development of Special Needs Education (2006). *Inclusive education and classroom practice*. Available at http://www.european-agency.org/iecp/iecp_intro.htm.
- Evans J., & Lunt I. (2002). Inclusive education: Are there limits? *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 17(1), 1-14.
- Florian, L. (2007). Reimagining special education. In L. Florian, (Ed.). *The SAGE handbook of special education*. London: Sage.
- Florian, L., & Rouse, M. (2001). Inclusive practice in English secondary schools: Lessons learned. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 31(3), 399-412.

- Forlin, C. (2004). Promoting inclusivity in Western Australian schools. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 8, 183-200.
- Forlin, C. (2001). Inclusion: Identifying potential stressors for regular class teachers. *Educational Research*, 43(3), 235-245.
- Gould, S. J. (1997). *The mismeasure of man*, (2nd ed.). Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Hart, S., Dixon, A., Drummond, M. J., & McIntyre, D. (2004). *Learning without limits*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Kauffman, J. M., Landrum, T.J., Mock, D., Sayeski, B., & Sayeski, K.S. (2005). Diverse knowledge and skills require a diversity of instructional groups: A position statement. *Remedial and Special Education*, 26(1), 2-6.
- McLaughlin, M., & Rouse, M. (2000). *Special education and school reform in the United States and Britain*. London: Routledge.
- Rouse, M., & Florian, L. (1997). Inclusive education in the marketplace. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1(4), 323-336.
- UNESCO (2005). *Children out of school: Measuring exclusion from primary education*. Montreal: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.
- UNESCO (1994). *The Salamanca Statement and framework for action on special needs education*. Paris: UNESCO.
- UNICEF (2000). *Dakar framework for action: Education for all: Meeting Our Collective Commitments*. UNICEF.



AUTHOR PROFILE

Martyn Rouse is Professor and Director of the Social and Educational Inclusion Project at the University of Aberdeen. Previously he was a senior lecturer in inclusion and special educational needs at the University of Cambridge, Faculty of Education and Director of Studies for Education at St Catharine's College Cambridge. He was a teacher for 16 years in special and mainstream settings in London and also worked for a local authority advisory service. He has undertaken commissioned research and development work on inclusive education for local authorities in the UK and for several national and international agencies, including UNICEF, in Bosnia and Serbia in the former Yugoslavia, and in the Republics of Georgia and Latvia. More recently he has worked with the Kenyan Ministry of Education. Currently he is working with colleagues from the Universities of Cambridge, Edinburgh and Oxford on RECOUP, a five-year project looking at the ways in which education can help to reduce poverty in Ghana, India, Kenya and Pakistan. Over the past decade, he carried out research and has published widely on the impact of school reform legislation on the education of children with special education needs and is particularly interested in inclusion and achievement, and the identity and status of teachers who work with children in special education.

Author Contact

Professor Martyn Rouse
 Director of the Social and Educational Inclusion Project
 School of Education
 University of Aberdeen
 Scotland AB24 5UA
 UK

Email

m.rouse@abdn.ac.uk



Teaching Māori Children with Special Education Needs

Getting rid of the too hard basket

Keynote address delivered by **Dr Jill Bevan-Brown** at the *Learning for All: Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education Symposia*, June 2006.

ABSTRACT

This paper examines research evidence, practitioners' knowledge, skills and experiences and the voice of students, parents and whānau to identify common messages in respect to educating Māori students both with and without special education needs. The keys to effective practice identified include: positive teacher-student relationships; interactive teaching strategies that engage students in their own learning; teaching that builds on students' strengths and interests; high teacher expectations of Māori students; the inclusion of cultural input; and the involvement of parents, whānau and peers. Professionals are urged to take the provision of culturally appropriate, effective education out of the "too hard basket" and to use the previous strategies when working with Māori students.

Keywords

Culturally appropriate strategies, effective practices, evidence based practice, inclusive classrooms, Māori culture, Māori students, parent school relationship, teaching strategies.

INTRODUCTION

When I was first asked to present this talk I declined the invitation. What ensued was a flurry of emails giving excuses and suggesting other people but finally after being wined, dined and flattered, I agreed (it works every time). Chief amongst my reasons for initially declining was a fear that I would disappoint people, be boring and waste everyone's time. Fresh in my mind was another talk I had given. The topic was, "What is the research telling us about provisions for Māori students with special needs?" Briefly my message was that these students were not faring well and that despite the importance of their culture, cultural input into teaching and special education programmes was inadequate. After the presentation I was in the lift with a woman who had attended my talk and she remarked, "Nothing you told us was new, we've known that for years!" The lift door opened and the woman promptly disappeared which was probably a blessing for us both but what she said got me thinking, "If people are already well aware of the situation, why do many Māori students with special education needs remain inadequately provided for?" I came up with a number of possible reasons.

1. Teachers and special educators don't care.
2. They believe that culture is not relevant to teaching students with special education needs.
3. They believe their efforts won't make a difference.
4. They are unsure of what to do or are so overwhelmed by the enormity of the challenge that they put improving the teaching of Māori students with special education needs into the too hard basket.

I will return to these possibilities at the end of my presentation.

Sir Apirana Ngata once said, 'There are two ways of tackling problems. One is to explore the bad and feature it. The other is to discover good and encourage it' (Percy, 1989, pp. 6-7). My previous presentation, in the main, took the former approach. By giving statistics and examples showing how Māori students with special education needs were missing out I had hoped to appeal to people's sense of injustice. I don't think it worked – well for the lady in the lift it didn't! So in this presentation I am going to take a positive approach.

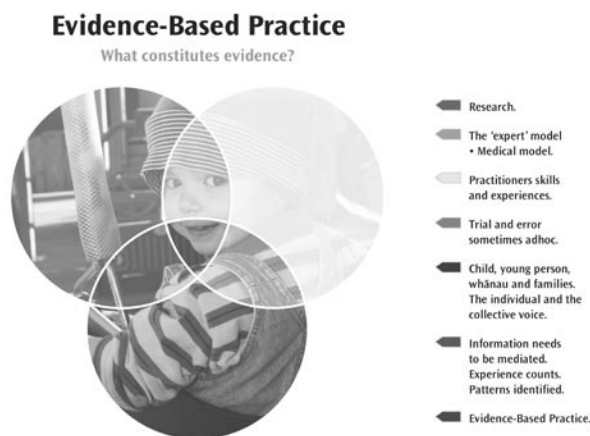


Figure 1. Evidence-based practice diagram. (Bourke, Holden and Curzon, 2005).

To place my talk in a context and outline what I intend to cover, I refer you to this model of evidence-based practice (Figure 1) which very effectively illustrates the sources of evidence we should be drawing on to inform our practice. This model represents three types of evidence: those of research; practitioners' knowledge, skills and experiences; and the individual and collective voices of children, young people, whānau and families.

My talk is going to cover examples from all three evidence sources in respect to teaching Māori students in general, and Māori students with special education needs in particular. I will be highlighting effective practices identified in each area and looking at common messages that emerge. However, I need to mention that this evidence-based practice model was developed as a guide to practice in specific situations. Because I am not dealing with a particular student, the examples I will be giving in each area are drawn from relevant research studies.

PRACTITIONER MESSAGES



Figure 2. Practitioner skills and experiences.

I will start with practitioners' knowledge, skills and experiences and share with you findings from the *Achievement in Multicultural High Schools* (AIMHI) project.

This was a school support initiative to raise the achievement of Māori and Pasifika students in eight low decile secondary schools with large Māori and Pasifika rolls. It consisted of a number of components and was conducted over a four-year period. One aspect of the study focused on identifying teaching and learning strategies used by effective teachers in the AIMHI schools. Over a six-month period, 100 lessons involving 89 nominated teachers were observed. Following each observation the teacher concerned was interviewed to discuss the lesson. In addition, six students from each class also participated in a discussion of the lesson, the strategies used and the qualities of the teacher. Altogether 600 students participated in group discussions and 1645 were present at the lessons observed. We will be hearing from some of these students later when I talk about student voice.

What did this comprehensive study reveal? It showed that successful teachers of Pasifika and Māori students carefully planned and structured their lessons. They knew how to assess and accommodate their students' learning needs and had an armoury of effective and appropriate teaching strategies they could draw on to facilitate their students' learning. These included:

- outlining the purpose of lessons
- including a range of stimulating, meaningful and varied activities
- actively engaging students in their own learning
- differentiating teaching to accommodate different learning abilities
- responding to "teachable moments"

- using focused revision to link previous learning to new material
- "explicit teaching" of new concepts by presenting material in small, manageable steps
- ongoing assessment of students' learning
- using skilful questioning techniques to engage students in paired, small group and whole class discussions
- making learning fun
- incorporating cooperative learning techniques
- providing clear, unhurried, easily understood explanations
- rewarding learning
- giving regular and genuine individual, group and whole class praise and encouragement.

Indeed, research shows that these strategies are effective with all students regardless of ethnicity. They are certainly evident in the literature on teaching students with special education needs.

In respect to culture, successful teachers were identified as having 'a good knowledge and understanding of and empathy with the cultural worlds of their students' (Hill & Hawk, 2000, p. 15). They pronounced Māori and Pasifika names and words correctly and used Māori and Pasifika words and concepts in their teaching. They also seated students who spoke the same language together so they could help each other.

But perhaps the strongest message to emerge from the AIMHI study was in relation to the affective qualities these successful teachers possessed. They were positive, optimistic, hardworking, motivated, reflective practitioners. In dealing with students they were understanding, respectful, fair, caring, giving of themselves, patient, humorous, persevered and kept their word. They also consulted with parents and were involved in out-of-school activities.

The affective qualities these teachers possessed contributed to the development of strong and positive teacher-student relationships. It was these relationships that the researchers identified as crucial to students' learning. In fact they stated that teachers' age, gender, socio-economic status and/or ethnicity did not matter to students; rather it was the teachers' attitudes that the students considered most important (Hill & Hawk, 2000, p.15).

The data show these students have particular needs that students in other schools do not have. The relationship that students in these schools form with their teachers is crucial. While the relationship that forms between a student and teacher in any school is important, the data in this study show that it is not only important to these students but is a prerequisite for learning. If a teacher has not been able to form a positive relationship of reciprocal respect the students in the class will find it very, very, difficult to be motivated to learn (Hill & Hawk, 2000, p. 3).

This finding concurs with other Aotearoa/New Zealand studies of Māori and Pasifika students and with overseas studies of minority group, at-risk and special education students in general.

You may be wondering why positive student-teacher relationships are more crucial to learning for these groups of students than to students in general. There are a number of reasons for this but chief amongst them is the connection between learning and the five “self-hyphens” that is, self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-identity, self-concept and self-assessment. Students from ethnic minorities and those with special education needs have an increased risk of developing negative self-concepts. If their disability results in them having to struggle to achieve tasks others can do with ease, if it excludes them from participating in valued activities, or if the media regularly highlights negative statistics relating to their ethnic group, it is quite understandable that their self-concept and belief in what they can achieve is negatively affected. This in turn affects their ability to learn, not only because their motivation is lowered but also because cognitively they are not “operating on all pistons.” Gay (1994, p. 4) provides a good explanation of this in a school context:

If students feel that the school environment is alien and hostile towards them or does not affirm and value who they are (as many students of colour believe), they will not be able to concentrate as thoroughly as they might on academic tasks. The stress and anxiety that accompany this lack of support and affirmation cause their mental attention, energy and efforts to be diffused between protecting their psyches from attack and attending to academic tasks. This stress ‘adversely affects students’ daily academic performance by reducing their willingness to persist at academic tasks and interfering with the cognitive processes involved in learning’ (Gougis, 1986, p.147).

This explains why positive student-teacher relationships are so important for these groups of students, especially ethnic minority students with special education needs who are doubly at risk. If students know their teachers like and care about them, if they are treated with respect and their culture is valued, they can concentrate all their attention, energy and effort on learning.

The AIMHI study identified a second important influence on students’ learning. This is the nature of the relationships that exist between the learner and their peers. The findings showed that where positive peer relationships were present, students felt ‘safer to contribute, take risks with their learning and learn from each other ... group dynamics of the classroom make a difference to student motivation and attitudes towards learning’ (Hill & Hawk, 2000, p. 4.) Positive peer relationships were not just left to chance. Teachers planned team-building strategies, taught and modelled relationship skills and provided situations where these could be used. In the special education context, the importance of positive peer relationships can be gauged by the fact that Friendship, Belonging, Social and Bullying constitute four of the seven major themes identified in *Springboards to Practice* (Ministry of Education, 2005).

PARENT, WHĀNAU AND STUDENT MESSAGES



Figure 3. Child, young person, whānau and families. The individual and the collective voice.

What messages are parents, whānau and students giving about effective education for Māori students both with and without special education needs?

Throughout the last 18 years I have interviewed countless numbers of parents and whānau of Māori children with a wide range of special education needs. In preparing this talk I went back to my interview data to find out what the predominant messages were in respect to providing an effective education. The messages clearly indicate that parents and whānau:

- believe cultural input is important in the education of their child with special education needs
- want to be consulted, involved and empowered in their child’s education
- want teachers who care about their child and have high expectations of them
- want skilful teachers who can deliver a high quality programme.

Parents and whānau believe cultural input is important in the education of their child with special education needs

A strong message that has come through from the majority of parents I have interviewed is the importance of cultural input in their child’s education. This cultural input is important not only for the child’s cultural development but also to foster their self-esteem and to facilitate learning in general. The previous quote from Gay (1994) explained how children need to feel psychologically secure in order to learn effectively. Including cultural content contributes to their emotional and psychological well-being because it shows students that their culture is important and valued. It also facilitates learning by providing, firstly, a means by which new information can be related to prior knowledge and experience, and secondly, an educational environment that is culturally compatible with their home environment.

The cultural input mentioned by parents and whānau was wide-ranging. It included the incorporation of Māori content and language into the curriculum; the use of culturally appropriate identification and assessment measures, procedures, teaching strategies and resources; and the recognition and incorporation of Māori values, perspectives and perceptions of special education needs.

Parents provided some excellent suggestions and wonderful examples of cultural input, ranging from the simple inclusion of puha in a science lesson to involvement in kapahaka.

If every Māori kid today could identify puha then that is fantastic. If you can say, "Do you know what puha looks like? Can you go and get me some? Magnificent!" Again it's what they can do. Now who talks about the recognition of puha as a wonderful thing to have and yet you can live on that, you can eat that, it sustains you and then you get the puha and you say, "See that white thing coming out, what's it made of? Gee, it's not just puha, it's some chemical makeup of puha" and can lead on. I remember when I was working in Parehau [this parent was a social worker] we used to ask kids what they had for breakfast and they would lie. They would talk about pavlova, sponges and cream and that was all bullshit. Samoan kids, Māori kids, instead of saying they had the boil up from the night before! They didn't think it was acceptable to say that. It's actually valuing the things they do in their lives and talking about that (Bevan-Brown, 1993, pp. 110-111).

One child with Asperger syndrome who loved music and kapahaka but had difficulty coping with loud noises wore ear plugs at practices and performances. His mother noted that he was usually a few beats behind everyone else but he coped and in time was able to dispense with the ear plugs.

Parents and whānau want to be consulted, involved and empowered in their child's education

I definitely think that for a start for Māori children, Māori people have to be involved in the decision-making about what is going to happen to those children because when they're not, it doesn't matter how good it is, they'll never feel part of it and for it to be successful, Māori people, they have to feel a part of it (Bevan-Brown, 1993, p. 112).

In addition to being involved in decision-making relating to their children, parents were also keen to support their children's learning. However, the point was made that some parents were unsure of how to do this. A Māori parent who was also a teacher aide told of how she visited parents to explain their child's special education programme to them: *When the child goes home you are expecting that child to communicate with the family if they want help. Sometimes it is not that the parents don't want to help, it's that they don't know they can help or how they can help ... I didn't learn [what to do] until I was a teacher aide. So you know about getting the whānau involved, I'm really into that ... all your planning, all your programmes and everything like that will go right down the poo hole if you haven't got family support (Bevan-Brown, 2002, p. 298).*

At the other end of the spectrum I came across parents in my research who were experts on their child's disability. For example, six of the parents I interviewed in the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) study had an in-depth knowledge of ASD. They were well read, went to relevant conferences, regularly searched the Internet for the latest research results on the treatment of children with ASD and contacted acknowledged world experts to discuss their children.

We need to make the most of the knowledge and experience of parents such as these. But even if parents are not experts in their child's disability, they know their children best and we need to make the most of this knowledge. One parent explained how this was happening with her son's teachers:

We were aware of lots of little things that might trigger him off. Even down to hitting kids and then we'd figure out with Tipene ... if a rule was you couldn't wear your hat in the classroom and he was aware of it and as soon as he saw a kid who had a hat on, he'd go for them and try to take it off them because that was the rule! But with him it wasn't, "Can you please take your hat off?" it was go up and grab the hat and so that would lead to other things and fracas and fighting because other kids wouldn't realise what he's doing and teachers wouldn't realise why he did it. Lots of little things like that and it's only because we'd see it happen here or other places, we'd be around him when a similar thing would happen so we'd know that's what the problem was ... Once we've explained things to teachers and they've seen it and understand it, then they're usually pretty good ... Because of things we've said to the kids as well as to the teachers, now everybody is trying to recognise these things and understand why, so they tolerate it because they understand (Bevan-Brown, 2004, pp. 48-49).

However, I need to include a caveat here about parent involvement. While the desire to be involved in their child's education did emerge as a predominant theme in my research studies, similar to the desire for cultural input, this did not apply to everyone. Parents and whānau should be involved to the extent they choose, are comfortable with and are able to manage. Never make assumptions. The best way to find out what parents want is to ask! This consultation should not be a once only event. Because people's circumstances and opinions can change over time, consultation should be ongoing.

Parents and whānau want teachers who cared about their children and had high expectations of them

Parents described teachers and other personnel involved in educating their children as "having aroha," "very helpful," "very open," "supportive," "knowledgeable," "informative," "inclusive," "valuing of family," "great advocates," "easy going," "non-judgemental," "committed to their job," "positive," "caring" and so forth.

I had so many quotes that give testament to caring and dedicated teachers that it was difficult to choose just one to share with you. However, I decided on the following because it shows just how powerful simple little gestures from teachers can be. It is a story that one mother related about her own childhood experience:

I think that if a child feels special with that teacher, then she can draw out lots of things from the child, but if the child feels that he is not special then he'll just keep it in, it won't exhibit itself. Often kids need this drawing out, you know, "this person thinks I'm special!" I remember when I was little, when I was at primary, different teachers developed my self-esteem. I had long hair and always wore it in plaits ...

There was one teacher who used to flip my pigtail and smile at the same time. I looked up to him and I thought, "this chap likes me, this teacher thinks I'm neat." So I thought I was neat. This other teacher on my report wrote "cooperative." I looked at that and thought "gosh, that's a big, long word, it must mean that I'm brainy, I'm brainy!" That was in the primers, so that false thing improved my self-esteem so that I had this self-image of being brainy, and people liked me. So that motivated me to do better and better (Bevan-Brown, 1993, p. 109).

Parents and whānau want skilful teachers who can deliver a high quality programme

Invariably, parents and whānau made the point that cultural input was not enough to ensure learning. For special education to be effective it had to be of "a high quality". This included: appropriate, purposeful, timely assessment; ongoing programme evaluation; comprehensive, regular, relevant and sufficient interventions; teaching that was interesting, pitched at the correct level and used effective strategies; and programmes that were well funded and well resourced.

In respect to teaching strategies, the most frequently mentioned approach involved building on children's strengths and interests. This was seen to be especially effective for children with ASD. One father explained how his son's obsession with chess was utilised by teachers who provided chess maths, chess stories, chess PE and so on. He commented that even when the lesson had nothing to do with chess his son was able to find some tenuous link!

Another frequently mentioned strategy was the use of role models. One father told of how his son had chosen Heremia Ngata to study for a school project. He applauded this and explained:

It's just affirming who you are ... using images of successful Ngati Porou people like Apirana Ngata and Whaea McClutchie who are the successful images they can whakapapa in to ... So in terms of soccer there's Heremia Ngata ... Sean Fallen ... Winton Rufer ... So I say to Tama, "Hey, look, three professional Ngati Porou soccer players, one of them absolutely famous." It's a creation of images, that you have role models that you can say, "hey, that's a cuzzy!" Te Ra is very interested, he wants to find out exactly how Heremia is related to us. I've got to work that out. I know he is but in the meantime "doesn't matter boy," I say, "whether he is a first or second cousin, he's a cousin. We will work it out and I will show you." So that's the modelling thing. You can say, "You are me, your success is my success." It's that sort of thing (Bevan-Brown, 1993, p. 103).

In my ASD study parents were asked about teaching approaches that had been successful with their children. A wide range of approaches were described but the top seven were:

- preparation/transition activities
- visual strategies
- activities involving music and rhythm; firmness and perseverance
- computer use
- one-on-one assistance
- social stories.

STUDENTS' MESSAGES

Unfortunately I have not interviewed large numbers of Māori students either with or without special education needs so I could not use my own research to identify predominant messages. However, hundreds of Māori and Pasifika students have been interviewed in the AIMHI and *Te Kotahitanga* research (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003) so I looked to these studies for outstanding messages related to learning. This is what I found:

Students emphasised the importance of caring teachers who encourage and have high expectations of them:

They encourage us. They tell us about their lives and about the experiences of past students. They challenge you, they make comparisons that help you to understand. (AIMHI Students)

They respect your views. They don't make you feel stupid and when you ask a question they don't look at you like you're dumb. You feel more confident if you're relaxed with a teacher. (AIMHI Students)

Students want their culture valued and affirmed:

We don't necessarily need Pī and Māori teachers but we do need culturally sensitive teachers. (AIMHI Student)

I'm a Māori, they should ask me about Māori things ... I've got the goods on this but they never ask me. I'm a dumb Māori I suppose. Yeah they asked the Asian girl about her culture. They never ask us about ours. (Te Kotahitanga Student)

Students want: well organised teachers who make learning understandable, interesting and fun; to be actively involved in their own learning; and a classroom environment where it is OK to make mistakes:

It's good when they explain so you can understand. They break down the book information into little bits, part by part. (AIMHI Student)

They have a laugh with you instead of just sitting there, but still keeping us in line. Keep the class in order, but still laughing with you ... that helps you like the subject. (Te Kotahitanga Student)

If you can join in and do things then it's easier to learn. (AIMHI Student)

Students want the support of their parents, family and friends:

Your friends in your class, sometimes if you don't understand, they will help you out and put it in your words and then you'll understand. So that's how if you get a friend like that and they understand it, they can just tell you and you can get to work. (Te Kotahitanga Students)

Having your family and friends to support you ... cause they've all been through school and stuff and have good jobs and I want to be like that. (Te Kotahitanga Student)

However, it must be added that while students wanted their parents and whānau to support their learning they were not enthusiastic about them coming to school to do so! I suspect the latter actually depends on the age of the student. My four children loved me coming to kindy, kohanga reo and school when they were young but as they grew older they became embarrassed about my looks, my clothes, my bomb car, what I said, what I didn't say – to the extent that one of my daughters wouldn't bring home notes from college asking for parent assistance just in case I volunteered!

Finally, the process of listening to students' voices can be complemented and enhanced by becoming more knowledgeable about youth culture in general. The authors of a book called *What successful teachers do in inclusive classrooms. Sixty research-based teaching strategies that help special learners succeed* (McNary, Glasgow & Hicks, 2005) maintain that understanding where students are and what is important to them is essential to designing instruction. They suggest that teachers:

Check literature, music, clothing trends and so on. Spend time looking over popular magazines, check on students' favourite films and television shows, and most importantly, take time to talk and listen to them ... Relating the curriculum to the students in order to make it meaningful, relevant and fun reduces classroom management issues as well as contributes to student success (pp. 11 & 12).

RESEARCH MESSAGES



Figure 4. Research – the last circle.

The diagram (Figure 5) illustrates some different types of research that can be drawn on to inform our teaching practice. At the top are the multi-site studies that collect data from large numbers of teachers and/or students. The middle layer includes research which involves many teachers and/or children but they are all from the same site. At the bottom is research that involves in-depth studies of one classroom, centre, unit, teacher or child, and of course there are many gradations in between these three research scenarios.

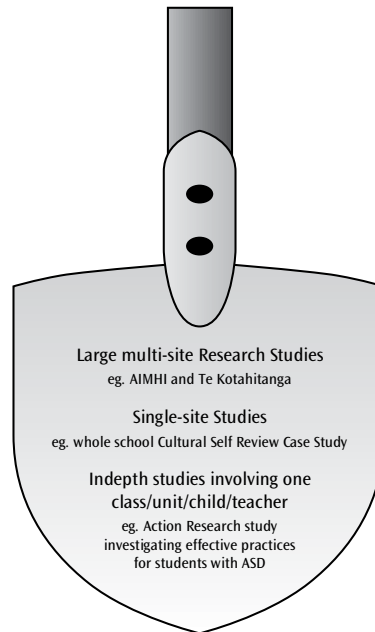


Figure 5. Looking beneath the surface.

Each type of research has its particular strengths and weaknesses. For example, the numbers in the large studies enable the identification of "statistically significant" findings which can be generalised to similar populations or situations. The smaller studies don't have this capacity but they can give "life" to the statistics of larger studies by showing in detail what people do, think and feel. In drawing on research to inform our practice we need to consider studies across this whole spectrum so that we can get the best of all possible worlds. I am going to present an example of research from each level.

AIMHI and *Te Kotahitanga* are both large multi-site research projects. The AIMHI study was described earlier. I will now very briefly explain the *Kotahitanga* project but strongly recommend that you visit the Māori research section on the Ministry of Education website (www.minedu.govt.nz) and read about these and other projects in detail.

In the *Kotahitanga* project researchers talked to Year 9 and 10 Māori students in four mainstream schools about their classroom experiences. They also talked to parents, principals and teachers. The analysis of these interviews showed that the students, parents and principals believed the most important influence on the students' achievement was the quality of the classroom relationships and interactions between the teachers and students. The majority of teachers, however, believed that the major influence on students' achievement was the students themselves and/or their whānau circumstances or structural issues. The researchers concluded that:

This deficit theorising by teachers is the major impediment to Māori students' educational achievement for it results in teachers having low expectations of Māori students. This in turn creates a downward spiralling, self-fulfilling prophecy of Māori student achievement and failure (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003, p. 12).

The researchers developed an effective teacher profile from the information shared by the students and others and then delivered professional development based on this profile to 11 teachers in four schools. This professional development included marae training and in-class observations and support. Emphasis was placed on both improving teacher attitudes and expectations of Māori students and on introducing interactive teaching strategies. These included giving feedback and feed forward, co-construction, making use of prior learning, cooperative learning, narrative pedagogy, formative assessment approaches and student-generated questioning. The research showed that when teacher-student relationships improved and teaching became more interactive, Māori students' on-task engagement increased, their absenteeism reduced, their work completion increased, the cognitive levels of the classroom lessons increased and students' short-term achievements increased – in many cases quite dramatically (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003, p. 12).

Since the initial *Te Kotahitanga* scoping study in 2001, phases two and three have been implemented and many more schools and teachers have become involved. The measuring of students' achievement has been carefully documented and analysed. Results continue to be positive including improvements in students' literacy skills as measured by the *Essential Skills Assessment Literacy Test*. The research is showing the many teachers who previously believed they could not make a difference because Māori underachievement was the fault of the students and their home backgrounds, have found in fact they can make a major difference simply by changing their attitudes and introducing interactive teaching techniques.

The second success story I want to share with you relates to the Cultural Self Review (CSR) (Bevan-Brown, 2003), developed as part of my PhD research. In brief, the CSR involves (hopefully) all staff in a school or early childhood education centre examining their own practices to see how well they are providing for Māori students in general and Māori students with special education needs in particular and then developing an action plan to address any areas of weakness.

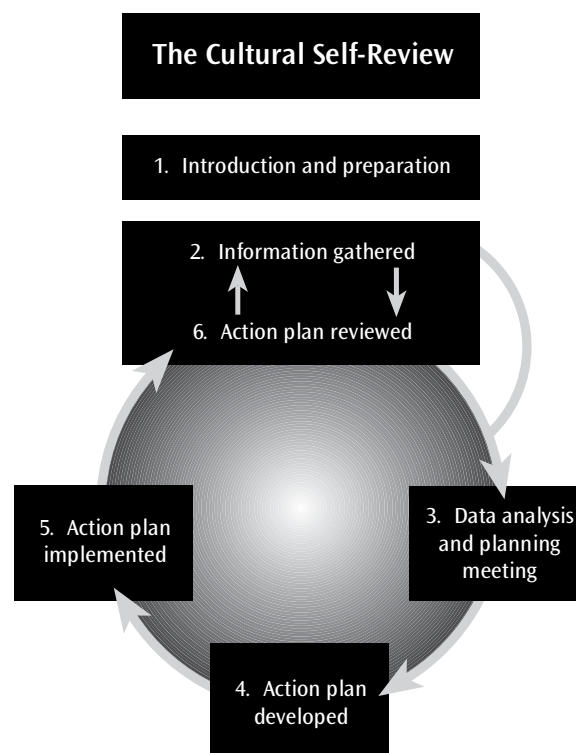


Figure 6. The cultural self-review process (Bevan-Brown, 2003, p. 27).

I have had many anecdotal reports about the CSR from people who have conducted one in their centre or school. These reports have been very positive. Not surprisingly, they show that schools benefit from the self review in proportion to the time, effort and commitment they put in.

The case study I wish to share with you was conducted in a decile 2 primary school with a 42% Māori roll. The school was experiencing major problems and requested assistance from the local Ministry of Education, Special Education (GSE) office. A Māori behaviour specialist came into the school and assisted the staff to conduct a CSR. After explaining the process, she helped teachers to gather answers to the questions posed in a cultural input checklist. (These questions are based on culturally-relevant principles and cover all areas of school/centre life). Staff were interviewed and kept reflective notebooks. In addition, the GSE worker conducted classroom and playground observations. The analysis of all data collected identified strengths and gaps. This information was shared in a staff meeting. People prioritised the areas that needed to be worked on, brainstormed possible strategies and developed a whole school action plan.

This included:

Environment – principal to make home visits to all whānau, school to develop a whānau drop-in centre.

Content and Resources – kapahaka group to be re-established, te reo Māori tutor introduced and all classes to make a marae visit.

Personnel – staff development in Māori, establishment of a school whānau committee and Māori tutors to be employed.

Policy and Processes – te reo Māori in classes, tuakana-teina model, and Māori protocols such as powhiri and koha to be introduced.

Assessment – a cultural profile to be developed for students and a whānau committee to lead the next CSR. Reviews were planned on a termly basis changing to an annual review at a later date.

This staff made a serious commitment to making their school a culturally responsive environment and I am pleased to report their efforts were rewarded. Both staff and children increased their cultural knowledge; parents become more involved in their children's education; whānau and the wider community became more involved in and supportive of the school; relationships between staff and children improved; absenteeism decreased and their Education Review Office (ERO) report improved! Unfortunately, the GSE worker who did this case study did not gather data around learning outcomes so I am not sure if there were significant gains in this area but, given the connection between cultural identity, self-esteem, psychological well-being and learning, it is highly probable these gains were made. (If anyone is interested in learning more about the CSR it is explained in detail in *The Cultural Self-Review. Providing culturally effective, inclusive education for Māori learners* (Bevan-Brown, 2003).

Finally, I would like to share with you the story of a participatory action research project centred around two senior students with autism one of whom is Māori (Bevan-Brown, Carroll-Lind, Kearney, Sperl, & Sutherland, 2005). This research was part of a larger Ministry of Education project to investigate effective practices for students with ASD. Along with two colleagues I was involved as a research mentor. The study was conducted in a large urban, co-educational, secondary school. The two students concerned received part of their education in regular classes and part in the school's special education facility. Staff were concerned that sometimes when these students became anxious or stressed they exhibited "inappropriate behaviours". So the research was focused on identifying stress factors, getting the students to recognise and understand their personal stress levels and to use this knowledge to manage their stress more appropriately. Teachers, teacher aides and parents were the main researchers, and using questionnaires, observations, reflective journals and teaching activities, factors that both caused and reduced stress for these students were identified. Parents and staff were also involved in a number of professional development activities to increase their knowledge of ASD and of how to manage it.

Action research is a cyclical process where various interventions are introduced, evaluated, discarded, modified, continued as is or perhaps built on in the next cycle. One of the interventions trialed was unsuccessful for the two students involved but ended up teaching us one of the most valuable lessons of the research. The intervention was Tony Attwood's *Exploring Feelings* programme (Attwood, 2004 a; 2004, b). There is nothing wrong with the programme itself but the ongoing evaluation showed that the two students did not have the conceptual and emotional understanding needed to benefit from it. This came as a surprise to staff especially in respect to the student who was verbal.

It was "assumed" because of her ability to verbalise, that she was more able at recognising emotions than the non-verbal student. Work with a "mood barometer" revealed that this was not the case. Staff also discovered that this was not an isolated incident – too many assumptions were being made when students' programmes were initially developed. As a result of this finding, instead of starting an organised teaching programme as soon as the students enter the special education centre, staff at this school now spend the first few weeks just getting to know the students – their likes, dislikes, strengths, weaknesses and so forth. This information is then used to develop an appropriate programme. The "getting to know you time" also allows space for the building of positive student-teacher relationships which have been previously highlighted as vital to successful learning.

What interventions did work? Principally a variety of visual strategies and social stories developed specifically to help the students cope with stressful situations. For example, one of the students identified for herself that visiting her mother who had shifted to a new city would be stressful for her, so she asked her stepmother to write a social story about the upcoming visit. Together they prepared a story that focused on stressful areas, for example, what food to avoid, how to behave towards her siblings and what to do when she felt stressed.

Observations throughout the project showed that the two students made slow but steady progress. Given the nature of their disabilities, dramatic changes were not expected. However, there was a significant decrease in incidents of stressed behaviour and an increase in the students' abilities to recognise and deal with stressful situations. For example, initial data showed one student's usual mode of handling stressful situations was to "throw himself on the ground and become vocal and agitated or repeat actions and verbalisations over and over again" (teacher's observation journal). Towards the end of the research such behaviour was very rare. Instead the student would remove himself to a place of "sanctuary" (the equipment room or foyer). Additionally, the parents of both students reported: improvements in stress-related behaviours in the home environment; their children appeared more happy and content; and they felt better equipped to meet their children's needs.

Staff members' knowledge about these two students and about ASD in general was greatly increased. There were also very positive changes in attitudes and behaviour. This is illustrated in the following quote from a teacher aide:

The project has changed the way I relate to A and M and other students with ASD in so many ways!! I feel I can communicate at a much better level than before. Using visuals has helped me no end such as stories, rules, signs and so on. I have more confidence in my own ability and I have a much better understanding of autism. I now speak to A and M not at them. I try and think ahead of ways to make up-coming tasks and events as easy as possible for them to accept through social stories and simple instructions. I also see their behaviours as a way of their communicating to us that things aren't going right instead of naughty behaviour. I'm not scared of A and M any more!! I can "push" harder and end up getting much better results (Teacher Aide Evaluation).

If anyone is wondering whether this action research included any cultural input for the Māori student involved, I should mention that for this pupil the whānau class was her home room. Her father was a staunch advocate for incorporating Māori content into his daughter's programme and believed the school was doing an excellent job in this respect. So cultural input was not something that needed to be addressed for this student.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to return to the four possible reasons I put forward for many teachers and special educators not adequately providing for Māori students with special education needs. They were that:

1. Teachers and special educators don't care.
 2. They believe that culture is not relevant to teaching students with special education needs.
 3. They believe that their efforts won't make a difference.
 4. They are unsure of what to do or so overwhelmed by the challenge that they put improving the teaching of Māori students with special education needs into the too hard basket.
1. Have you come across any teachers who couldn't care less about Māori students? I haven't and I have been teaching for over 30 years. I know some teachers get tired and burnt out – teaching is a very challenging and often unappreciated profession but I don't think this means they stop caring, so I will cross number one off my list.
 2. Hopefully I have provided enough evidence from all sources to show that culture is indeed very relevant to effectively teaching students with special education needs.
 3. Again, all the research studies described and the parents and students we have heard from are living testimony to the fact that teachers' efforts can and are making a real positive difference in schools all around Aotearoa/ New Zealand. So reason number three is discarded.
 4. This leaves us with number four which I believe is the major reason for Māori students with special education needs not being adequately provided for. There is no denying that teaching and providing for these students is often difficult and challenging. Teaching students in general – whether they have special education needs or otherwise – is not an easy task, however it is not a reason to put these challenges into the "too hard basket".

The predominant messages to come from the three sources of evidence examined show that the keys to successfully providing for Māori students both with and without special education needs are:

- building positive teacher-student relationships
- providing a "high quality" education which includes interactive teaching strategies that engage students in their learning
- teaching that builds on students' strengths and interests
- raising teacher expectations of Māori students
- involving parents, whānau and peers
- incorporating widespread cultural input.

If we had time to delve into best evidence sources, in particular the *Quality teaching for diverse students in schooling: Best Evidence Synthesis* (Alton-Lee, 2003), we would find that these are also keys for successfully teaching all students regardless of ethnicity or ability. Certainly the Education Review Office (ERO) Report *Māori students: Schools making a difference* (2002), noted that Māori do as well as non-Māori in schools that are effective for all students. Additionally, it should be noted that while I have concentrated on evidence specifically related to teaching Māori students with special education needs, the keys to successful provision are equally useful for psychologists, advisors, speech-language therapists, physiotherapists, in fact all professionals who work with these students.

I acknowledge that teaching Māori students is more challenging for teachers who do not have the cultural knowledge required. But many teachers do have this knowledge and so do parents, whānau and the students themselves – all valuable sources to be tapped into – but to learn from not to abdicate responsibility to! There are also many useful programmes and resources available. For example, Poutama Pounamu, an education, research and development centre located within GSE, has developed many excellent programmes that can be utilised. So, it is time to get rid of the "too hard basket".

I will end with a little story from my research. It refers to a class trip to Mt Ruapehu:

I can remember when he was 11 ... we did this big trip up the mountain. It wasn't until we were getting them down and we had them all at the bottom and I remember turning to Bernadette saying, "My God, look what we have just done." Four of them, and Ameria, lifting her out of her wheelchair, Hone seizing all over the show because he was so excited, and each with an adult holding on tight, and Rawiri and Hepa who at the time had two legs in plaster because he had just had another operation for his club feet, and is severely Down syndrome and deaf, they had a good time ... Well we know we are inclusive, we know we have made it because we took a kid who is autistic, one who is intellectually handicapped and two children in wheelchairs to the top of the mountain. And it wasn't till we got back down did I think, we have done it! We never ever had a thought about doing it. We just did it (Bevan-Brown, 2004).

So, take a risk – JUST DO IT!

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alton-Lee, A. (2003). *Quality teaching for diverse students in schooling: Best evidence synthesis*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.
- Attwood, T. (2004a). *Exploring feelings. Cognitive behaviour therapy to manage anxiety*. Arlington, Texas: Future Horizons.
- Attwood, T. (2004b). *Exploring feelings. Cognitive behaviour therapy to manage anger*. Arlington, Texas: Future Horizons.
- Bevan-Brown, J. (1993). *Special abilities: A Māori perspective*. Unpublished master's thesis, Massey University, Palmerston North, Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Bevan-Brown, J. (2002). *Culturally appropriate, effective provision for Māori learners with special needs: He waka tino whakarawea*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Massey University, Palmerston North, Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Bevan-Brown, J. (2003). *The cultural self-review. Providing culturally effective, inclusive education for Māori learners*. Wellington, New Zealand: NZCER.

Bevan-Brown, J. (2004). *Māori perspectives of autistic spectrum disorder*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education, Research Division.

Bevan-Brown, J. (2006). *Teaching Māori students with special education needs: Getting rid of the too hard basket*. Powerpoint presentation to the Learning for All: Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education Symposia, June 2006.

Bevan-Brown, J., Carroll-Lind, J., Kearney, A., Sperl, B., & Sutherland, M. (2005). *Making assumptions vs building relationships: Lessons from a participatory action research project to identify effective practices for learners with ASD*. Unpublished article.

Bishop, R., Berryman, M., Tiakiwai, S., & Richardson, C. (2003). *Te Kotahitanga: The experiences of Year 9 and 10 Māori students in mainstream classrooms. Report to the Ministry of Education*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.

Bourke, R., Holden, B., & Curzon, J. (2005). *Using evidence to challenge practice. A discussion paper*. Ministry of Education, New Zealand.

Education Review Office (2002). *Māori students: Schools making a difference*. Wellington, New Zealand: Author.

Gay, G. (1994). *A synthesis of scholarship in multicultural education*. [Urban Education Monographs]. Oakbrook, IL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. Available online: http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/educatrs/Leadership/le_Ogay.htm

Gougis, R. A. (1986). The effects of prejudice and stress on the academic performance of Black Americans. In U. Niesser (Ed.), *The school achievement of minority children: New perspectives* (pp. 145–157). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Hill, J. & Hawk, K. (2000). *Making a difference in the classroom: Effective teaching practice in low decile, multicultural schools*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education, Research Division.

McNary, S., Glasgow, N., & Hicks, C. (2005). *What successful teachers do in inclusive classrooms. Sixty research-based teaching strategies that help special learners succeed*. California: Corwin Press.

Ministry of Education (2005). *Springboards to Practice*. Source: Donald Beasley Institute (Eds.), *Building capability in education for students with moderate and high needs*. Final draft report of a literature review commissioned by the Ministry of Education: Wellington, New Zealand.

Percy, N. (1989). Bicultural issues. *Crosslink*, 3(5), 6–7.

Dr Jill Bevan-Brown



AUTHOR PROFILE

Dr Jill Bevan-Brown is Associate Professor and coordinator of the B.Ed (Special Education) at Massey University. Her iwi affiliations are Ngati Raukawa, Ngati Wehiwehi, Ngati Awa and Ngai Te Rangi. She has a long standing involvement in research relating to Māori children with special education needs and has conducted studies into Māori perspectives of intellectual disability, hearing impairment, giftedness, autism spectrum disorder, and culturally appropriate services for Māori students.

Email

j.m.bevan-brown@massey.ac.nz



Teaching Strategies

For some or for all?¹

This article is based on a keynote address delivered by **Dr Lani Florian** at the Learning for All: Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education Symposia, June 2006.

ABSTRACT

This article is based on a keynote address to the Learning for All Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education School-led Symposia, Palmerston North, Christchurch, Napier and Auckland, New Zealand, June 2006. It considers “special education” teaching strategies, and the extent to which they overlap with “mainstream practice”, in order to answer the question of whether or not there is such a thing as a specialist pedagogy. Selected research on this topic is summarised, and the need to develop a notion of pedagogy that is inclusive of all learners is suggested.

Keywords

Effective practices, evidence based practice, inclusion, inclusive schools, pedagogy, special education, teaching strategies.

Teaching strategies: for some or for all?

What we do for all doesn't work for some but what we do for some supports all.

Barbara Disley

Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Education, Special Education
Learning for All symposia
Palmerston North, June 1, 2006

INTRODUCTION

The New Zealand Ministry of Education defines special education as ‘the provision of extra help, adapted programmes, learning environments, or specialised equipment or materials to support children and young people with their learning and help them participate in education’². Other countries use similar definitions. In the United States, special education is ‘specially designed instruction ... to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability’ (USDOE, 1999, p.12, 425). In England, it is defined as ‘educational provision which is additional to, or otherwise different from, the educational provision made generally for children of their age in schools maintained by the Local Education Authority, other than special schools, in the area’ (§312 Education Act, 1996). Whether we use words “extra help”, “adapted programmes”, “specially designed instruction” or “additional” or “different” provision, there is a common understanding that special education involves something different from that which is on offer in mainstream schools. But what is special education and how do we know if it works?

This article focuses on “special education” teaching strategies, and the extent to which they overlap with “mainstream” strategies in order to answer questions about whether or not the teaching strategies found to be effective when teaching pupils with special educational needs are indeed different from those of mainstream education. The sections that follow briefly summarise some recent work on a range of relevant issues including: questions about whether there is a specialist pedagogy (for example, Lewis & Norwich, 2000; 2005), meta-analyses of research on meeting special educational needs (Kavale, 2007), a literature review on teaching strategies and approaches for pupils with special educational needs (Davis and Florian, 2004), and a study of teaching in inclusive secondary schools (Florian & Rouse, 2001).

PREVIOUS WORK ON SPECIALIST PEDAGOGY

Researchers in England (Lewis & Norwich, 2000; 2005) have been interested in whether they could identify differences between learners by type of special educational need in order to link them to differentiated teaching strategies. Lewis and Norwich’s (2000) literature review was organised by types of learning difficulties (low attainment, specific learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties and severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties) and found that though the evidential base was problematic, owing in part to conflicting findings, the preponderance of the evidence did not support the notion that differences between learners could be matched to differentiated teaching. This finding was consistent with earlier work in the USA that investigated similar notions of aptitude-treatment interaction and diagnostic-prescriptive teaching (Keogh & McMillan, 1996; Ysseldyke, 2001).

As a result, Lewis and Norwich advanced the notion of a continuum of teaching or pedagogic approaches to replace the concept of a distinctive special education pedagogy as something “different from” that which is generally available. More recently (2005), they have updated this work by reviewing the evidence on teaching strategies for 14 areas of special educational needs including speech and language impairment, Down syndrome, specific learning difficulties (such as dyslexia, dyspraxia), emotional and behaviour difficulties, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, autism spectrum disorder, sensory impairments (such as visual or hearing impairment, and multi-sensory impairment), profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties and low attainers.

¹ Parts of this article are adapted from Florian, L. (in press). Towards inclusive pedagogy. In P. Hick, R. Kershner and P. Farrell (Eds.). *Towards a psychology of inclusion*. London: Routledge Paul.

² Ministry of Education (2003). *Special Education Policy Guidelines*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.

In addition, they elaborated on the notion of a continuum of teaching approaches by suggesting that teaching strategies can be arranged along such a continuum from high to low intensity relative to their application as interventions.

META-ANALYSIS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PRACTICES

Where Lewis and Norwich found the state of existing research problematic, Kavale (2007) argues that the problem of equivocal evidence can be overcome by the use of meta-analysis, a statistical procedure that allows the results of many studies to be combined by quantifying the results of individual studies in a way that permits the results to be compared.

In recent years the efficacy of special education has been subject to a series of meta-analyses generally undertaken and based on research conducted in the USA. Kavale (2007) has reviewed the use of meta-analysis in answering questions about what works in special education. In his review Kavale shows how early beliefs about the altered learning functions or deficits of disabled children gave rise to a pedagogical emphasis on cognitive processes or process training (such as corrective perceptual-motor training and psycholinguistic training) which proved to be very modest in their effectiveness. He goes on to show how attempts to define what is special about special education based on deficit views of learners, have failed to show anything distinctive. Rather, it is only when research which investigates the teaching-learning process in general is 'interpreted' for special education 'by modifying the way in which instruction is delivered' that we find significant effect sizes (p. 212). In addition, pre-referral activities (modifications to teaching approaches and the use of alternative strategies) prior to referral for assessment for special education were found to have positive effects because, in Kavale's words, 'it is predicated in modification of *instructional* activities' (emphasis original, p. 214) as opposed to some presumed within-child deficit. Kavale argues that the efficacy of special education is owing to a change in emphasis from strategies that emphasised the remediation of learning deficits to those that focus on teaching and learning. When 'instructional techniques originating in general education were adapted to assist students with disabilities in acquiring and assimilating new knowledge, the efforts demonstrated significant success and much improved academic outcomes' (p. 12).

TEACHING STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES FOR PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS: A SCOPING STUDY

Recently, I co-directed a scoping study commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in England and Wales as part of their agenda to raise the achievement of pupils with special educational needs (SEN). The aim of the study was to examine the relevant published literature in order to 'map out and assess the effectiveness of the different approaches and strategies used to teach pupils with the full range of special educational needs' (Davis & Florian, 2004 p.7).

The review of literature that informed the scoping study was structured in terms of the four areas of need identified in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001); language and communication, cognition and learning, physical and sensory, and emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Although there was concern that organising the review in this way would fragment the findings doing so led us to conclude that:

certain teaching strategies and approaches are associated with, but not necessarily related directly to specific categories of SEN (such as autism, learning difficulty). However, the teaching strategies and approaches identified in the review were not sufficiently differentiated from those which are used to teach all children to justify a distinctive SEN pedagogy. It was clear that sound practices in teaching and learning in both mainstream and special education literatures were often informed by the same basic research, and that certain teaching strategies developed for one purpose could be effectively applied to other groups of children with different patterns of educational need (for example co-operative learning). This does not, however, diminish the importance of what might be construed as special education knowledge as an element of pedagogy applying to all learners.

In other words, although the scoping study was initially structured in terms of areas of SEN it was clear from our reading of the literature that there was a considerable overlap between different areas of need in relation to different teaching approaches. When we searched the literature by teaching strategy we found many relevant reviews that covered all areas of need leading us to suggest that the areas of need are important elements of human development for all learners. Our view was that these elements interact in ways that produce individual differences that make it difficult to prescribe a course of action to remedy a particular problem. Thus, children with "complex needs" often require support to a degree which is beyond that typically required by their peer group. This support is called "special education". And while there is an important role for special or additional education support, such support does not depend on teaching strategies that are different from those that are available to all children.

TEACHING STRATEGIES IN INCLUSIVE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

There is limited research that has been carried out on pedagogy in inclusive classrooms and until recently much of this work tended to focus on the primary years. In an extensive review of the research on inclusive practice, McGregor and Vogelsberg (1998) reported only seven studies specifically focused on secondary school practice. While more recent work (for example Deshler, et. al., 2004) has begun to address this gap, a concern often expressed in the literature is that teachers in mainstream schools are not prepared or trained to work with pupils with special educational needs. This concern prompted our study of inclusive practice in English secondary schools (Florian & Rouse 2001).

This study was designed to investigate what happens in secondary schools when subject specialist teachers attempt to create the conditions for inclusive learning in their classrooms. We were interested in examining the extent to which classroom practice in the various subjects of the English national curriculum was consistent with that which is promoted as effective by the literature on inclusion.

A questionnaire was developed containing a list of 44 teaching strategies derived from a review of the literature carried out by Scott, Vitale & Masten (1998). The strategies were organised under the following broad headings: differentiation strategies; cooperative learning strategies; classroom management strategies and social skills. Teachers were asked to rate their familiarity with these strategies. They were also asked to rate the strategy as appropriate or inappropriate to the teaching of their subject. If teachers thought the strategy was appropriate they were asked to indicate if it was a teaching technique that they typically used or something additional that was used specifically to ensure the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs. If they thought the strategy was inappropriate they were asked if this was because it was unhelpful or too difficult to manage. A glossary defining ambiguous terms was appended to the questionnaire.

Schools from a network of secondary schools around England that met regularly to share experiences and ideas about how to develop more inclusive practice were invited to participate in the study (further details of the network and the work of the schools can be found in Ainscow, 1999). Four schools volunteered to participate in the full study and a fifth agreed to administer the questionnaire. Nominations from senior staff and the special education needs coordinator (SENCO) at the four case study schools were used to identify subject specialist teachers considered skilled in including pupils designated as Special Education Needs (SEN) in their classes. Each teacher was observed for the equivalent of two full teaching days and participating teachers also kept inclusion journals for a period of five weeks. The journal guidelines asked the teachers to make one entry each day paying particular attention to their own thoughts and feelings about the commitment to inclusive practice, how subject area knowledge informs their teaching, how they account for individual differences, and “what works”.

A total of 268 teachers completed the questionnaire for an overall response rate of 66%. With few exceptions, teachers overwhelmingly reported they were familiar with and used all of the strategies listed in the questionnaire. The most frequent response was that the teacher was very familiar with the strategy and used it, typically, with all pupils. Only two strategies, consult with pupil on preferred learning style and the use of learning support assistants for 1:1 teaching, were identified as being used specifically because a pupil was designated as having SEN. Teachers were evenly divided as to the use of team-teaching as a typical or additional strategy. Importantly, a number of teachers noted in written comments that they did not differentiate between teaching strategy and whether a pupil had a special educational need.

Overall, there were no apparent differences between schools with respect to teachers’ knowledge about practice although teachers in schools with more experience in mixed ability teaching made more suggestions about what works. That they may not be able to engage in a practice is different from not knowing how to do it, and some teachers made this comment when filling out the questionnaire. Organisational arrangements and resource constraints were factors that determined whether certain strategies were used.

For instance, it would not be possible to make use of information and communication technology if the hardware was not available. Notably, teachers tended not to differentiate between types of students. Though they found the support of colleagues with specialist knowledge invaluable they did not view the pupil designation SEN as particularly helpful when thinking about teaching strategies.

Whether or not these findings would be replicated in other schools is not clear. Indeed many subject teachers may not recognise themselves or their practice in the above descriptions. What is important to note is that there were differences between subjects that need to be considered when thinking about how to include pupils who experience difficulties in learning in those subjects. It is not simply a matter of placement. Different subjects will make different demands on learners and teachers of those subjects will use different strategies in teaching the various subjects of the curriculum.

CONCLUSION

Though it is often argued that lack of knowledge on the part of mainstream classroom teachers, attributed to lack of training, is one of the main barriers to inclusion, careful consideration of the evidence on teaching practice and pedagogy in special education suggests that teachers do not lack knowledge of effective teaching strategies. What they may not know is that the *label-treatment interaction* or *prescriptive-teaching* approach to individual differences in learning has not shown that interventions are differentially effective with different kinds of learners. Meta-analyses of “what works” in special education show that the teaching strategies used in mainstream education can be adapted to assist students identified as having SEN in learning.

Moreover, while many who have attempted to articulate what is “special” about special education often begin with a defence of teaching practices that have been shown to work with students identified as having disabilities (for example Cook & Schirmer, 2003), the strategies they identify also work with students who are not identified as having special educational needs. My own view is that it is the process of adaptation that defines the special education knowledge needed by teachers. This adaptation depends on a responsiveness to individual differences within the context of whole class teaching (Jordan & Stanovich, 1998) but it does not depend on the identification of SEN (Florian & Rouse, 2001). Rather, we need a notion of teaching theory that is inclusive of all learners.

To this end, a growing number of researchers are now suggesting that difficulties in learning might be reconceptualised as dilemmas for teaching. In this way difficulties in learning may be viewed not as problems within learners but as problems for teachers to solve (Hart, 1996; Clark, Dyson, Milward, & Robson, 1999; Ainscow, 1999). Such a view discourages teachers from seeing themselves as unprepared or not qualified to teach children who are identified as having special or additional needs because they experience difficulties in learning. Rather, teachers are empowered to work with their colleagues on adaptations that address the demands that different subjects, topics or tasks make on different learners.

REFERENCES

- Ainscow, M. (1999). *Understanding the development of inclusive schools*. London: Falmer Press.
- Cook, B. G., & Schirmer, B. R. (2003). What is special about special education? Overview and analysis. *The Journal of Special Education, 37*(3), 200-204.
- Clark, C., Dyson, A., Millward, A., & Robson, S. (1999). Inclusive education and schools as organisations. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 3*(1) 37-51.
- Davis, P., & Florian, L. (2004). *Teaching strategies and approaches for children with special educational needs: A scoping study* [Research Report 516]. London: Department for Education and Skills.
- Deshler, D. D., Lenz, B. K., Bulgren, J. A., Schmaker, J. B., Davis, B., Grossen, B., & Marquis, J. (2004). Adolescents with disabilities in the high school setting: Student characteristics and setting dynamics. *Learning Disabilities: A Contemporary Journal, 2* (2), 30-48.
- Department for Education and Skills (2001). *Special Educational Needs Code of Practices*. London: Author.
- Education Act 1981 (15 Statutes 300). United Kingdom.
- Florian, L. (2007). Reimagining special education. In L. Florian (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of special education*. London: Sage.
- Florian, L., & Rouse, M. (2001). Inclusive practice in secondary schools. In: R. Rose and I. Grosvenor (Eds.), *Doing research in special education*. London: David Fulton.
- Hart, S., Dixon, A., Drummond, M. J., & McIntyre, D. (2004). *Learning without limits*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Jordan, A. & Stanovich P. (1998). *Exemplary Teaching in Inclusive Classrooms*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, California, April.
- Kavale, K. (2007). Quantitative research synthesis: Meta-analysis of research on meeting special educational needs. In L. Florian (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of special education*. London: Sage
- Keogh, B. K., & MacMillan, D.L. (1996). Exceptionality. In D.C. Berliner and R.C. Calfee (Eds.), *Handbook of educational psychology*. New York: Simon Shuster Macmillan.
- Lewis, A., & Norwich, B. (2000). *Mapping a special educational needs pedagogy*. Exeter: University of Exeter and University of Warwick.
- Lewis, A., & Norwich, B. (Eds.) (2005). *Special teaching for special children? Pedagogies for inclusion*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Ministry of Education (2003). *Special Education Policy Guidelines*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.
- McGregor, G., & Vogelsburg, R. (1998). *Inclusive schooling practices: Pedagogical and research foundations: A synthesis of the literature that informs best practices about inclusive schooling*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
- Scott, B.J., Vitale, M.R., & Masten, W.G. (1998). Implementing instructional adaptations for students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms: A literature review. *Remedial and Special Education, 19*(2), 106-119.
- United States Department of Education (1999). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, p.12, 425.
- Ysseldyke, J. E. (2001). Reflections on a research career: Generalizations from 25 years of research on assessment and instructional decision making. *Exceptional Children, 67*(3), 295-309.



Dr. Lani Florian

AUTHOR PROFILE

Dr Lani Florian is Professor of Social and Educational Inclusion at the University of Aberdeen. Previously she was Senior Lecturer in Inclusive and Special Education in the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge. Her research interests include models of provision for meeting special educational needs, and teaching practice in inclusive schools. She recently co-directed a research project on teaching strategies and approaches for pupils with special educational needs for the Department for Education and Skills in England and Wales. She has written extensively on inclusive education and conducted research on special education provision in the USA, England and Europe. She co-edited *Promoting Inclusive Practice*, winner of the 1999 NASEN/TES academic book award. Recently, she was commissioned by Sage Publications to edit a new Handbook on Special Education, which was published towards the end of 2006. She is founding editor of *The Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs* and current editor of the *Cambridge Journal of Education*.

Email:

lf10002@hermes.cam.ac.uk



A Torrent of Change: Enhancing effective change in special education – one school's journey

Chris Morris – Principal, Rosebank School, Balclutha

Shirley Katon – Learning Support Teacher, Rosebank School, Balclutha

All conservatism is based upon the idea that if you leave things alone you leave them as they are. But you do not. If you leave a thing alone you leave it to a torrent of change (G.K Chesterton, English novelist and author, 1874 -1936).

ABSTRACT

This article is the story of a school's journey from a deficit model of special education needs programming to an inclusive model of student learning support. The heart of this journey was the identification and management of tensions and complexities surrounding educational beliefs, school values, and pedagogical practices. This article will describe the ecology of change that this school undertook during a two-year period, analyse the mechanisms of change during the same period, and evaluate critically the extent to which the change achieved its intended outcome.

Practice Paper

Keywords

Effective practices, inclusive schools, individualised education plans, parent school relationship, professional development, school effectiveness, school management, strategic planning.

INTRODUCTION

During the period July 2004 - June 2006 the school looked to shift school systems away from the traditional "special class" model to a more inclusive class-based one. This shift was one that looked to change the ecology of how the school perceived it should cater for students with needs and was one that challenged deeply-rooted beliefs. To understand this, one needs to understand the school's history in special education needs teaching. Up until the implementation of the Special Education 2000 policy (SE2000), the school contained a primary school special needs unit. This unit was viewed as a successful model of practice and for the following seven years the school continued to replicate this by funding a special education needs teacher. However, during this time the learning needs of students who fell into the moderate special education needs category became more difficult to address using this model. By 2004 the school had only three students verified with the Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Schemes (ORRS) compared to a growing number of students with moderate special education needs. This change in student need showed that the school needed to find another way of providing learning support. The longer this programme was retained, the more it became out of step with the education environment outside of the school.

There were two catalysts for change in the second half of 2004. Firstly, the board of trustees determined it needed to review the effectiveness of a range of school programmes because of a fiscal deficit in the preceding financial year. Secondly, the appointment of a new principal provided an opportunity to review the cost against benefits of all the above-entitlement staffing. Such scrutiny included the role of the special education needs teacher.

REVIEWING SPECIAL EDUCATION

The review process of this strategic change took nine months to complete and had three distinct phases. These phases involved redefining the values and beliefs of the stakeholders, clarifying how the school would implement the mandate defined by the National Education Goals (NEGs) and responding to a number of opportunities and threats that arose at this time. Bryson (1995), talks of the building of a series of agreements as part of initiating a strategic process. The experience at Rosebank was that this occurred throughout the entire project as different stakeholders came on board. By the end of the process the school was working with the aspirations of 12 distinct stakeholder groups.

The review process initially looked to involve all teaching staff in a consultative fashion, delegating the review authority to a team of three teachers who had some expertise in this area. This resulted in some inter-staff and inter-syndicate conflict as the make-up of the team did not allow for the representation of the sectional interests of the school's three syndicates. This consultative approach caused a strong reaction amongst some staff members in that a number of individual teachers had significant philosophical differences about how special education needs should operate. The strength of this strong reaction highlighted that there were issues that were deeply embedded in the school's culture of practice. For this reason the review approaches used from this point onwards were less formal and looked to identify strategic issues through one-on-one discussion with teachers. The information that emerged was broadly categorised into two areas: school systems and teaching practices. From this information the school looked to develop a flexible strategic approach based on Mintzberg's (1994) "ready-aim-fire-aim," approach.

TABLE 1
Identified Strategic Issues

SCHOOL SYSTEMS	TEACHING PRACTICES
Equity of resourcing across school levels.	Use of narrow assessment tools for identifying student needs.
Lack of consistent philosophy and policy across the school.	A focus on the needs of “normal” students rather than the needs of all students.
Lack of school-wide case management systems.	Teacher burn-out (special education needs teachers).
No school-wide reporting system.	Low level of teacher knowledge of teaching practices that would assist students with special education needs.
No level of linkage between the special education needs programmes and the regular class programmes.	

These issues were identified on the basis that an issue for one teacher was an issue for all teachers. The intent in identifying such issues was to resolve the tensions between systems and practice by clarifying what was a fair and reasonable role for teachers to play in this process. The document used to do this was the National Administration Guidelines (NAGs) which state:

- that all schools are to deliver teaching and learning programmes that provide opportunities for all students to “achieve for success” in all areas of the curriculum
- that all schools are directed to “develop and implement teaching and learning strategies to address the needs of students” (p. 2).

These reference points reiterated that meeting the needs of all students was a mandatory part of every teacher’s job.

The third stage of review occurred when the school envisaged what good practice looked like. Through discussion with staff from Ministry of Education, Special Education (GSE) we developed a set of success criteria:

- students being taught within their classroom environment
- classroom teachers taking responsibility for the learning progress of their students
- greater involvement of parents through the use of Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
- the systematic monitoring of student achievement
- children being able to move in and out of the programme as their needs changed
- a focus on giving students the support so they would be successful in a regular class
- the elimination of the term “special education needs” as a stigma, replacing it with a neutral term
- the use of a delivery model that matched all areas of learning support.

At this point of the process the school had no concept of how change could take place, only an understanding that some change needed to begin. The opportunity to participate in the Ministry of Education’s Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education (EPEiSE) project provided an impetus for change. This was done by resourcing for staffing and time to plan a change management strategy. Any strategic programme would seek practical solutions to resolve the identified strategic issues.

REFORMING SPECIAL EDUCATION

The strategic reform needed to be tested first with a small group of students. Having seen the increase in the number of students with moderate special education needs, the school decided to focus on students who were not achieving at an age-appropriate level. These students would have their reading achievement assessed before and after an intervention programme in order to ascertain whether the intervention would improve their reading achievement. At the same time the teachers would be involved in a professional development programme that looked to develop a greater knowledge and use of IEPs. Part of this project was to develop the ability of teachers to successfully case-manage and individualise student learning. Behind this was the need to model new practices referenced to appropriate pedagogical and ethical beliefs. The hope was that the teachers would adopt new practices because it was both the best model to use and the right thing to do. To move the school forward the reform was based on four steps.

1. The school, based on the principles of self-management, would engage in the project on their terms.
2. The school would bring parents and teachers together to develop shared goals and actions to support student learning.
3. The school would add to the knowledge and skills of the teachers.
4. The school would identify a range of successful strategies rather than the “one correct” model.

The strategic issues highlighted a need to develop effective school-wide systems. In terms of successful implementation the school cited Sarason’s (1991) opinion that piecemeal reforms inevitably failed. For the school to be successful it had to redefine the relationships between all the stakeholders for the benefit of students with special education needs. As a result of this definition it could articulate the following vision:

- to make a difference for children whose experience of school has been less than successful by the following actions:
 - to stop seeing children as “special needs” and to start seeing them as unique and valuable individuals
 - to define for the school, the language and terms of support for these students, for example, taking away the labelling of students
- to build success on what students can do rather than what they cannot do
- to create quality choices for these students now and in their future.

The success of the programme was to be measured both qualitatively and quantitatively using:

- the improved level of success these students achieved after an intervention programme
- the effectiveness of the relationship between home and school
- the improved level of individual self-esteem experienced by students after participating in the project.

The weaving of this mix of beliefs, expectations and outcomes into an action plan showed that the school saw a need for a broad based implementation plan. This plan is detailed below:

TABLE 2
Action Plan

ACTION PHASES	TEACHER TASK	IN-SERVICE TRAINING	PROJECT MONITORING
1. Preparation for introduction – building a momentum and capacity for change to be introduced.	For each classroom, except new entrants, two children were to be provided with extra support.	Lead teacher model (Special education needs coordinator (SENCO)/Principal/GSE Facilitator).	
2. Introduction of IEPs as a tool to individualise and adapt curriculum.	One criteria of selection was that the intervention would lead to the children succeeding at their cohort's expected level.	Whole school and management development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • three staff meetings • observations in three other schools (reported back to staff). 	Two students in each class working in the project were identified.
3. Review of school practice.	The selected children were to have an identified learning issue.	Parallel programmes – trial of individualised programmes using some children identified as requiring IEPs and some from the regular class programme. This allowed a number of teachers an opportunity to experience and experiment with adaptive curriculum.	Nominations with evidence were received from syndicates for individualised programmes for children with identified talents and abilities (working on systems with a control group).
4. First meeting with parents.	Each child would have two IEPs; one at mid-year and one at the end of year.		IEPs held within the designated timeframe.
5. Professional development delivered.			
6. Parallel programming.			Parallel programmes implemented.
7. Final meeting with parents.			Final IEPs held with reporting back against individualised goals.

RESULTS

Twenty-two students or six percent of the school roll participated in the project. Fourteen percent of these students left before the completion of the project and 42 IEPs were held during the six-month implementation period. The measure used was a comparison of reading achievement before and after the project. It was assumed that each student should increase their reading achievement by six months during the project. For this reason any improvement over six months could be seen as an indication of successful intervention. The results for the period June 2005 - January 2006 showed that seventy percent of these students increased their reading level by an average of 9.5 months. One student increased their reading performance by 2.2 years during their time of participation.

Fifty-nine percent of the parents surveyed responded, with seventy percent stating that the relationship between the school and the home had been beneficial and ninety percent believing that their child had a high or very high level of self-esteem after participating in the project. On these data the project could be described as successful. In addition the parents surveyed also presented two broad messages through this process:

1. Parents wanted the new style programmes to continue because they found they better matched their children's learning needs.
2. Parents believed that if the relationship that they and their child had with their teacher was positive, then it was beneficial to their child's academic achievement and self-esteem.

Throughout the implementation process, feedback from teachers and parents helped modify aspects of school practice. The school found it had to be flexible enough to change small practices but focused enough to continue to move the project forward to completion. The EEPiSE project changed the initial focus on the effectiveness of the school's special education needs expenditure to an in-depth review of philosophy and practice. However, at the end of the project, it was still problematic to prove the programme's effectiveness. The evaluation of the project led to the identification of the following key learnings:

1. School-wide systems needed to be established so that teachers focused on providing the appropriate programme for each student. The role of systems was firstly to demonstrate accountability for student achievement to class teachers, and secondly to allow teachers to seek innovative methods to address learning needs. The biggest motivator behind change of practices was teachers seeing innovative programmes succeeding and discussing these with their peers.
2. The empowerment of students and parents as part of the programme made for a strong home-school alliance. This working together provided a positive role model for the students and created support for the new-style programmes that were run. The power of positive parent discussion about individualised support for their children has created an expectation and the school now has to consider how this will be delivered.

3. Change such as this must be sponsored from the school management. Leadership in change requires school managers to be aware of the ethical role they need to play in ensuring that students receive appropriate programmes. Partly this is reflecting and analysing current practice. Partly it is developing a vision that a critical mass of staff members support.

CONCLUSION

The EEPiSE project delivered a new style of special education needs programming within the school. The results from the project were encouraging enough for the school to sustain it beyond the conclusion of the study. The results suggest that a more individualised and inclusive approach now needs to be extended across the school. With this comes the issue of managing those tensions identified as strategic issues. Firstly, the school needs to look closely at how it ensures that all teachers have the pedagogical knowledge and classroom management to successfully individualise programmes for students with moderate special education needs. This is an issue of successful systems and also of professional development. Secondly, the school needs to look carefully at how best it can assess the effectiveness of its programmes. Anecdotally the perceptions of the teachers and the parents were that the project was very successful. The next stage is to develop a model of measurement that allows the impact of special education needs programmes to be evaluated. Thirdly, the school needs to find appropriate funding mechanisms to ensure the individualised programmes are sustained. The level of resourcing appears to be a major determinant of success. The existence of a special education needs teacher creates an environment where the coordination of student information can take place, meaning less duplication of effort and the ability to better manage teacher workload. Finally, the project brought about a strategic capacity in school management. The need to plan and manage the change meant that school leaders became more adept at understanding the cycle of change and the processes of consultation and decision-making. School managers are now more comfortable at handling differences of philosophy and working through the resolution of such differences.

The journey through EEPiSE ultimately clarified the beliefs that the school had about special education needs programmes. The process of confronting and reconciling tensions and complexities ultimately led to the school determining what it believed in terms of philosophy, pedagogy and practices.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bryson, J. (1995). *Strategic planning for public and non-profit organizations: A guide to strengthening and sustaining organizations' achievement*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Charlesworth, R. (2001). *The coach*. Sydney: Pan Macmillan.

Chesterton, G. K. (1874 – 1936). Quote retrieved October 4, 2006, from <http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/c.html>

Fullan, M. (1993). *Change forces*. London: Falmer Press.

Holmes, M. (2002). *Big hairy audacious stretch goals*. Presentation to the Wellington Rugby Board, (July), Wellington.

Ministry of Education (2005). *National Administration Guidelines*. Wellington: Author.

Ministry of Education (2005). *National Education Goals*. Wellington: Author.

Mintzberg, H. (1994). *The rise and fall of strategic planning*. London: Prentice Hall.

Sarason, S. B. (1991). *Predictable failure of educational reform: Can we change course before it's too late?* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Weindling, D. (1997). Strategic planning in schools: Some practical techniques. In M. Preedy, R. Glatter, & R. Levacic (Eds.). *Educational management: Strategy, quality and resources*. Bristol, PA: Open University Press.

Chris Morris



AUTHOR PROFILE

Chris Morris is currently the principal of Rosebank School, Balclutha. He has an interest in special education, particularly in individualising curriculum and student coaching and mentoring. Outside of education he has a background in sport coaching and looks to apply these principles into school-wide learning support systems.

Email

Chris.morris@rosebankschool.co.nz

Shirley Katon



AUTHOR PROFILE

Shirley Katon is the learning support teacher at Rosebank School. Shirley is particularly interested in supporting teachers in the development of effective classroom culture that allows student success to take place.

Email

Shirley.katon@rosebankschool.co.nz

Within our Circle of Influence

Namratha Hirannah

Team Leader, Manurewa South School, Auckland

Bernadette Mahoney

Teacher, Manurewa South School, Auckland



ABSTRACT

Two teachers working in Year 0-1 classes at Manurewa South School, a decile 2 school in the Manurewa area of Manukau City, Auckland, share their voyage of exploration around their own circle of influence. In this article the research team including Bronwyn Blair, a facilitator from the University of Auckland, worked through a cycle of needs analysis and assessment, reflection, practice and reflection, and evaluation of 12 students targeted from their classes. The five and six-year-old students were experiencing behaviour and/or learning difficulties. The team explored teaching social skills while also focusing on raising literacy achievement. Practice interventions included a mix of changed teacher behaviours, practice, and planning in the areas of literacy and social skills for the targeted children. Pre and post-data were collected to guide and evaluate teacher planning. Teachers later became involved in school-wide development sharing their ideas and process.

Practice Paper

Keywords

Classroom management, effective practices, emergent literacy, professional development, reflection, social skills, teaching strategies.

INTRODUCTION

In approaching the Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education (EPISE) project, we decided to examine both the learning and achievement of our students as well as factors that could affect this. Initially, through taking a very wide approach, all the factors that could influence students' behaviour were of interest to us, and a circle of influence was drawn to represent our thoughts.

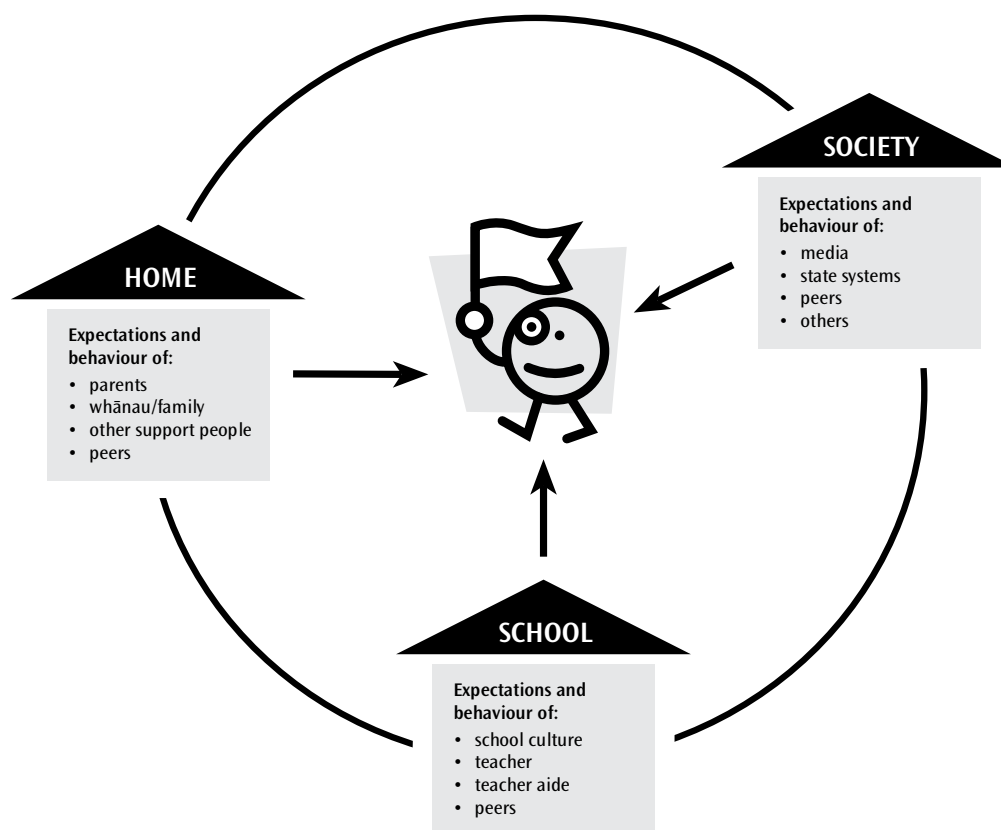


Figure 1. The consultation process

As we worked through this process we identified that as teachers we thought we had to assist our students in every aspect of their lives, because all of these factors could influence both their learning and their behaviour. This left us feeling overwhelmed and wondering how to make a difference in these students' lives as in many of these situations it was difficult to intervene. It was so easy to become reactive and focus on every influence drawn within the circle. Through the support of our facilitator, we began to see more clearly that focusing on issues outside our realm of influence was not only leaving us overwhelmed, but was affecting our effectiveness as teachers. Many of these factors, although part of our students' circle of influence, were beyond what we as teachers had control over. How could students who were affected by several influences, which in turn affected their behaviour, be best supported in their learning? Like every other student in our classes they had an equal right to learn. In exploring how these students could be helped, Hattie (1999) suggested that quality classroom teaching has the most influence on successful outcomes for students.

This made an enormous impact on us both and made us realise that in order to help these students learn:

Everything that happened within our classrooms was within our circle of influence. We could leave other things alone and try to make changes within ourselves as teachers and in our classrooms, and this would make a difference for these students at school.

With the help of our facilitator, Bronwyn, a four-phase programme was developed:

1. Needs analysis was carried out through assessment and evaluation.
2. Reading the literature helped us identify possible ways of meeting these needs.
3. These strategies were incorporated into our teaching and learning practice.
4. Further assessment and evaluation of our practice was carried out to measure changes.

The decision was made to target a group of six students from each class. The students were all experiencing learning difficulties, having made very little progress over the year, and several also experienced behavioural difficulties.

STAGE 1 NEEDS ANALYSIS

From our **needs analysis** it was decided that everything we did had to have a purpose.

Our purposes in teaching **social skills** were:

- to improve social outcomes
- to reduce undesirable behaviour
- to enhance learning.

Our purposes in **literacy** were:

- to raise learning achievement in reading
- to raise learning achievement in writing.

We were guided by Brophy's (1988) ideas on good classroom management:

Good classroom management implies not only that the teacher has elicited the cooperation of the students in minimising misconduct and can intervene effectively when misconduct occurs, but also that worthwhile academic activities are occurring more or less continuously and that the classroom management as a whole is designed to maximise student engagement in these activities not merely to minimise misconduct (Brophy, 1988, p.3).

Brophy's comments indicated that as teachers we needed to examine our own practice closely to look at our impact on student learning and behaviour.

Once we were clear about our focus for our 12 students, we not only wanted to collect data on each student's learning, behaviour, and social skills, but also on how our own teaching practice and planning impacted on the learning and social skills of those children. The data needed to be:

- valid
- purposeful
- from a variety of sources.

The following data was collected.

TABLE 1
Data Collection

RAISING LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT	DEVELOPING SOCIAL SKILLS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • phonic knowledge • running records • writing sample • concepts about print • sight words • observations of teaching behaviour • teacher planning for lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • time sampling of children's on-task behaviour • anecdotal recording of social skills and behaviour in the classroom • observation of teacher attention to student behaviour • observation of teacher

The data collected was analysed in order to find out the strengths and areas of need for both the students and the teachers. While it was easy to analyse and find out about the students' needs and strengths, it was very challenging for us to analyse our own. This is when we had the facilitator observe us teaching our classrooms. While it was quite daunting to begin with, to have someone watch and note every word and every action, in the end it was fruitful as we could now analyse through a reflective process, what needed work in order to do what we had set out to achieve for our students. Our planning procedures were also under scrutiny. We went back to Ministry of Education (1996, 2003) publications to guide us through the processes of guided reading and writing.

We aimed to use effective practice research to guide data collection, analysis, and to plan any changes to our teaching.

STAGE 2 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PRACTICE

As teachers we worked collaboratively and reflectively with Bronwyn to develop a package that covered both professional development and changes to practice to support our classroom programmes. We started from where our strengths were, for example taking guided reading lessons, and then moved on to taking guided writing sessions, one of our weaknesses. Prior to this we had reverted back to whole class writing as we tended to put guided writing in the “too-hard basket”. To be able to link reading and writing was a learning curve for both of us. We had very rigorous, intense sessions on how to take running records, how to analyse them and plan for students’ needs, and how to use the information to inform both reading and writing. Language experiences were then planned to provide the students with ideas for modelled writing, shared/interactive writing, guided writing and independent writing.

The information gathered on teacher responses to children was studied carefully. What was apparent was how important teacher modelling was for children. From discussions with Bronwyn we knew that all behaviour had a purpose, so the purpose behind each student’s behaviour was determined. We developed ways of noticing little triggers before children reacted to a situation, as it was easy to forget that preventing challenging behaviours occurring in the first place is one of the most important parts of behaviour management. We referred back constantly to Bill Roger’s (1995) technique of managing behaviour in the least intrusive way.

Goals were set for both teachers and the 12 students and these were included as part of our daily work with the students. By targeting particular aspects of learning we were able to specifically work with the students’ required needs. Planning for both literacy and social skills now became very specific including concentration on letter/sound associations, basic sight words and reading strategies; we went “back to the basics”.

A balanced literacy programme was provided for the whole class. Students wrote independently with the teachers, and the teachers in turn wrote with and to the students. High expectations were communicated to the targeted group of students every day. These students were expected to achieve in the same manner as all the students in the class. We continuously told them we believed that they were capable of doing it. The target group was given literacy input from the teachers every day in order to give them maximum and focused attention. We consciously used instructional strategies including modelling, prompting, questioning and giving feedback, which are ‘deliberate acts of teaching that focus learning in order to meet a particular purpose’ (Ministry of Education, 2003, p.78) within a range of contexts and approaches to teaching reading and writing.

Resources were developed specifically to meet the needs of the target students. These were included in regular small group practice sessions. The resources were incorporated into our task board activities and the students were encouraged at every opportunity to use them either independently, in a pair with another member in the group, or in a group with another “expert” buddy in the class. Gradually, as the confidence in these students began to grow, they were able to show other students in the class how to work on these tasks, and so the target students became the experts in the classroom.

Provision of opportunities for students to have a lot of legitimate talk in pairs and in groups was another strategy we consciously put into our classroom planning. Once student talk was relevant, they were able to transfer it into their written stories. Because the students were young, we held the preconception that children had to do a new story every day and somehow we could not imagine children writing one story over a couple of sessions at this age. Our open discussions with Bronwyn got rid of such fallacies and we moved on to help students do what they could do best.

We decided to concentrate on one social skill every three weeks and planned how this was going to happen for each of the three weeks. From the initial information collected a decision was made to teach social skills to the whole class, as we wanted everyone to use the skills we chose for these students. We saw that these students could be disadvantaged if the others did not know of what became “our ways”. As a result of this the idea of “class rules” became “class ways”. We developed the class ways with input from students, asking them what they wanted in their classroom. The students, therefore, had ownership of the class ways. We constantly referred back to them and there were deliberate acts of teaching, role plays, and constant reminders and positive reinforcements of these desirable behaviour patterns. Thus we chose a model that relied on teaching skills rather than a punishment model.

In both social skills and literacy, students were encouraged to evaluate themselves and others in the group. This made children see what other children were doing and it also helped them develop the confidence to be able to evaluate themselves.

STAGE 3 FINAL DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

It was now time to collect data and analyse this to see the shift in learning for our 12 students. We repeated the initial observations, and data collection methods. The results we saw were extremely positive. From our observations we noticed that:

- students were more courteous to each other
- there was more tolerance and cooperation between students which in turn enhanced their relationships
- on-task behaviour had improved markedly.

An in-class observation by Bronwyn supported the change we saw in the language used by students, and indeed the teachers. Pre-intervention observations on teacher attention to student behaviour showed that we had low levels of attention to positive student behaviour. Post-intervention observation data collected showed we were attending to positive behaviour in our students between 80-85 percent of the time.

With enhanced on-task behaviour, came enhanced learning. We noticed that the reading levels of most of our children had gone up. They had made considerable progress in terms of their alphabet knowledge, and concepts about print.

TABLE 2
Student outcomes: Student instructional reading levels from running record results

INSTRUCTIONAL LEVEL (USING PM BENCHMARK)				
	March	June	August	December
Class A Students	1	1	3	7
	1	1	1	1
	1	1	1	6
	1	1	1	7
	1	1	1	7
Class B Students	1	1	1	3
	1	1	1	2
	1	1	1	1
	1	1	3	4
	1	1	1	5

Key:

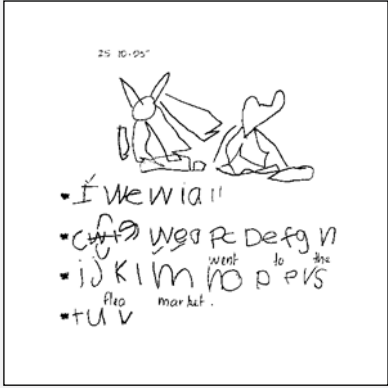
- Pre-intervention data
- Post-intervention data

Here are three writing samples of the same child taken over a period of about a month. The shift in this student's learning has been from representing words with any letters to using correctly spelt sight words and some correct letter/sound associations in unknown words.

In post-intervention reflection we noted the following changes in students:

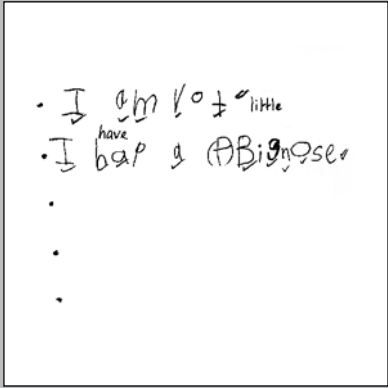
They felt real pride and ownership in the stories they had written. All of them wanted others to read their story. I think the purpose – setting it up at the beginning – has really worked. The students are now keen to write. They are engaged in their work and are learning well.

SAMPLE 1: 25/10/05




"I went to the flea market"

SAMPLE 2: 3/11/05 & 4/11/05



"I am not little. I have a big nose."

SAMPLE 3: 15-11-05



"The girl had an umbrella."

Figure 2: Writing samples from a class student.

STAGE 4

POST-INTERVENTION EVALUATION

Reflection and forward planning now took place on three levels:

- individual
- class
- school-wide.

We looked at our journey from both where we were at, and from where the students were at, and the progress seemed immense. The students were keen learners with boosted self-esteem, who felt success and believed that they could learn. It was quite interesting to observe the shift we had made from what we saw initially as positives and negatives in our classrooms, to how we now saw this in the classroom. The focus in the classroom is now more about the positive behaviour choices students make, rather than annoying small negative behaviours. For example the focus is less on how the students are sitting on the mat, and is instead on attending to those students who are ready to learn. By praising this behaviour the students follow quickly into the expected learning behaviour.

Planning is based on the analysed needs, strengths, and interests of the students. We work with the students on developing their strengths, and where they need to go next to enhance and extend their personal learning journeys.

We had developed confidence as teachers in making changes within the classroom, our circle of influence, and hence we felt we had given both the students and ourselves a fair chance. We wondered if we would have a chance to share what we had learned with others.

It was timely when senior management approached us to share our knowledge with the staff at our school. We were very hesitant to do the professional development by ourselves as we thought the staff may not be very receptive if professional development came from colleagues. We asked Bronwyn to assist us with this, as we thought that the staff might perceive her as an “expert” and make shifts in their teaching practice. However Bronwyn, while agreeing to support us in developing the professional development, refused to present it herself, as she thought it was better coming from practitioners experiencing the everyday reality of the school, rather than from someone who wasn’t part of this. Finally, we braced ourselves for two sessions on writing and one on socials skills, each one and a half hours long. Contrary to our beliefs, we found that most staff members were very keen to hear of our success story and have taken back to their classrooms some of the strategies we presented. We have also had beginning teachers observe our literacy sessions and they have commented on how useful it has been.

Our principal Nola Hambleton commented:

This exercise has reinforced a belief, long held by the senior management of this school, that sharing of expertise within our own learning community, by staff members who know and understand our students, is the most powerful tool in effecting change. From my observation of the two staff members involved in the project I noted an increased understanding of the value of cooperatively interchanging ideas and practice, an increased ability to clearly define the outcomes they required and a subsequent growing in confidence in their ability to move their students forward. As a result they were then able to confidently share their findings with the rest of the staff who themselves largely adapted their own teaching and learning. This I see as a beginning; the scaffold on which school-wide effective practice can be built. Undoubtedly they enhanced their teaching with new skills in engaging students in their learning while trying to minimise distractions of behaviour and low concentration spans. The pleasure of the students in their progress, as outlined in this article, is evident.

We consider ourselves lucky to be a part of this involvement with EEPiSE. Thanks to the patience of our facilitator we have come out with the confidence that we can make a difference in the learning of our students.

REFERENCES

- Brophy, J. E. (1988). Educating teachers about managing classrooms and students. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 4(1), 1-18.
- Hattie, J. (1999). *Influences on student learning*. Paper presented at his Inaugural Professorial Address, University of Auckland, Auckland.
- Ministry of Education (1996). *Dancing with the pen: The learner as a writer*. Wellington, New Zealand: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education (2003). *Effective literacy practice in Years 1-4*. Wellington, New Zealand: Learning Media.
- Rogers, B. (1995). *Behaviour management: A whole school approach*. Sydney: Scholastic Australia Pty Ltd.

Namratha Hirannah and Bernadette Mahoney



AUTHOR PROFILE

Namratha Hirannah teaches Year 1-2 children at Manurewa South School.

She is a lead mathematics teacher, junior team and art curriculum leader, a provisionally registered teacher coach and associate teacher. Last year she also participated in EEPiSE with her class of Year 0-1 students.

Email

namrathah@manurewasouth.school.nz

AUTHOR PROFILE

Bernadette Mahoney is now teaching a composite class of Year 4, 5, and 6 children at Manurewa South School. She is also a provisionally registered teacher coach and associate teacher. Last year she taught Years 0-1 and took part in professional development with the EEiPSE project.

Email

berniem@manurewasouth.school.nz

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to acknowledge the continuous support of Bronwyn Blair, whose support throughout facilitated our professional development. Her patience and in-depth knowledge was invaluable for our professional growth.

Reflections on an Action Research Project

An interview with staff at Mt Richmond Special School

Savi Bhupala – Teacher, Mt Richmond Special School, Otahuhu, Auckland

Gurjeet Toor – Teacher, Mt Richmond Special School, Otahuhu, Auckland

Kathy Dooley – Principal, Mt Richmond Special School, Otahuhu, Auckland



ABSTRACT

Two teachers and the principal of a special school reflect on their learning from participating in an action research project focusing on the Individual Education Programme (IEP) process in their school. Their reflections illustrate not only practical applications of IEPs, but also the challenges and rewards of engaging in action research. The principal's reflections help to locate the project in the wider vision of the school.

Personal Experience

Keywords

Action research, effective practices, individualised education plans, professional development, reflection, special education teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Mt Richmond Special School in Otahuhu, Auckland, has a multi-ethnic population of 140 students ranging in age from 5 to 21 years. There are nine satellite classes attached to other schools and about 65 students attend the base school. The school's involvement in the action research component of the Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education (EePiSE) project focused on examining the existing IEP process and how it could enhance the achievement of students.

A teacher of a Year 1-5 class and a teacher of a Year 8-15 class were directly involved in the project. One teacher had been at the school for three years and the other for one year. The principal, who has been at the school for 29 years, took a keen interest in the project activities. The project considered the learning needs of seven students with autism.

The principal and teachers involved took part in the following interview which provided an opportunity for the participants to reflect on their practice and learning.

Interviewer (I):

What were your expectations from being involved in EEPiSE?

Teacher 1 (T1):

We were offered the opportunity to be involved with the project and accepted the challenge even though we were uncertain as to whether it was intended to provide the Ministry with data or to contribute to our own practice. Initially we felt vulnerable about being asked to provide information about our students and our teaching practice to someone we didn't know. We were asked to speak honestly and frankly about issues that concerned us but naturally in speaking to an "outsider" we had to face the decision either to give filtered information or to be really honest and therefore expose ourselves. At that point we took a plunge into the unknown in order to know and learn more.

Teacher 2 (T2):

I started the project thinking that this would be an opportunity to refine the process of creating and using IEPs. I thought it would provide information and skills about the "nuts and bolts" of doing IEPs. When I came into the project I thought it was going to be a project collecting data about the effectiveness of IEPs catering for the needs of students. I wasn't sure of what exactly I was going to learn from it. Each session was a learning experience in itself, in the sense that we looked into assessments, reflective practice, classroom practice and these were all learning moments for me.

I:

Can you describe one of those learning moments?

T2:

We had a drama teacher come to work with the children. She was trying to get them to pass balls. I noticed that J struggled to even hold the ball and realised that before the activity could take place a lot more teaching was needed. We then redesigned the teaching goals by breaking them down into smaller segments such as (a) holding a ball, (b) carrying a ball to the teacher, (c) carrying a ball to another student, (d) rolling a ball to one person, and (e) rolling a ball to more than one person. Then we moved progressively to developing ball throwing skills. We also used video to record the progress of the children. After six months J had improved his ball skills and could engage in simple interactive ball games. The ball skills helped to achieve other IEP goals including turn-taking, eye contact, and relating to other students.

That example showed me how much teaching can be generated by reflecting on what I observe in the class.

T1:

I developed more ideas about data collection such as who could contribute information, and how the data could be written into an IEP, which helped me to choose appropriate goals. The data collection involved more than just recording the frequency of particular behaviours for example, spitting; what really helped was thinking about the purpose that might lie behind the behaviours. There were messages for us in the children's behaviours. The range of data sources could be observations, interview information, tests, or reports. Using a task analysis form helped to break down the activities into smaller achievable steps. I found it helpful when we were doing data collection to discuss, evaluate and select the appropriate emerging data and to reflect on choosing IEP goals.

When writing IEP goals we needed to pay attention to many different aspects of the student and their environment, such as the physical environment, emotional factors, the way the staff approach children, routines and so on. Using this process we hoped the information gathered would help us plan a teaching and learning approach more suited to each student's needs and that this approach could then build more effective programmes by helping us refine teaching strategies.

I:

Your action research was particularly interested in addressing the needs of children who could be challenging to teach. Can you explain how your IEP focus helped?

T2:

In my situation there were a number of non-verbal students who had severe behaviour concerns. We trialled some existing assessment tools but on reflection found that they were inadequate. It was clear that we needed better ways to gather useful information about what the behaviours meant. We adapted the existing assessment procedures to get more precise and purposeful data, particularly thinking of ways that we could understand the behaviours that would motivate students. The data provided me with better information to develop IEP goals that were more useful for teaching and were more meaningful for the students.

My teaching practice changed as a result, to working towards attaining the IEP goals. I found I was providing different and more motivating activities for the students. The classroom atmosphere changed, even the physical environment was altered. For instance, I used information about the students' needs and capabilities in adjusting how I did shared reading or structured physical activities. By being aware of the stimuli and reinforcers that worked for each student, and that these can change over time, I was able to improve their learning. Now I am more conscious of what relevant and workable behaviour goals can be applied with my students.

T1:

We reviewed previous IEPs and critiqued them against the school handbook. This prompted us to brainstorm how we could do IEPs in better ways. This has helped me to look more critically at the data used in IEPs. I am aware of using more suitable test information to set goals that are relevant to the students' needs. The IEP is only a starting point, the learning goes on beyond the school.

The project helped me improve my skills in goal setting and writing the IEP as well as implementation. It also showed the importance of collaborative teamwork in developing the goals. Working as a team helps you to consider more perspectives on the student and it makes you feel less vulnerable. It is not a question of who is doing what that matters, it is all of us, caregivers, parents and teachers, working for the benefit of the child.

I:

Looking back on your involvement in EEPiSE what have you learned that helps your teaching practice?

T2:

My most important learning experience from the whole project was developing my own IEPs for my students after having reflected, studied and analysed assessments and previous IEPs. Looking at different barriers to learning and reflecting on current IEPs was very useful. It was a valuable journey that began with my reflections as a teacher, my strengths, weaknesses, hopes and barriers and moved on to scaffolded professional development related to assessments and the effectiveness of the IEP. I reflected on and used existing school references to develop teaching strategies that would support working towards the new IEP goals. I can now confidently write down goals that take into consideration learning barriers, assessment strategies and teaching strategies.

I firmly believe that in order to have a conducive and challenging environment that maximises students' learning, it is very important to have an effective IEP.

I am seeing the IEPs working effectively with my students.

I:

As principal how do you think the EEPiSE activities aligned with the broader objectives of the school?

Principal (P):

In the past we relied on an assessment screening type of tool with broad steps. The increase in roll and the verification of students through the Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Schemes (ORRS) meant that our staffing increased markedly and we employed more than 16 new teachers from overseas who had less experience with the type of students we have at Mt Richmond. The assessment tool that we were using to guide us in the development of our IEPs was not adequate for teachers new to the school and we have been developing more precise assessment tools and a more structured and systematic process for assessing our students. Initially, staff may have felt overwhelmed but are now finding these tools give them a much clearer picture of their students' levels of functioning.

Our assessments showed the teachers the skills that the students had, but then the teachers were unclear about how to prioritise goals and write short-term learning objectives. They also needed development in selecting teaching strategies that would enable the learning objectives to be taught.

Many of our students operate developmentally below three years. Teachers have to become proficient at understanding students' behaviours and how they respond in class.

While students' skill levels can be assessed easily, other observations help teachers develop strategies to overcome barriers to learning skills. Judgements of the function of students' behaviours sometimes tended to be based on perception rather than reality. It helps if teachers understand that the behaviour can be a demonstration of student needs.

Effective IEP writing is an important task for our "Positive Behaviour Support" approach to teaching and learning across the school. Gathering and reflecting on assessment data from a variety of sources can inform teaching decisions. By seeing the purpose of gathering data it becomes more exciting and meaningful for teachers. This has been particularly relevant to the students who have been involved with the project because of their extreme sensitivity to stimuli including those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). It is difficult for teachers to select learning goals for these very complex students.

The project gave these two teachers an opportunity to understand more about the importance of writing IEPs and the selection of appropriate teaching strategies, greater confidence in selecting and using various forms of assessment, and guided opportunities to reflect on their teaching and learning programmes. The outcomes also provided the school with useful recommendations for managers about teacher induction, school-wide assessment systems, and further training for staff, including teacher aides, in assessing and monitoring student achievement.

Savi Bhupala



AUTHOR PROFILE

Savi Bhupala has been a teacher at Mt Richmond Special School for four years. She has previously worked with teenage students who have ASD. She has a BA in education from her home country, India.

Email

savib@mtrichmondschool.co.nz

Gurjeet Toor



AUTHOR PROFILE

Gurjeet Toor has been a teacher at Mt Richmond School for the past two years. Previously from India, she has an MA in education, and has also worked with students with ASD.

Email

gurjeett@mtrichmondschool.co.nz

Kathy Dooley



AUTHOR PROFILE

Kathy Dooley has been the principal of Mt Richmond Special School for 29 years. She was an Inspector supervising special education for a short period in the 1980s, and was formerly Organiser of Special Classes with the Psychological Service prior to the establishment of the Ministry of Education and Special Education Services, now part of the Ministry.

Email

kathyd@mtrichmondschool.co.nz

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to acknowledge the support of Jo Govender, acting deputy principal and Bruce Kent, Ministry of Education, Special Education, for support in writing this article. They would also like to acknowledge the support of Bronwyn Blair the EEPiSE project facilitator for guiding the two teachers on their journey towards effective practice.

9.08.05

Reflection Task 1: Clues about classroom life

On a good day in my classroom, these things will be happening:

- Students will be on task and motivated while doing planned activities.
- Students will be re-directed to activity even if they are playing up or tantruming.
- (Child A) (Severe behavioural problems) participates in the entire morning greeting session (from tantrums at this session we have got him to sit in circle most often), works on table top activities and responds to visual and verbal instructions)

On a bad day in my classroom, the things that happen that are not the way they should be or that I would like them to be, are:

- (Child A) keeps running away from certain activities, throws tantrums (banging, hitting, screaming, throwing).
 - (Child B) gets agitated with the noise and starts crying, flinging objects at hand at (Child A). Also sometimes does this at other times. But can be redirected much more easily than (Child A)
 - (Child C) could be grizzly and bite others. This does not happen much now.
 - My teacher aides are busy with other tasks and I need them close at hand to deal with their challenges
- Some things that should happen more than they do to make this class a better place for learning, are:

- Lots of outdoor, planned activities apart from indoor activities that keep them busy but which at the same time are interesting for students like (Child A) He has very few interests.
- A particular incident in class was an eye-opener in this context - (Adult A) the drama therapist wanted my students to catch the ball and pass it back to her. I realised that this was not as simple a skill for my students as it appeared to be. I realised that this could be the beginning point of new learning and help in making and achieving new IEP goals to include waiting, turn taking, ^{other} social and behaviour goals too

Putting Enjoyment into the Lunch Break

Enhancing effective practice at Ferndale School

Dorothy Wilson – Deputy Principal, Ferndale School, Christchurch

Stephen Evans – Play Skills and Sports Coordinator, Ferndale School, Christchurch



ABSTRACT

Ferndale School is a special school catering for students in the Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Schemes (ORRS). We sought to explore how a sense of well-being and belonging for students could be fostered during the lunch break at the base school.

Students' need for close supervision during lunch hour meant that staff found it hard to successfully engage the students in activities during this time. Parent and staff surveys and video footage were used to identify the changes to be made, and allowed the research team to monitor the resulting changes in the area of student participation. Worthwhile outcomes were identified for children, teachers, and the whole school.

Practice Paper

Keywords

Action research, effective practices, physical activity, playgrounds, social interaction, student participation, teacher development, teacher roles.

INTRODUCTION

Historically the lunch hour had been regarded as an area for improvement by teachers, teacher aides and therapists. A number of changes had been attempted, for example, splitting the lunch hour into two separate blocks and employing a specialist games coordinator. There was general agreement, however, that the students' experiences at lunch times still fell short of the following goal identified in the school's charter:

The school is committed to ensuring that all students are given an education that will enhance their learning, respect their dignity and meet their special needs.

Students have a full hour in the playground as they complete their lunch routines in the classroom prior to the break period. All classroom teachers and teacher aides are on a roster for playground supervision duties with four on duty in the playground at any time. The playground is comprised of a large climbing and activity structure, a grass area, a large open hard surface area as well as an enclosed area for riding bicycles. Students have a particularly diverse range of abilities and physical competence.

The research team's motivation for implementing an action research project to investigate practices and student outcomes around lunch time experiences was underpinned by the following five issues:

1. The need for close supervision meant that staff could not successfully engage in activity with students, and social interaction or play between students occurred more frequently in the company of an adult.
2. A number of students were frequently observed wandering without purpose, or sitting without engaging in any activities.
3. Incidents of inappropriate or aggressive behaviour had been reported and the school provided one-to-one supervision for those students identified as being unable to operate in the playground on their own – this placed a strain on the school's overall funding.
4. Staff had raised concerns about student well-being particularly in the winter when lack of physical activity resulted in students becoming cold and uncomfortable. The school makes the decision to keep students inside at break times with extra staff supervision if the weather is too cold.
5. Student relationships were strong within individual classes but not across classes.

Members of the research team (two classroom teachers, the deputy principal, one occupational therapist and the research associate) wanted the lunch time experiences to meet the school's goal of providing a supportive and caring environment for all students. Better use of this hour of the day at school could provide students with more positive experiences that would support them in viewing themselves as members of the school community.

METHOD

We began with a parent and staff survey to gauge the extent of concern and to elicit ideas for improvements. The survey was distributed to 23 staff (teachers and teacher aides) and 33 parents. 16 staff and 16 parents responded. Responses were collated and the following four outcomes were discussed by the research team.

1. Parent and teacher groups' primary concern was student safety, while a secondary concern was that students would have opportunity to socialise and enjoy time outside of the regular classroom.

2. Both groups believed the level of supervision was satisfactory, but that social interaction among students could be better.
3. Both groups held similar ideas regarding the types of activities that could be offered; ball games, music and moveable equipment featured strongly in the survey.
4. Some staff did not particularly enjoy lunch time supervision duties, and words such as child minder, prison guard, trouble-shooter and babysitter were used by some to describe their role. Teachers felt that their time was consumed by the need for constant supervision, which restricted their ability to engage in interactions with students.

Video footage of three lunch times was used as a basis for analysis of what students were doing in the playground and to identify areas that could be improved. Findings from the survey and the video footage were considered by the research team as they put together the next step in their action research process.

Action Cycle 1: Plan for Change

The research team began by grouping students according to their level of social participation. The decision was made to focus on developing opportunities for social participation with one of the groups. Six students were chosen as case studies. These students were to be a focus for staff to monitor and identify changes in participation. This decision later became less helpful in terms of our research.

A key teacher was assigned to begin implementing additional lunch time activity for students on four days a week over the period of one school term. This suggestion had been made by both teacher and parent groups in the survey. This teacher was to be responsible for developing and adapting a variety of games and activities that students could participate in. Other staff continued the lunch time supervision duties as set out on the regular school roster. The deputy principal assumed overall responsibility for supporting the key teacher and any other administrative requirements as they arose during implementation of the research.

Action Cycle 2: Making a Difference

The key teacher met with the researcher and deputy principal weekly to reflect on what was happening for students. Data that formed the basis for reflective discussion included:

- the key teacher's journal documentation of daily activity, his reflections about student participation and comments made by other teaching staff that were considered important
- the researcher's video of lunch times, once change had begun to occur.

Further meetings between the key teacher, researcher and deputy principal occurred at regular intervals over the course of the research project. The key teacher reported on the research progress at weekly school staff meetings, and teacher feedback from these meetings was documented.

In the first two weeks of implementing change the key teacher focused on developing a repertoire of social games for the "player" or case study group of students. Following early reflections this focus shifted as students other than the defined list of "players" were observed to display interest in becoming involved. The continued focus became one of looking for ways to provide a sociable setting in which students could select to participate from a range of adaptive activities.

Aspects of the playground were physically changed to encourage more social participation, for example, seating was arranged in a grouping layout, and accessibility to resources and equipment designed for individual and group play was increased. Resources were developed and introduced to the playground. Both were designed to allow students to participate in ball activity on their own or with and alongside others. These students were able to participate without reliance on adult support.

The research team accessed relevant literature to gain more understanding about social involvement and participation in relation to children with special education needs. Of particular interest was the work by Fergus Hughes and Daniel Hollinger on the role of play with special education needs children. Both acknowledge the important role of adults in giving reinforcement and feedback to students to encourage play. Concepts such as social exclusion and peer tutoring were discussed, and peer tutoring was trialled among a selection of students. The "tutors" were asked if they could help another student to play for short periods during the lunch break. The pairing of tutor and peer involved careful selection based on observation and knowledge the key teacher had gained about student preference and participation.

External expertise was accessed. Sport Canterbury provided teachers with a series of three half-hour workshops on adaptive physical activity. This external input contributed to heightening teacher awareness of adaptive physical activity for students. However, the teaching team also reflected on how much of the information shared appeared to be more relevant in a mainstream context. A health and physical education (PE) curriculum advisor then met with the key teacher to assist in this essential learning area. The discussion affirmed that there was a direct correlation between what students were experiencing and learning in the playground, and the intentions of the curriculum document. It was at this time that a reflection was made, "It would be great if everybody could view this as increasing children's curriculum by one hour everyday".

Changes in student participation formed the main area of discussion at weekly meetings. The video footage proved to be instrumental in identifying change in individual participation. The footage also showed observations of student participation that may not have otherwise been viewed. Notice was taken of the type of activity individual students selected and how they participated socially. Weekly findings influenced ongoing provision of lunch time activity as careful consideration was made to foster peer interactions and play friendships.

Early findings highlighted the fact that increased participation was evident from a wide range of students. Some of the biggest and most interesting shifts were occurring in the other students.

As the project progressed informal contact between the key teacher and individual classroom teachers increased. Staff became interested in the developments and began to share their observations about individual students. As one stated, "I have never seen (student) so enthusiastic about participating in physical activity." Staff began taking responsibility for preparing and supervising playground activity on occasions when the key teacher was absent. The changes occurring in the playground were seen to be valued by the whole school.

RESULTS

A key finding has been the recognition of students as more capable than previously acknowledged in three key areas:

1. Physical – students engaged in more physical activity than previously observed.
2. Social – cross-class relationships, sharing and turn-taking and having fun together were observed as a result of peer tutoring and playful interactions during student choice activities.
3. Participation level – students were drawn together physically by the equipment/resource and environment layout; the location of the activity or resource became the focus for interaction rather than staff relying on the students to initiate social contact.

TABLE 1

Change identified in selected students.

Student	Prior knowledge/observation	Changes identified
T	Chose to sit near classroom, active participation seldom observed.	Moved to main activity area alongside others. Regularly played with ball games, displayed enjoyment.
S	Typically stayed near one corner of playground, few interactions, not particularly active.	Responded to peer tutor and joined cooperative games. Began to initiate own participation.
M D	Remained sitting on verandah by classroom during lunch. No physical or social interactions.	Responded to peer tutor. Became physically active, enjoying running, and initiated play with peer tutor.
L	Intense play with bark, water puddles, dirt. Required lots of supervision.	Choice of play material changed to use of PE equipment. Observed playing nearer to others as if more comfortable in the social situation. Less intervention by staff.
A	Sociable with at least one other regular peer. Physically active using most of the playground at various times.	Took on responsibility of peer tutor. Relationships developed with peers from other classes.
N	Constant one-to-one teacher supervision required owing to behaviour. Wanders about with little engagement in play.	Calm, playful periods observed using the crash mat. Did not aggressively respond to close proximity of others. Supervising teacher relaxed and was able to interact with other students. Eventually one-on-one supervision was no longer needed.

The initial categories the research team used to describe student levels of participation became less easy to define. Students no longer easily fitted into the groupings.

The original idea of following case study children became unnecessary as different students came to the fore in our research at different times. We found that we were taking notice of all students. It was beneficial to the research to continue in this way rather than limit our view to six selected students.

The role of the key teacher shifted from one of initiating activity to that of observing and responding to student choice of play following the provision of appropriate resources. As one of the research team commented, 'We were following the child's lead now, not the adult's.' The resources offered in the playground became the "magnet" for student participation. The resource itself appeared to provide the initial focus for students, which in some way took away the need to initiate social interaction through making eye contact or verbal interaction. Through participating with the resource, students naturally interacted with peers as their activity became one of playfulness and enjoyment. Results for students, teachers and the school are summarised on the following page.

Student experiences, learning and development included:

- students self-selecting from more “user-friendly” playground environment
- students being drawn in from the perimeter by the “busyness” of their peers
- student play becoming more purposeful and appropriate
- students’ peer interactions and friendships developing through more playful interactions
- new (and old) equipment/resources being introduced into the playground and thought being given to the type of equipment/resource that would encourage or forestall a particular behaviour; previously we would have provided equipment from a different perspective – our own rather than the students’
- friendships were developing within and between classrooms through a peer mentoring programme
- changes in the audible tone of the playground becoming apparent from comparisons of video footage and providing confirmation of the increase in enjoyment for students and teachers’.

Teachers found:

- the changes in playground activity improved their lives as well as those of the children
- they felt happier and more comfortable in their role on playground duty, and although a supervisory role was still essential there was less of the “prison guard” mentality, and staff were able to interact more freely with students
- they had increased awareness of the diversity of need amongst students in the playground environment
- a one-on-one supervision roster for a particular child with behavioural concerns became obsolete as his participation in activities increased, and this reduced pressure on staff across the whole school.

For the school as a whole:

- through staff development in PE there has been an increased awareness across all sites of the need for students to be engaged in meaningful play experiences
- staff acknowledge that appropriate play needs to be planned for and that it doesn’t just happen.

Examples of change in student participation can be viewed on the short video we have produced in support of this final research report. The video brings to life the improvements made in playground experiences and the resulting shifts in student participation.

DISCUSSION

Where to from here?

The impact of teacher learning during this research project precipitated lots of discussion within the school. Two main issues were identified as requiring continued attention:

1. The sustainability of the lunch break activity. Could this now become a part of regular school practice without reliance on a key teacher?
2. The transference of experiences to satellite schools. The school has six satellite classes situated in neighbouring schools. There was a sense that what has been learnt at the base school could be transferred to benefit students at other sites.

Early in the new school year teachers and management met to discuss these ideas. A number of decisions were made as a result of this meeting. The key teacher involved in this project has been assigned a new position as a play therapist/sports coordinator. This role involves moving around the base school and satellite schools to support teachers and children to create sociable play environments during the lunch break. Early observations at the schools hosting satellite classes showed similarities with what had been occurring at Ferndale School. As the key teacher commented, “I’m seeing a similar attitude among the staff.” Provision of accessible resources and equipment in a socially interactive area, peer tutoring, and adult modelling and facilitation, form the basis for future developments within the satellite schools.

Changes have continued in the organisation of the lunch hour at Ferndale. The research project reinforced the fact that students benefit from some form of structure during the lunch break. The previous unstructured hour had been too long for students to cope with. The project highlighted the need for consistency of adult facilitation throughout the lunch break activity. Employing an extra teacher over the long term to take on this role was not financially sustainable. To provide continuity of play activity and also meet staff need for lunch breaks, the lunch hour has been divided into two. The base school looked to experiences in satellite units and found a model that worked well in one of the units. The first half-hour is used flexibly at the discretion of the classroom teacher. The playground can be used under class teacher or teacher aide supervision.

During the second half-hour all students will have use of the playground at which time the social play environment will be provided with one staff member assuming responsibility each day. Students will now be involved in setting up the resources and equipment on a daily basis with support from teacher aides. Pictorial lists have been developed to support them with selecting and organising the equipment.

CONCLUSION

Although this is a school for students with special education needs, those needs cover a wide range of abilities and interests. The provision of playground resources needs to be carefully thought out. It is not a case of one size fits all.

Assigning a key teacher to explore possibilities and implement change during the lunch break proved to be beneficial to the school as a whole in the long term. Having a “fresh pair of eyes” was useful in terms of questioning and then improving the layout of the existing playground. The key teacher and researcher’s weekly analysis enabled a clear focus to be maintained. They were not confined in their knowledge of students (as a classroom teacher may be) or constrained by other school commitments. The developments provided the school with an effective model of what was possible. Evidence of the value of this is the way the school is now transferring what has been learnt to the satellite classes.

Reflections on participating in research

As participants, the staff involved in this project viewed themselves as novices in the action research process. Flexibility in the process proved to be one of the main advantages for the research team. For example, the team were able to deviate from the initial plans in direct response to the emerging nature of the data. Rather than restrict developments by focusing on six case study students it proved to be more beneficial to retain a view of the whole student group. The flexibility of action research allowed the team to make changes to their plan. The use of video footage as a data-gathering tool provided the team with the ability to do this. This aspect of the use of video was something that was not recognised in the initial planning of the research. It emerged as the process unfolded.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Hughes, F. P. (1998). Play in Special Populations. In O. N. Saracho & B. Spodek (Eds.), *Multiple perspectives on play in early childhood education* (pp. 171-193). New York: State University of New York Press.
2. Ramsey, E., & Gresham, F. (2003). Antisocial Youths. In H. Walker (Ed.) *Assessment and classification of social competence deficits among antisocial youths*, (pp. 178-201). Oregon: Wadsworth.
3. Hollinger, J. D. (1987). Social skills for behaviourally disordered children as preparation for mainstreaming: Theory, practice, and new directions. *Remedial and Special Education*, 8(4), 17-27.
4. Smith, M. J. (2001). *Teaching play skills to children with autism spectrum disorder*. New York: DRL Books.
5. Website: <http://www.tracks.net.nz/moreinfo.htm#rop>

Dorothy Wilson



AUTHOR PROFILE

Dorothy Wilson has been involved in special education for more than 20 years. She started her career in special education at Ruru Special School in Invercargill before moving to Christchurch and Ferndale School. She is now the deputy principal of Ferndale School.

Email

dorothy.wilson@ferndale.school.nz

Stephen Evans



AUTHOR PROFILE

Stephen Evans has taught at a range of primary schools and worked as part of a behaviour team in the United Kingdom. More recently he has taught special education needs classes in two Christchurch schools, and is now developing social, cooperative and physical education skills through play and sports activities at Ferndale School. He is also a trustee for TRACKS, an organisation which mentors young men.

Email

stephen.evans@ferndale.school.nz



Raising the Bar in Reading

Taryn Naidoo

Year 3 Classroom Teacher, Papatoetoe Central School, Auckland

Roshilla Naicker

Senior Teacher, Papatoetoe Central School, Auckland

ABSTRACT

This article aims to present strategies and discussion about how teachers can adapt the curriculum in order to provide authentic needs-based programmes. Identifying students' strengths and needs gave us clear directions as to what we needed to teach. In this article, the research team discuss how they successfully raised the reading achievement of target students by attending to classroom practices such as guided reading and taking running records, as well as giving specific focus to targeted assessment, goal setting and inclusive support programming.

Practice Paper

Keywords

Differentiated instruction, effective practices, inclusive classrooms, needs assessment, professional development, reading achievement, school effectiveness, teaching strategies.

INTRODUCTION

The rationale for our professional development was to embark on an action research project which focused on teaching and learning, more specifically directed towards changes in practice. Using the techniques of action research, we drafted questions, collected data, analysed data, and acted upon it. The key focus of our involvement with our facilitator in the Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education (EePiSE) project was to develop an understanding of and build confidence in adapting the curriculum to provide authentic needs-based programmes that enhanced student learning. The main context was literacy. A secondary context was afternoon topics where it was harder to accommodate the struggling students.

The suggested objectives were to:

- increase teacher effectiveness in collecting and analysing data, in particular, running records
- increase effectiveness in using data to inform programming and provide appropriate instruction at the instructional curriculum level
- increase effectiveness in using strategies to accommodate diversity in the classroom
- become involved in the process of reflection, and consider our own attitudes, beliefs, and expectations about our students and our own practice.

The suggested intervention programme involved workshops and learning conversations around the process of:

- needs assessment/data gathering
- providing students with literacy experiences at their instructional level
- using strategies to accommodate diversity in the classroom
- inclusive classroom support programmes
- ongoing monitoring and adjustment of programmes
- reviewing and reflecting on our practice.

METHOD

The action research project required us to work collaboratively with the facilitator and was carried out in three phases.

Phase 1: Needs Analysis

Pre-intervention data were collected in order to identify the target students. This information was gathered from the school's reading profile cards which contain children's chronological reading ages. The data revealed that two students, one aged eight in Year 3, and the other aged nine in Year 4, had reading ages of 5.5-6 years, and 6.5 years respectively. These students were reading at least two years below their chronological reading ages. Other assessments, such as the ability to recognise and sound alphabet names, read high frequency sight words commonly used by students of the same age, and spelling ability were then tested. Our professional development was aimed at these two students. However, to monitor the broader effects of the programme, we also included an additional 3-4 children from a non-English speaking background in each class.

TABLE 1

Initial literacy assessment data for target student of Year 3 adapted from the pre-intervention programme

Name	Date	Letter ID sounds reads	Letter ID sounds records	Blends reads	Blends records	1st 100 words	2nd 100 words	3rd 100 words	Teacher comments
Student A	30.8.05	18/28	28/28	14/23	14/21	75/100			
Student B	22.11.05	21/28	25/28	21/23	17/21	94/100	93/100	81/100	

Once the initial assessments were completed and collated, the results were analysed with the help of the facilitator. We identified the common errors and difficulties that children experienced when reading and writing. The analysis revealed that:

- children were grouped at incorrect instructional levels and therefore some texts were too easy or too difficult
- children needed an understanding of strategies they can use to assist them in the learning programme
- teachers needed to monitor effectiveness by using data to inform programming and provide appropriate instruction at the curriculum instructional level
- teachers needed to provide more opportunities for practise.

With this assessment information at hand, the next step was to identify each student’s strengths and weaknesses. The strengths were tasks the students accomplished independently and the weaknesses were areas where they were experiencing difficulties. We then progressed to drawing up an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for each student. These plans focused on what the student needed to learn and related directly to their specific needs. These plans guided our teaching for the next five weeks.

TABLE 2

An example of a Strengths/Needs profile

Strengths/Needs profile		
Student: A	Subject: Reading	Term 4: Week 1-5
Strengths		Needs
Graphophonic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • records 26/26 letter sounds • records 14/21 blends 		to write letter blends for example fl, gl, pr
Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognises 75 out of 100 first sight words 		to attend to short vowels when reading 2-4 letter words (often misreads) to consolidate knowledge of first 100 sight words

TABLE 3

An example of an IEP

Short-term IEP		
Student: A	Subject: Reading	Term: Week 1-5
Teaching target		Outcome
Process objective: Indicate letter sound relationships		
1. To give the sounds for these written letters/blends		Achieved some. Can give sounds for
Week 1: a, u		
Week 2: y, i		
Week 3: c, s, sk, sc		sk
Week 4: sm, sn, st		sm, sn, st
Week 5: ch, th		ch, th
2. To recognise and read words: Game: Bingo		
Week 1: away, after, as, up, under		
Week 2: yes, with, him, yesterday		achieved
Week 3: came, some, school, skate, sky		achieved
Week 4: smoke, smell, smile, snip, snow		achieved: smoke, some

Activities included in these IEPs were:

- matching games, which helped children to develop an understanding of word patterns and improve spelling
- spelling games such as bingo and snap
- the repeated reading programme which increased reading speed and fluency
- tracing over letters and numbers such as d and b, p and b, 5 and 3, to consolidate alphabet names and numbers, and to reduce confusion
- a four-minute writing graph where the aim is to write as many words as they can in four minutes with the teacher dictating the story, usually from a text at the writer's instructional reading level.

Phase 2: Action

This phase required us to put our plans into action both in planning and teaching. We incorporated these IEPs into our daily teaching programme. We discussed and explained the set goals with the target children. Sharing these intentions meant that students knew exactly what they needed to learn. During our student/teacher talk time, one student remarked: *I know more about what I'm supposed to be doing. The teacher tells us more now.*

Another student remarked: *Before I didn't know that well (what to do) ... the teacher is asking me more questions and I get to learn more.*

They continued to work on the set targets independently, with peers or sometimes with a teacher aide. Both teacher and teacher aide monitored progress through the use of a tracking sheet.

TABLE 4
An example of a tracking sheet with tasks

Support programme recording chart		Term: 4				Date: 29.8-2.9
Date repeated reading		29.08	30.08	31.08	1.09	2.09
Letter/blend focus	practise					
	memory					
	pairs	✓	✓	✓	library	✓
Short vowel words	practise					
	bingo	✓	✓	✓	✓	computer suite
Four-minute writing	reading		✓	✓	✓	✓
	recovery					
Spelling						

We reviewed the goals after a five-week period in order to assess whether they had been achieved. Students built confidence and self-esteem through regular practice and were given opportunities to reflect on their learning on a regular basis. Student A said:

I didn't like reading because it was a bit too difficult... you had to copy all these big words out of books and it took ages to write it...now we have more fun activities. They help us learn spelling words and you can have fun as well as learn.

This process of assessment, analysis and planning continued until the student reached the goals.

Phase 3: Results and Discussion

The repeated reading programme proved to be the most effective. This process required the children to read at their instructional level twice a day for one minute. The listener (a more able reader) was responsible for time-keeping, assisting with difficult words, and counting and graphing the number of words read correctly. Once the student read a total of 120 words per minute they moved onto a new text. The repeated reading programme enhanced student participation. Students also became more competitive by comparing graphs and took greater responsibility for their learning.

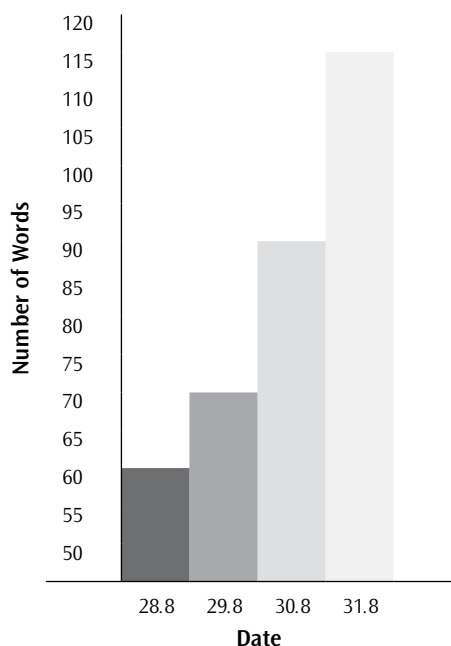


Figure 1. A repeated reading graph showing reading progress

In establishing the students' correct instructional level we realised that it was necessary for teachers to take more than one running record at any given time. This may seem daunting and time-consuming but it is absolutely essential if it is to inform planning. As regular practice throughout the professional development activities, we continued to analyse strategies which students were using during reading. In doing so we were able to make more informed decisions and general statements about student reading behaviour. In response to taking running records student B said:

I was feeling a bit excited about getting a bit higher. I went up quite a lot. It was cool. I felt a bit proud.

TABLE 5

Running record data showing pre and post-intervention reading levels for target student

Student	C.A	Date	Reading Age	PM level	Accuracy	Self Correction	Comp%	Intervention plan
D. O. B.	7.6	29.06.05	6.5-7	15	97%	1.3	NA	pre-intervention
6.11.97	8	1.12.05	8.5-9	24	95%	1.4	90	post-intervention

CONCLUSION

Our participation in the action research project has enabled us to reflect and question our decisions about best practice. As mainstream classroom teachers one of the greatest challenges we face is to cater for the diverse needs of the students we teach. In this journey we learned that it is possible, irrespective of the range of student ability, to cater for all students. We adapted our practice by:

- examining the way we teach
- lessening written reading tasks
- carefully selecting tasks that match the learning goals
- examining the guided reading lesson structure and student involvement
- planning for diversity
- developing supportive classroom practices.

If we expect our students to succeed it is imperative that all teachers understand the critical factors for effectiveness in teaching literacy, which include teacher expectations, teachers' knowledge of strengths and weaknesses, effective use of instructional strategies, and the quality of interaction between students and teachers. Children enjoy challenge; teachers can set higher goals and therefore have children achieve at higher levels. Teachers can raise the bar!

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Frager, A. M. (1993). Affective dimensions of content area reading. *Journal of Reading*, 36(8), 616-622.

Ministry of Education (1996). *The Learner as a reader*. Wellington: Author.

Taryn Naidoo



AUTHOR PROFILE

Taryn Naidoo is a Year 3 mainstream classroom teacher at Papatoetoe Central School. She has been teaching in New Zealand for five years, and has had previous experience teaching as a junior primary teacher in South Africa.

Email

tarynn@pcs.school.nz

Roshilla Naicker



AUTHOR PROFILE

Roshilla Naicker is a senior teacher teaching Year 4 at Papatoetoe Central School. She also has previous teaching experience teaching primary school children in South Africa.

Email

roshillan@pcs.school.nz

Building Resiliency in Students with Special Education Needs

A journey of discovery

Alan Mears – Learning Team Leader, Disability Resource Centre, Mairehau High School, Christchurch

Rosalie Stevenson – Coordinator, Learning Support Centre, Burnside High School, Christchurch



ABSTRACT

This article describes an action research project, based within a school, to develop and increase the social resiliency of students with special education needs in both school and community settings. The programme included role-plays, scenarios and problem solving. An assessment tool was developed to measure self-esteem amongst the students and this tool became a learning resource for the students. Resources were gathered from similar projects and the health and physical education (PE) curriculum. Outcomes included increases in students' resiliency and were reported by the students themselves, teachers, teacher aides and parents. Reflections from the researchers about students' outcomes and the action research process are included.

Practice Paper

Keywords

Action research, adolescents, assessment tool, effective practices, life skills, resilience, self concept.

INTRODUCTION

This project was initiated by the head of Learning Support, who encouraged the head of the Physical Disability Resource Centre to be a co-researcher. Mairehau High School is a co-educational, decile 5 school located in the north-east of Christchurch. It draws a wide range of students from a diverse community, and has a high proportion of students with special education needs, including a large number who are funded through the Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Schemes (ORRS). A number of years ago a senior life skills class was established to meet the needs of ORRS students ready for transition. However, over time the numbers grew to include vulnerable at-risk students who were not ORRS funded. The school became involved in the Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education (EePiSE) project at the end of 2004. We suddenly found ourselves in the role of action researchers.

The project itself was slow to begin. We felt there was a lack of clarity and purpose. Real progress was not made until the beginning of Term 2, 2005.

Action Research: Reconnaissance Plan

At this stage the two Mairehau High School researchers began to work with the research team leader at the Christchurch College of Education (CCE), and we were rather alarmed because time seemed to be slipping away. Things were so unclear, we didn't really know our focus, we didn't know how to go about undertaking the research, and the end of year deadline was looming even closer.

However, the opportunity to bounce ideas off each other meant we very quickly began to focus in on the key needs of our students and one factor in particular kept coming to the fore. This need was highlighted by the naivety of some of the students, which were illustrated by the following examples:

- student S asked by a "friend" if he could borrow his brand new walkman for a couple of days and naively gave it up without being able to identify who the friend was, with the result it was never seen again
- student T reported their vulnerability around hopping into cars with drunken drivers and being "used" for their access to money through their disability allowance.

Students, families, educators and staff at Mairehau High School reported that the group of students of interest in the EePiSE project may have low resiliency, and that this had an adverse impact on their abilities or opportunities to participate, take risks, "bounce back" from set-backs, gain enjoyment and a sense of achievement, contribute to local networks, and have a realistic look at future options. This led the researchers to focus on the concept of trying to build resiliency in these students. We began our research by exploring resources at the CCE.

We discovered some very user-friendly publications, which were easily adapted to meet the needs of our students. We also worked closely with a secondary advisor for health and PE from teachers' support services who alerted us to the link with the health and PE curriculum. She was also able to provide us with a framework of lessons that she had developed for use with a Year 9 at-risk class. In addition the advisor provided us with professional readings and research articles and Ministry of Education curriculum documents that we were able to incorporate into the teaching programme.

We focused on resiliency because one of the researchers had previously completed some research in Australia focusing on minimising the harm caused by illicit drugs, and had found the emphasis was increasingly being placed on building student resiliency. In our opinion resiliency is the ability of people to handle bad experiences, set-backs and disappointments in life, to learn from these difficult experiences, but to still maintain self-confidence, self-esteem and feeling of self-worth.

Once the focus had been decided, this sparked a heated and excited discussion about the need to develop resiliency in the students with special education needs as they were seen as particularly vulnerable.

Both school-based researchers were able to note numerous stories where these students had been manipulated or were very vulnerable and where their resilience was battered. Many of them had bought into an “experience of misery” by the time they reached the senior levels of high school, where their lack of success had undermined their sense of self-worth and resilience. They were no longer prepared to try new things for fear of failure. We sought to address this concern. Both researchers had worked in this area for a long time in many guises and felt a programme of this nature was long overdue.

Working with experts from the CCE and having the opportunity to bounce ideas and adapt existing resources meant we didn't have to “reinvent the wheel”. We were surprised how quickly we were able to put together an appropriate teaching programme using the expertise we had available. We realised it was really important not to work in isolation but to connect with those who had some expertise in the area we were interested in.

Action Research: Action Plan

Prior to teaching the programme in Term 3 we decided to develop a tool for assessing the student's self-concept. This was based on a series of 20 questions, each with a scale ranging from 1-5, which students completed (several with the help of teacher aides). This gave us a baseline from which to try and measure whether our programme had made any difference to students' self-confidence and resilience. Over a three-week period students were exposed to a teaching programme with a heavy focus on role-plays, scenarios and problem-solving situations. These involved real-life examples where students were asked to anticipate how and why they would react in risky situations.

At the end of the programme the same assessment tool was used and the results were analysed. We were pleasantly surprised by the overall improvement in student resiliency as measured by this tool. The findings were supported by reports from teachers, teacher aides and parents of the students involved, many of whom noticed a perceptible increase in the students' self-confidence, self-esteem and assertiveness. While this tool is subjective, and student perception of what it means is variable, the tool itself became a learning resource because students began to question what others understood or meant by their responses. For example, one student said:

Now I know what you've been doing for the last three weeks, you've been trying to get us to stand up for ourselves more.

During Term 4 students watched a video that featured dangerous scenarios prepared by drama students from the CCE in consultation with the researchers. The students were shown the clips and then asked to respond by showing what they would do in the given situation. There was a noticeable reduction in naivety and an increase in positive and assertive behaviour. At the end of the programme students were asked what they had learned from the programme, and how they felt about the programme.

Overall, they were positive about what they had learned from the programme and many were able to come up with several strategies they could use to protect themselves during dangerous situations.

In reviewing the programme the researchers agreed it was a worthwhile project for the students and it will be continued with future classes. We also found that working collaboratively and tapping into outside expertise was a really worthwhile experience and brought a sense of achievement and discovery that was quite exciting. As one researcher stated, “If I had tried to do this on my own ... I would have given up”.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The students were positively engaged in the programme, and in phase two of the action research project they had clearly retained the resilience strategies that had been taught in phase one. In discussion and role-plays, they showed more resilience to resisting dangerous situations, for example, declining drinks offered at a party. As a group, they were able to clearly identify risk situations and were able to generate a variety of responses that allowed them to avoid risk-taking behaviour. One of the surprises for us was that the programme we implemented was at level 5 of the curriculum, we had expected the students to be operating at around level 2.

Within this project our research facilitator helped us to learn how to gather and analyse data. We learned a lot about action research, about using data as a basis for informing teaching, targeting particular students, and finding out if our teaching was making a difference. We felt that it was important to have an outside research facilitator to keep us focused on the project. A member of our school's research team said that the process allowed her to continually review what she had learned as the project progressed. She said:

I think also coming back to it a few times, numerous times, you've actually got that space to clarify a few things in your head and ask yourself a bit more ... to move on. Even though I found it frustrating at times because it felt like we were not getting anywhere. But it has helped.

We also believed that our action research project was important, that it did bring changes to the school, and most importantly, the students benefited.

One of the research team stated:

What I've found out about it is that it is incredibly important and what we're doing is only a small part of what is happening to these students. A small part, but I do think that it is incredibly important. The feedback from the students is that they think that it is important. They see it as important. They recognise the value of it, but there are so many things going in their lives.

Like overseas travel, the planning and preparation can seem overwhelming, but travelling as a close-knit, supported group is mind-expanding, challenging, and really worthwhile.

Alan Mears



AUTHOR PROFILE

Alan Mears is the learning team leader of the Disability Resource Centre at Mairehau High School. He continues to teach the senior life skills class. Alan has worked in special education for nearly 30 years across a range of settings.

Email

mearsa@mairehau.school.nz

Rosalie Stevenson



AUTHOR PROFILE

Rosalie Stevenson was working at Mairehau High School during the EEPiSE project, but left at the end of 2005 to take up a position at Burnside High School as coordinator of the Learning Support Centre. She has worked in special education in a variety of settings over the past 20 years.

Email

sv@burnside.school.nz

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors Alan Mears and Rosalie Stevenson would like to acknowledge the guidance and input of Missy Morton and Sally Unwin from the Christchurch College of Education.



Motueka High School Storied Experience: Teaching and learning strategies

Tracey Ellery

Literacy Coordinator, Motueka High School, Motueka

Jan Trafford

Head of Department, Learners' Support, Motueka High School, Motueka

ABSTRACT

In 2005 Motueka High School became involved in the Ministry of Education's Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education (EePiSE) project. The following is the story of how we integrated this action research project into our existing Enhanced Programme Funding (EPF). The project was supported by researcher Don Brown and led by our head of department (HoD), Learners' Support, Jan Trafford. A range of teachers across the school, including the literacy coordinator, Tracey Ellery, were involved in the project. Both initiatives aimed at upskilling all teachers, enhancing literacy across the school and were based around students with moderate special teaching needs. We collated quantitative and qualitative data mainly in the area of literacy but also in numeracy and behaviour. These two programmes have made an impact on the school's efforts to increase learning outcomes.

Practice Paper

Keywords

Action research, effective practices, learning strategies, literacy programmes, professional development, teacher development, teaching strategies.

INTRODUCTION

In the beginning ... our principal Rex Smith was noticing that our (then) school certificate results were below average. After investigating possible reasons for this, he found that Motueka High School programmes were up-to-date, relevant, and he believed that the teachers were hard working. This led to two thoughts: what were the students' abilities and skills at the time of the Year 9 intake, and were the teachers adequately equipped to meet the needs of the incoming students?

The primary assessment used at Motueka High School for Year 9 students is the Supplementary Test of Achievement in Reading (STAR). In 2003, 26% of Year 9 students arrived at high school with a stanine 1 or 2 on their STAR, and in the 2004 intake there were 35.5%. We concluded that students with high literacy learning needs were enrolling at our school and we needed to do something to address the problem.

The low STAR results along with Progress and Achievement Test (PAT) scores led to the school applying for the Ministry of Education EPF programme. Our learning programme was to focus on students with moderate literacy needs and began in 2004.

A Year 9 literacy class was set up. The target students for this class were a group of students who we hoped would achieve the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) level 1 if they were given some extra literacy support. Approximately 16 students were selected for the initial class and most had achieved stanine 1 or 2. The targeted students received the same curriculum programme and assessments as their Year 9 peers, however, they were supported in class through lesson adaptation and delivery by two teachers, one of them specialising in literacy. The supported students were expected to write less, to talk and discuss their ideas and learning more, and there was a focus on individual reading. To encourage successful learning, subject-specific vocabulary and the relevance of the lesson to the students' life experiences were stressed. A close liaison was maintained with the parents and caregivers of these students.

A second part of the programme focused on professional development for all staff in literacy strategies. Experiences from using these strategies were shared and discussed at regular professional development meetings. Surveys regarding this professional development found over 90% of the staff were using the literacy strategies in their classrooms and over 75% believed these strategies had helped their students.

One of the key outcomes is student success at level 1 of NCEA. Thus, when our school was accepted for the EePiSE project, we were able to explore in more depth the needs of our targeted students, and the methods we used to sustain and enhance their ongoing learning. At the same time as we started this project, we received feedback from many parents that their children were able to read well but that their spelling was very poor. This was something we needed to consider as well.

ACTION PHASE

Cooperative learning was a strong focus of our action research. Brown and Thompson (2000), state that cooperative learning has the goal of 'improving the academic skill of all team members enabling them to face the world with more confidence and with improved levels of skill' (p.13).

With this in mind, and in consideration of parent feedback, we were encouraged by our researcher Don Brown to implement a spelling programme across all Year 9 English classes, in effect increasing our target population to all Year 9 students. The following is a brief outline of the programme we implemented in Term 3, 2005.

Year 9 spelling programme

1. All students are pre-tested on level 1 words.
2. Students are paired with a partner they work with each spelling session.
3. Partners test each other on unknown words from the pre-test, using groups of 10 words at a time.
4. Students then complete a variety of spelling activities on unknown words.
5. Students are retested by their partners and then go through the same process with the next set of words.
6. Once the students have learnt all the level 1 words, a post-test of 50 words is given.
7. Students will then move on to level 2.

Teachers were asked to support the spelling programme in other curriculum areas by introducing curriculum key words for each lesson and using flash cards. The flash card programme developed by Don Brown reinforced new curriculum vocabulary and concepts. The programme was supported by staff-wide professional development and was left up to individual teachers. There were varying degrees of programme utilisation by staff but the comments were positive from those who did implement the strategies.

What grew from this?

The next stage of our action research project involved our resource teacher of learning and behaviour (RTLB) working with the Year 10 literacy class. This class had been supported in 2005 as the Year 9 literacy class. Under the guidance of Don Brown the RTLB introduced a paired writing programme to the class to make spelling relevant, to increase confidence in using words, and to improve cooperative work skills. The programme involved the RTLB working with four pairs of students. He taught them how to praise one another, how to expand on ideas and encourage writing, and how to correct their peers in a non-threatening manner. A consequence of this particular programme was a small paired maths project. This involved some Year 13 students working with some identified Year 11 students who were requiring help to enable them to achieve NCEA level 1. This programme only ran for four one-hour sessions but all four Year 11 students went on to achieve in their Term 1 assessments.

Both of these programmes, while small, were successful in that all the students involved in them enjoyed the experience. The main comment was that students found it easier to ask a fellow student for help than their teacher. The tutors also gained from the experience. They recognised that in order to teach a skill they had to synthesise that skill first themselves. The Year 10 students in particular experienced a high degree of increased confidence. These were students, who despite some intensive literacy input throughout their schooling, (reading recovery, RTLB intervention, teacher aide support) were still at stanine 1 and 2 on STAR, and reading at a 5-7-year-old level. For most of them it was the first time they were in a position of skill and knowledge at school.

OTHER OUTCOMES

Both the spelling programme and the literacy professional development have had some very positive outcomes in other curriculum areas. Many teachers have adopted a whiteboard format that includes topic-specific key words and lesson aims. An initially reluctant teacher has now realised that with the introduction of NCEA, subject-specific language and literacy has become very important to his subject, and has spent considerable time creating process charts with key words and definitions for display in classrooms. Similar things have occurred with other teachers. There has also been a great deal of sharing of resources and ideas from department to department and we are beginning to see a change in junior school curriculum delivery.

The second part of cooperative learning was to improve the way in which students engaged with each other while completing tasks. An important aspect of this was group or class identity: 'We do best as individuals when we have learned within a supportive group' (Brown & Thompson, 2000 p.16).

For our literacy class this was something that happened quite quickly over the course of the year. The students saw themselves as a cohesive and supportive group as the following quotes testify:

... because you are not shy and you are confident and you can stand up in front of them and say a speech or something.

... because then you know the people in your class and you can work with them better.

... there is no bullying.

Many parents have said that this is the first time their child has enjoyed school:

... he grew in confidence and as he was in a class with other students with learning needs he was free to be himself (parent of a child in our literacy class).

REFLECTION

The questions we asked ourselves at the end of our project were these: What has been challenging? What have we learnt? What would we do differently next time?

The challenging parts were starting and finding the time to coordinate and carry out the research. It took time to select a topic that was relevant, purposeful and fitted into what we were already involved in. Then, part-way through the project we had major staff changes which impacted on the continuity of the research. Working with already busy teachers was also difficult at times. A lot of different teachers were involved in the research and they all had to find time to do the extra work. When we ask what have we learnt, it is important to point out that our action research is really still at the beginning stage. The action research model is a cyclical one and for us at the moment our research is posing more questions than it is answering. We are now ready to move into the next cycle.

What we can report to date, is that there has been a move from technocratic teaching to a manner more encompassing of the teacher as a professional, a teacher who while guided by documentation, works reflectively and makes curriculum judgements according to individual class and student needs.

Education is a powerful tool and curriculum is a key component. At school, we have in our hands the ability to not only reproduce life as it exists outside of school, but to produce life chances for our students. School should not be a mirror of society at large; it should be an agent of change. EEPiSE has enabled us to enhance our journey of change and for us that has been one of the most positive aspects of this project. We are opening the eyes of our teachers to new teaching methods, and opening the doors of success for our students.

And next time? Firstly, we hope there will be a next time. Secondly, we have learnt that we need to have very clear objectives and outcomes at the start of our project. Although we realise that this doesn't mean the initial objectives will remain the same, it does give us purpose and direction at the start. Such is the nature of action research.

REFERENCES

Brown, D., & Thompson, C. (2000). *Cooperative learning in New Zealand schools*. Palmerston North, New Zealand: Dunmore Press.

Tracey Ellery



AUTHOR PROFILE

Tracey Ellery has a background in special education teaching and is currently the literacy coordinator at Motueka High School where she has worked for the past seven years. She has two young children one of whom who started school this year, an event that enabled her to see education as both parent and teacher. She is studying for her Master of Teaching and Learning focusing on students with high literacy needs.

Email

tracey@motuekahigh.school.nz

Jan Trafford



AUTHOR PROFILE

Jan Trafford is currently the HoD of Learners' Support at Motueka High School. She is a primary trained teacher and has also worked as a relieving RTLB and as Motueka High School literacy coordinator. Jan writes for Learning Media Ltd, the Australian School Journal, and has had books published by both Reed Publishing and Rainbow Reading Ltd.

Email

jant@motuekahigh.school.nz

What Does it Take to Facilitate?

Dr Bruce Kent

Senior Advisor, Ministry of Education, Special Education, Manukau



ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to capture a sense of the experience of facilitators working with schools and teachers on the Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education (EePiSE) project. Facilitation skills are often used in educational contexts in a variety of forms and for a variety of purposes. A considerable body of literature provides detailed information about the skills and procedures that can be applied in facilitation. It is also of value to attend to the learning that facilitators have gained from experiencing the role.

Nine participants (including two Māori and two male) were interviewed using a semi-structured interview format. The interviews were transcribed and the data analysed using content analysis to identify themes.

Four themes emerged from the interviews: these were (a) working together, (b) teacher self-discovery, (c) working and learning in context, and (d) useful skills for enhancing outcomes. These themes reflect a strong emphasis on the necessity for facilitators to develop quality relationships. This is consistent with current literature which recognises “being” as the fundamental skill of facilitation. The contribution of those involved in the action learning project is recognised.

Practice Paper

Keywords

Action research, collaboration, facilitation, professional development, reflection, research project, teacher development.

INTRODUCTION

Effective facilitation may indeed equate to expertise in using masking tape (Epps, 2004) but the profundity of the simple task of “making it easy” for groups to function is challenging and far-reaching in its effect. The Ministry of Education, Special Education (GSE) supported teachers and schools involved in the EePiSE project by providing facilitators to assist them in their action learning activities. The role of the facilitator has emerged from the project reports as one of the key elements in promoting constructive reflection and action in teaching practice.

Groups meet to make decisions, share information, plan work, learn together, create “buy-in”, and solve problems (American Society for Quality [ASQ], 2002). However, simply gathering people together in a particular forum does not necessarily mean that there will be constructive progress towards attaining those objectives; in fact it may generate additional challenges. A facilitator uses knowledge and skills to assist the group accomplish its goals (McNamara, 1999). The objective of participants in EePiSE included critical engagement in reflective practice in order to identify where and how to make adaptations to the teaching and learning context. This is consistent with the concept of action learning which seeks to develop learning from the interactions that occur while problem-solving in real work contexts (Revas, 1982). The depth and quality of this reflective process was at the heart of the facilitation role regardless of the diversity of teaching strategies that subsequently may have been affected. As Bacal (2004) comments, ‘the facilitator’s responsibility is to address the journey, rather than the destination’ (p.1).

A vast number of resources are available to provide detailed information regarding skills and strategies for facilitation (for example ASQ, 2002; Justice & Jamieson, 1998; Rees, 1998). These skills can be complemented constructively by sharing the lived experience of those who have engaged in the process (McNamara, 1999). The purpose of this article is to explore the experience of being a facilitator in the EePiSE project.

METHOD

Participants

A convenience sample of nine facilitators was invited to participate in the study. They had worked in 10 of the 24 schools that were involved in the action learning activities of EePiSE. Two of the participants were Māori and two were male. The locations of the schools (spread across New Zealand) in which they worked ranged from large urban schools to remote rural schools and included one kura kaupapa Māori. Both secondary and primary schools were represented. The participants were informed of the nature of the study and consented to participate. Most of the interviews were conducted at the symposia where the schools the facilitators were involved with were presenting summaries of their work. One interview was conducted electronically owing to the personal circumstances of a facilitator but was followed up with a face-to-face interview prior to drafting this article.

Procedure

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews using the schedule provided in Appendix 1. The interview schedule was sufficiently flexible to allow participants to introduce experiences and insights that were of importance to them. The transcribed interviews were checked by the participants and any amendments were incorporated in the final transcriptions.

Analysis

Content analysis was used to examine the collected data. This is an inductive 'qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings' (Patton, 2002, p. 453). The "sense-making" includes organising the data around themes or patterns that are supported by the weight of the evidence. The transcripts of the interviews were coded to account for the full interview. Through an iterative process the common themes and distinctive individual variations were identified. The themes were grouped and subjected to peer review by a Ministry of Education senior advisor not involved in the EEPiSE project. The draft material was shared with all the participants to ensure their expressed views were adequately represented (where used) and that their anonymity was preserved. Their permission to use the quotes was confirmed. In keeping with recommended qualitative methodology (Patton, 2002; Smith, 1996), the use of verbatim evidence allows the reader to assess the validity of the interpretation provided.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The themes that emerged from the interview data were (a) working together, (b) teacher self-discovery, (c) working and learning in context, (d) useful skills for generating outcomes.

(a) Working together

Common to all the facilitators was a perception that building and maintaining constructive relationships was critical for effective facilitation.

In some ways I think that facilitation almost came down to the personality of the person ... because it came back to relationships so if you didn't develop a relationship then it probably would have gone to custard ...

Included in developing the relationship with the project participants was the approach that "we are all learning together" and "understanding that we are all in a different place on the inclusive practice continuum". This required both patience and time to develop credibility. Where a positive relationship already existed or time had been spent establishing one, the project was more easily activated. Participating schools as well as facilitators appear to have valued the working relationship.

I think that they saw that it was valuable to have the relationship. It really wasn't ... but may have been an outside goal, it sort of wasn't the goal of the project but it certainly was really nice to have the process, definitely.

Where the relationship developed constructively the facilitator and the school were able to adopt interdependent roles that could be a catalyst for change. Additionally, if schools had a sense of ownership of their goals, their expectations were more commonly aligned with those of the facilitator.

The actual leadership came from the school and that is where the ownership has been, so really my role has been more as a critical friend ... The most important thing here is the reminder that the school has to have full ownership. We might be a catalyst for some things but it's the school that's doing it, it has to be their vision – all we do is be a critical friend – at times clarify.

Working relationships among educators are not always easy, but even when faced with challenges, a constructive and open relationship enabled facilitators and school personnel to benefit.

The things that knocked me for a six when I was doing this were when I was in a meeting with people that I didn't know, that is staff members, who were just wanting to knock the stuffing out of me for whatever reason, whether it be ... we were moving too fast, or I was from GSE, or that ... the special ed sort of scenario where "we've got 30 kids in our class and how can you expect us to do this?" and I at times I suppose, had the stuffing knocked out of me, but then after a meeting like that, the principal and I would sit down and debrief and he and I were able to find good things that came out of it so it wasn't so bad after all. ... even though I did feel flat at times, it was easy to pick up again and keep going. Again, it was that partnership.

Mutually supportive relationships between facilitators and schools were demonstrated at the symposia presentations.

They reported that they appreciated my being there, and some advice and directions, the confidence factor even at symposia, symposium presentation ... they wanted me up on the stage there, so that sort of being alongside, that relationship and confidence building ... is useful.

(b) Teachers' self-discovery

A notable outcome from facilitators and teachers engaging in a professional learning dialogue was the evidence that teachers became more aware of their ability to confront and cope with teaching challenges. This is a particularly important outcome as 'effective teachers [reflect] on their own thinking and children's thinking as learners. They engage in reflection and planning with colleagues and use a range of methods to help to identify how pedagogical practices can be improved to benefit children and further increase their effectiveness' (Farquhar, 2003, p. 3).

I think the fact that teachers have begun to realise that what they do actually makes a difference to the outcomes that children achieve ...

And I think one of the other key outcomes for teachers was, um, a development in confidence about what they could actually do themselves, and confidence in their colleagues because there was often hidden talent in both schools which hadn't had the opportunity to come out until this type of project was in place, so many teachers found it quite validating ... and surprising and they realised they had a lot of expertise themselves ...

One characteristic of this increased teacher awareness of capability was a demystification of the myth around teaching "students with special needs" which led to teachers feeling more confident about meeting the needs of these students within their regular classroom programmes and actively seeking the input of the students in developing programmes.

Experiences during EEPiSE led to teachers realising the value of seeking student feedback and determining to make this a regular part of their interaction with students.

(c) Working and learning in context

A feature of the EEPiSE project was that the professional development or professional learning (PD/PL) was inherently related to the needs identified by each participating school and linked to their respective context. Effective professional development for educators has been described as collaborative, site-based, involving peer engagement, and involving teachers as "experimenters" (Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education, 2005). Reflecting on practice within the teaching/learning context appears to have been valuable for a number of the participants in the EEPiSE project.

What was reported to me was having the theory separately and uncontextualised wasn't that helpful, but when it was brought in alongside the actual work and interpreted in the context of the actual children they were working with and in their school and community it was far more meaningful and powerful.

Not only was this approach meaningful, but it appears to have generated practical benefits for students and teachers.

The principal has been reporting some of the progress that some of the children have been making as a result of that focus, shared focus on planning for better outcomes for children. The teachers have taken ownership of their professional learning and they are looking at 'what do we need?' and they're developing and driving it and it's a huge difference to when PD used to be something where you went out there, attended a course which may or may not have been relevant, so they're really looking at what do we need as a staff? And taken ownership.

It was further observed by some facilitators that the ability of some team leaders to apply the action learning model within their school structure was a characteristic of those sites that achieved notable outcomes.

(d) Useful skills for enhancing outcomes

The predominant skill of facilitators in generating useful outcomes with participating schools was the early establishment of a positive relationship with the school. This included being available, being present and being involved.

I think, first of all, the relationship building, and that was one of the things that came from both schools, that they really appreciated the opportunity to get to know me and me to get to know them over the year that I was there. They had my phone number, my email, I was coming in and out regularly, all the staff got used to seeing my face around, they had a good understanding of my role in that, I wasn't there to tell them what to do but to help them find what they wanted to do and then help them plan it and implement it so ... they saw it as a supportive ... yeah, a very supportive role, but also challenging.

A productive relationship included a deliberate sharing of responsibilities and roles. Sometimes the facilitator had to accept that others did not currently share the same understandings and accommodate that in their work.

In my particular facility it was built on a good relationship, but that relationship was developed and continued to be developed over time. I think that I needed to be willing to take, to let the school have a part in the process ... it was necessary to ... you know, in a collaborative sort of thing for us each to have a part in it. I found that hard at times.

The feedback I got from teachers was the ability to provide safe feedback to them – they didn't feel threatened; they quite happily sought feedback on what they were doing and the effect of it.

One facilitator noted that the effectiveness of an outside facilitator "is largely influenced by the effectiveness of the in-school coordination". This may be enhanced through open communication between the school coordinator, principal, deputy principal and the facilitator (for example, setting up a group email and modelling "keeping everyone in the loop"). The modelling by the facilitator of the valued skills (whether communication, consultation, questioning, listening, or teaching) was often reported as useful for facilitation. But perhaps the most effective elements in producing change in teaching practice are fully comprehending the needs of the students and seeing the possibility of making positive outcomes happen for them.

Hugely powerful for all those teachers was recognition of that ... intimate connection with the students that often the sector is failing for whatever reasons, building their understanding of those students' needs and, from that impact, quite an emotional impact for most of them (but not all of them), a commitment to making things happen differently in their classrooms.

Facilitation occurs in diverse and dynamic contexts and involves the art of creatively using a variety of techniques (for example, Baca, 2004; Rees, 1998; Schwarz, 2002). Where the purpose of facilitation is focused on learning and improving practice rather than accomplishing a task, simply applying techniques is unlikely to achieve the desired outcomes. Moreover, the nature and extent of how such techniques were applied by the facilitators at their respective sites over the time of the EEPiSE project are far beyond the limits of this study.

However, a sense of the “artistry” involved emerges from the interview data. All the interviewees emphasised the necessity of developing relationships and these provided the foundation for working together, supported teacher self-discovery, and allowed the possibility of working and learning in real contexts. The skill of “being” is central and pervasive, cutting across all other skills, for it represents the facilitator’s presence and vulnerability in creating a reflective climate in the group’ (Raelin, 2006, p. 92). The emphasis on relationships is woven through the interviews and appears to have influenced the nature of the role taken by facilitators whether as a catalyst, a critical friend, providing feedback, or as a source of confidence. To some extent (although how much cannot be assessed from the interview data) the project team relationships supported teachers discovering capabilities within and among themselves. This appears to have been related to providing a focus on the real teaching/learning practice as illustrated in the observation that:

They are looking at “what do we need?”

The teachers’ reflection on what was needed in their particular contexts promoted constructive dialogue about change in practice.

In addition to the core skill of “being”, Raelin (2006) identifies four other skills that characterise advanced facilitation praxis: (1) speaking to express the collective voice, (2) disclosing doubts or passions, (3) testing ideas to uncover new ways of practice, (4) probing assumptions and consequences. Elements of the facilitators’ reported experience indicate the use of techniques that are consistent with these four skills.

The current study only reports on the perceptions of the facilitators. The emphasis on the importance of relationships with participating teachers clearly indicates that they were also very significant in the facilitation relationship. The reports of positive change suggests that the teachers must also have demonstrated high levels of facilitation skills to bring about real change in their practice. Not least of the characteristics of the teachers was the courage to share themselves and their practice with others.

CONCLUSION

The interviews reported in this paper offer some insights into the experience of the facilitation role. It is very clear that the skill of “being” is fundamental in effective facilitation and the experiences of those involved are consistent with the literature. For the purpose of enhancing effective teaching practice a facilitator (together with participating teachers) may contribute to the creation of a learning team that provides an environment that is compatible with open reflection on practice and encourages change. The interviews suggest that facilitators performed a variety of roles and applied a range of techniques but did so as members of a learning team with a keen interest in the development of that team.

The service orientation of facilitation becomes paramount when:

- the focus of the entity is on praxis, namely, on learning from reflection on practice
- the facilitator is not just a guide to increase the efficiency of the operation or to remove the obstacles to task accomplishment
- the facilitator is committed to the learning of each member within the group, as well as of the group itself (Raelin, 2006, p. 94).

REFERENCES

- American Society for Quality. (2002). *Basic facilitation skills*. Retrieved June 1, 2006, from <http://asq.org>
- Bacal, R. (2004). *The role of the facilitator: Understanding what facilitators really DO!* International Association of Facilitators. Retrieved 1 June, 2006, from <http://www.iaf-world.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3291>
- Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (2005). *The impact of collaborative continuing professional development (CPD) on classroom teaching and learning*. London: EPPI-Centre.
- Epps, J. (2004). *Facilitation from the inside out*. International Association of Facilitators. Retrieved June 1, 2006, from <http://www.iaf-world.org/i4a/pages/indext.cfm?pageid=32913>
- Farquhar, S. (2003). *Quality teaching: Early foundations best evidence synthesis*. Wellington: Ministry of Education, New Zealand.
- Justice, T., & Jamieson, D. (1998). *The facilitator’s field book*. New York: AMACOM
- MacNamara, C. (1999). *Facilitation (face to face and on-line)*. Retrieved June 1, 2006, from http://www.managementhelp.org/grp_skill/facitlate/facitlate.htm
- Patton, M. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*, (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Raelin, J. (2006). The role of facilitation in praxis. *Organizational Dynamics*, 35, 83-95.
- Rees, F. (1998). *The facilitator excellence handbook*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Revans, R. (1982). *The origin and growth of action learning*. Brickley, UK: Chartwell-Bratt.
- Schwarz, R. (2002). *The skilled facilitator*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Smith, J. (1996). Evolving issues for qualitative psychology. In T. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research method* (pp. 189-201). Leicester: BPS Books.

Dr Bruce Kent



AUTHOR PROFILE

Dr Bruce Kent is a Senior Advisor, Professional Practice, with GSE. In this role he has been the project manager for some national research projects including a portion of the EEPiSE project. He has previously been a teacher and an educational psychologist, and has just completed a PhD in health science.

Email

bruce.kent@minedu.govt.nz

APPENDIX 1

Interview Questions/Prompts

You have worked with school staff to provide support for professional learning ...

1. Describe the outcomes that had the most impact on the school/project.
2. What skills were most useful in generating those outcomes?
3. What does PD/PL mean to you?
4. What experiences/attributes that you have were most useful for you to work with schools?
5. What did you learn about facilitation?
6. What were the main inhibiting factors to effective facilitation?
7. What were the main enabling factors to effective facilitation?



Challenging Teachers' Practice through Learning Reflections on the Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education programme of research and professional practice

Dr Roseanna Bourke

Director, Centre for Educational Development, Massey University, Palmerston North

ABSTRACT

When teachers participate in professional development and learning opportunities it enables them to reconceptualise their assessment and teaching practices with the support of facilitators and researchers. National programmes of professional development and research, such as the three year Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education (EePiSE) programme led by the Ministry of Education, also created opportunities for researchers, professional development facilitators and Ministry personnel to reconceptualise their ideas, beliefs, values, and understandings of what it means to learn, and acknowledge the diversity of learners and learning. This paper highlights some of these learnings and explores ideas around supporting and challenging teacher practice through their own learning. It signals the need for both action research and action learning models of support to teachers, and highlights how "simple things" such as change in teacher talk and small adaptations to teaching practice lead to more complex changes within the classrooms and schools. Within the project an interplay between Ministry, researchers, facilitators and teachers enabled a richer indepth exploration within each school setting about the intent of EePiSE and inclusive practices for all learners. The outcomes for teachers and schools was often portrayed through the increased learning achievements of their students; however, the realities of teacher daily practice often blur the correlation. The significant achievement of EePiSE is the celebration that teachers, researchers, facilitators and Ministry combined efforts to continue to tackle and enjoy the challenge of learning for us all.

Practice/Research paper

Keywords

Action research, effective practices, learning, professional development, professional practice, research, teaching.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are active learners through the very art and science of their day-to-day teaching in the classroom. As a result of being continually confronted with unique and changing situations, teachers question their own learning about their teaching. Working with an increasingly diverse range of learners, teachers' attitudes, beliefs, values and knowledge about learners, challenges their notions about "what it means to learn" and "what it means to teach".

It is not surprising then, that the most effective models of professional development and learning utilise a range of authentic environmental factors to best support teachers. These include (1) specific and unique situations that arise for teachers that challenge their practice, (2) authentic teaching contexts that have meaning for teachers and (3) support from an in-class or in-school facilitator or researcher working alongside the teachers to support their inquiry-into-practice. Systematic professional development in the environment where the teacher works and learns, enables change within the school to take place at two levels: systems, and professional teaching practice.

Creating opportunities for teachers to systematically examine the impact of their teaching on student learning is a valuable and powerful way to support teachers. If we are to understand what change in teacher practice is most effective for both teachers and learners, professional development cannot be separated from day-to-day professional practice. In order to bring about a desired and positive shift in student learning, teachers require the support to examine their own practice, and trial different ways of thinking and working, followed by an examination of any influences these have had on the way learners think about their own learning.

This paper outlines some of the findings of a Government-funded project (2003–2006) that aimed to support classroom-based teachers' pedagogical practices in relation to learners identified as requiring significant adaptation to the curriculum content. The project aimed to identify, develop and share effective pedagogical practices in primary and secondary schools for students who required significant adaptation to the curriculum content.

CAPABILITY BUILDING RECONCEPTUALISED AS LEARNING

When the New Zealand Government funded and initiated the *Building Capability in Special Education* project (introduced in 2003), it was intended that the project would target learners who had the most significant needs, irrespective of their educational setting, and to support teachers to develop their teaching practice. The unintended consequences of the initial project title highlighted the significance of the way we use language, and the meaning people attribute to it.

First, teachers had made it clear they felt that “building capability” signalled an assumption that there was little or minimal capability already in the sector; yet within New Zealand we already had many examples of very strong teaching and inclusive practices for learners with diverse needs. Second, the notion of “special education” suggested that there was an education apart from, and different to, the types of education that other learners in schools received. This created divisions within the educational sector, where ideology, politics, funding and intentions were conceptualised and practiced in different ways. A change in the name of the project to Enhancing Effective Practice better reflected the intended focus on effective practice and signalled a move away from *developing* capable teachers to enhancing effective *practice*.

One of the project’s specific aims was to facilitate the ongoing development of teacher expertise and confidence in teaching all learners. This meant that irrespective of placement, learners who required significant adaptation to the curriculum would have access to a supportive, inspiring and knowledgeable teacher – about *teaching*. Such teachers are already visible within the New Zealand context in primary and secondary schools, and in designated special schools. However, less is known about how a teacher in any given educational context develops and builds their expertise in supporting all learners.

While the focus of the project was on student outcomes, these were broadened and identified as incorporating students’ social, cultural and learning achievements. These achievements were used by the teachers in the project to think about their own practice and to reflect on the impact *their teaching* had on student learning.

It was a different focus from a deficit orientation towards a learner that was premised on impairment or disability. This subtle change in focus caused many teachers to describe this project as ‘one of the hardest I have been involved in’; simply because there was no standard response or textbook answer to the difficulties or dilemmas they faced in examining their teaching practice.

LEARNING DOES CHALLENGE ALL

The children and young people who were the focus of this initiative were those learners who had been identified as requiring significant adaptation to the curriculum content. To reach that level of specificity, a reference group consisting of Ministry personnel, principals, teachers, union members, People First representatives and Parent-to-Parent representatives, deliberated on how to identify the focus students without labelling them. This challenged the way Ministry personnel and, later, teachers identified the learners they sought to support. While on paper, the learners could be carefully described in words that described their learning difficulties, there was not a shared understanding about the identification of these learners as the project began. Nor did it become a focus.

The criteria for involvement in the project were that schools would self-nominate, had a number of learners who required significant adaptation to the curriculum, and were able to release teachers to take part in either the action research or action learning. Over the next 18 months, the principals, teachers and teacher aides were quick to realise that this was not an “easy option” for additional funding or teacher time. It was a time of challenge and change, created largely by facilitators and researchers supporting a teacher inquiry model into the classrooms and schools. The teachers were able to focus on their practice through asking questions and to examine their practice in relation both to themselves as teachers, and the achievements and learning of their learners. Examples of this inquiry are given throughout this special edition of *Kairaranga*.

Teachers and other educators are more likely to change when challenged by their own evidence (Ainscow, 2005). In fact, Ainscow (2005) goes further and argues that when teachers are faced with their own discrepant data (that is, they believe one thing about their practice but the data they collect tells a different story), they are more likely to find meaning in their own practice and therefore change it. He states that ‘new meanings are only likely to emerge when evidence creates “surprises”’ (p.146).

This project adapted the related approaches to supporting teachers as they questioned and examined their practices: action research and action learning.

Action Research

There are different forms of action research depending on the focus and the rationale for adopting the methodology. In this project, action research was used as a form of self-reflective inquiry. It was undertaken by teachers to improve their practices; both in terms of why they chose certain practices, and understanding the resulting impact of those practices on student learning. Through action research, teachers were encouraged to systematically make their practice “public” in order for it to be scrutinised at a level not usually associated with day-to-day teaching. This proved to help their understanding of their practices, and the contexts in which the practices were carried out (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). This form of action research is firmly located in the realm of the practitioner, specifically the reflective practitioner model (Schon, 1983; Robinson & Lai, 2006), and the teacher inquiry model.

Half of the schools were involved in action research (25 schools), with schools supported by four research teams from educational researchers in tertiary organisations.

Action Learning

A second strand of the project involved 24 schools in an action learning model. Within this model each participating school had a facilitator to support them. The facilitator was a Ministry of Education practitioner, either a psychologist or a special education advisor, who supported the teachers and their schools in a *learning* process, rather than a research process.

This model relied on an intuitive practitioner model, rather than that of a reflective practitioner. The distinction is that “intuition can provide a holistic way of knowing – it appears to be unconscious insight but it is not, therefore, without basis. Rather, its basis is the whole of what has been known but which cannot, by nature of its size and complexity, be held in consciousness” (Atkinson & Claxton, 2000, p. 5). The complexity of an action learning model lay in the way the facilitators worked with teachers. The facilitators needed to encourage the teachers to bring their knowledge of the complexity of their work, including knowledge of their learners in their own educational context, to the foreground. This enabled the teachers both to articulate and rationalise their practice, leading to a focus on their own and others’ practice. This was a powerful mechanism through which the facilitators and the teachers could explore ‘the way we do things around here’. In many circumstances these taken-for-granted practices were both questioned and changed by the teachers. Ownership of the identification of the issues, and the associated ways to address these through collaborative problem-solving with the facilitators, kept the momentum for change alive. It also kept the teachers in the project. There was not one school that withdrew from the challenge.

WHO WERE THE LEARNERS?

In the same way that we cannot readily separate individual learners from their learning context, nor attribute causality to changes we see in learners’ achievements, the learning that occurred for Ministry personnel, the researchers, the facilitators, teachers and learners may not easily be separated out. Nevertheless, this is consistent with a socio-cultural perspective on learning, where we would expect to see evidence that members of a learning community have changed, and to have changed by their interactions with others without necessarily being able to attribute cause and effect. This project provides multiple examples of these interactions that created and sustained different practices.

The title *Enhancing Effective Practice* was seen as an appropriate choice for a project that was to support teachers as they examined their own practice in relation to the achievement of their learners; specifically those requiring significant adaptation to the curriculum. The term “Special Education” was retained because the project used Government appropriated funding specifically for this purpose. The dilemma remained, and still does however, that in using the terms, we are signalling a different type of education for some learners. Do the needs of learners for example, determine who receives special education, or is it the practice of teachers that determines what special education is? This is an unresolved issue and one that continues to polarise the educational community. What was interesting though, is that for teachers in the project, and their learners, it was not a dilemma. The focus on effective practice, on the learners’ needs, and on the way teachers changed their practices, highlighted that an ideological discussion did not deter daily practice, or day-to-day learning.

The Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education (EePiSE) project began as a *Building Capability in Special Education* (BCiSE) project. It became apparent that the language used and the way a project is described affect the meaning and intention of those involved. The initial choice of name itself became a barrier for some teachers, and yet the intent and aims of the projects remained consistent. The integrity of the programme was maintained. Essentially, the research and professional development for teachers was used as a mechanism to support, engage and challenge teachers, and to facilitate and encourage the trials for different ways of working. A basic example came early in the project; one secondary school called a staff meeting to discuss how the teachers within the school would become involved. The first task for the facilitator was to have the teachers introduce themselves as, largely, these teachers did not know each other. Many secondary school teachers who operate in large schools may work primarily within their own departments or areas of practice. In a project such as EePiSE that works across curriculum areas, and where ideas and concepts challenge both the cultures and practices within a school, such isolation of teachers and their practice becomes visible. Within this project we found that when teachers’ practices have visibility, there is a greater likelihood action for change will be initiated within the school.

More poignantly, it became apparent to the teachers, and to the researchers and facilitators, that we could not examine teacher practice in relation to students with significant disabilities in isolation from the social context of the teachers’ classrooms and school environments. Therefore the issue was not about the students. The focus was on teaching practice. Student achievement data became an indicator that could identify changes in teacher practice that appeared to be more effective for this group of learners.

Teacher Inquiry model

The Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education programme of research and professional development highlighted the importance of a Teacher Inquiry model. Through both the action research and action learning strands, teachers were supported to build their own problem-solving skills as teachers. They did not learn “things” but they did learn how to think about issues of teaching practice to support student learning.

Teacher inquiry is not a single program but a broad, generally agreed-on set of insider research practices that encourage teachers to take a close, critical look at their teaching and the academic and social development of their students. The goal of teacher inquiry is to build teachers’ and schools’ capacities to understand and solve problems of teaching and learning (Lewison, 2003).

While, as interested observers, we could say “a lot happened”, it is more difficult to gauge the quality of the changes or their enduring influence on student learning. Change in teacher talk was one of the first indicators of a change in teacher practice. Change in talk demonstrated a change in teachers’ thinking; about their learners, about their own teaching and about the importance of being able to articulate and explain issues of practice.

Patterns of staff professional learning were established in schools. Teachers who started the project talking about “that data thingy”, a year later were discussing the collection, analysis and interpretation of student data to analyse their teaching and its effectiveness.

The teachers involved in the project may not have been fully aware that, as with any professional development and learning, changed thinking changes the status quo within their own classrooms and across the school. It did in this case and while change was not always comfortable, it certainly made the teachers think. As Fullan (1991, p. 117) has argued, ‘educational change depends on what teachers do and think – it’s as simple and as complex as that’. Yet for many teachers, it was not simple to *get to the point* of change. The stories in this special edition illustrate that when we operate in complex environments, and work through multiple issues, it is far from simple.

As outlined in the many papers in this edition that illustrate the EEPiSE work, teachers as learners grappled with ideas about learning, teaching, assessment and diversity. These teachers challenged themselves and others about their classroom and school cultures, policies and practices. The notion of “inclusionary practices” is itself one example of the need to challenge accepted practices. The pilot study highlighted a variation in the way schools clustered their students according to a “disability”. For example, one school which had 25 children verified as having high or very high needs and received subsequent ORRS (Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Schemes) funding, integrated these learners throughout the classes within the school. In contrast, another school that had seven students verified to be eligible for ORRS funding, clustered their students into one unit. The principal of the latter school initiated a visit to the former school in order to learn how the school supported these learners within the regular classrooms.

For some teachers in this project it was about seeing the impact of small adaptations, while for others it was an awareness that all children have the right to experience success like their peers. To some extent therefore, teachers talked about their own learning. Some teachers in this project worked on strategies to adapt the curriculum so that students could learn in their classrooms, while for others, learning conversations evolved with a focus on collaborative problem-solving. They developed further understanding in how to provide the necessary resources to enhance a child’s learning, and demonstrated an increased awareness of how to adapt the lesson to suit children’s needs. Some teachers used Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to set learning goals while others established systems within the school such as regular meetings for teachers’ aides, or regular meetings for teachers of support programmes. Even so, for many teachers working in secondary and primary schools there still remain silos of learning and teaching.

However, the project did enhance collaborations and cooperations between teacher and external educational agencies. There was evidence that an increased positive relationship developed with facilitators through the Ministry of Education, Special Education (GSE) and teachers; and between resource teachers: learning and behaviour (RTL) and GSE and teachers. The fact that there was no “one right answer” to the challenge of changing teacher practice enabled greater sharing of ideas, resources and energy.

Inquiry into practice

While the Ministry project team knew there was “no cook book approach, and no one right answer” to the dilemmas teachers face in supporting the learning for all students, there were some teachers who signed up for the project looking for that one programme, or one way of doing things that would magically increase student learning and positively influence student behaviour. Increasingly, the teachers in the project started to realise it was them, not a specific programme, that made a difference to how they felt about teaching, and how they felt about their learners. In the early phases of the project many teachers felt let down, as did some of the facilitators, that they were not provided with the recipe for success. However, as they realised, creating solutions was as much about identifying and exploring the real problem, and that the teaching solutions were often to be found within the school. These solutions were shared by the teachers in a range of ways, including the culmination of school-led symposia across the country. Many of the papers presented in this edition come from those symposia. Even so, what will work well in one context and in one school will not necessarily be the answer for other teachers in other contexts. There is still no single solution to complex challenges of teaching practice.

The context for learning, and the teachers and learners in these contexts, are important elements in deciding what to do when faced with a teaching or learning dilemma. This has long been recognised and led Gersch, Kelly, Cohen, Daunt and Frederickson (2001) to observe that ‘the same presenting problem in other circumstances or in other schools could arguably require a different response to be effective’.

What these classroom teachers have done, in their own contexts, and through this EEPiSE project, is to show that “giving it a go” in a structured, systematic form of inquiry, can make a difference for them as teachers and learners. The ultimate outcome for these teachers and the project is that their students’ social, cultural and learning opportunities and achievements are enhanced and positively encouraged.

REFERENCES

- Ainscow, M. (2005). *The next big challenge: Inclusive school improvement*. Keynote presentation at the conference of school effectiveness and improvement, Barcelona, January, 2005.
- Atkinson, T., & Claxton, G. (2000). *The intuitive practitioner: On the value of not always knowing what one is doing*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Carr, W., & Kemis, S. (1986). *Becoming critical: Education, knowledge and action research*. London: Falmer Press.
- Fullan, M. (1991). *The new meaning of educational change*. New York: Cassell.
- Gersch, I., Kelly, C., Cohen, S., Daunt, S., & Frederickson, N. (2001). The Chingford Hall Schools Screening project: can we have some more educational psychologist time please? *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 17 (2), 135-165.
- Lewison, A., & Lewison, M. (2003). Teacher Inquiry. In E. P. St. John, S. A. Loescher, & J. S. Bardzell (Eds.), *Improving early reading and literacy in grades 1-5: A resource guide for programs that work*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.
- O'Brien, P. (2005). *Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education*. A pilot study. Auckland Uniservices.
- Robinson, V., & Lai, M. K. (2006). *Practitioner researcher for educators: A guide to improving classrooms and schools*. California: Corwin Press.
- Schon, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.

Dr Roseanna Bourke



AUTHOR PROFILE

Dr Roseanna Bourke is Director of the Centre for Educational Development at Massey University, leading a team of In-service Teacher Educators. Prior to this she spent three years as Manager, Professional Practice at the Ministry of Education, New Zealand. In both roles, her interest has been to support educators develop and implement an evidence-based model of practice in education through research programmes and practice-related initiatives. Her PhD focused on students' conceptions of learning and self-assessment and her research interests are in learning, assessment and the professional learning of teachers.

Email

R.Bourke@massey.ac.nz

Kairaranga Book Reviews



SPRINGBOARDS TO PRACTICE

Ministry of Education

The title of this resource – *Springboards to Practice* – is apt, as it has been designed to promote professional dialogue in the teaching/education community and support reflective practice. Throughout this resource are two underpinning themes:

- the importance of social inclusion and belonging as being a vital pre-requisite for learning (thought-provoking quotes from students and parents underline this point)
- that good teaching practice for students with special education needs, is good teaching practice for all learners.

The focus is on effectively catering for diversity and is compatible with Adrienne Alton-Lee's (2005) *Best Evidence Synthesis* for teaching diverse learners.

The resource, which consists of seven, four-page posters, is a synthesis of current research about teaching and learning, practical class-based strategies and the perspectives of students, parents, and a teacher. Each poster addresses a particular topic. They include *Friendship, Belonging, Social, Learning Support, Bullying* and *Teaching*. Each topic expands on the key ideas and provides opportunities for teachers to deepen their understandings of the ways in which they can include all learners.

Key messages include:

- the value of the diverse strengths and needs of all learners
- that positive relationships are central within the teaching context, achieved through relating to each student individually and through modelling behaviours which are inclusive
- the viewpoint of accepting and incorporating all perspectives as opposed to “this is the way we do things and you're only welcome if you do things our way”
- the importance of partnership, which includes the student, their parents and the school
- the importance of the peer group being encouraged and supported to find their own solutions to social situations
- the importance of a student-centred approach towards learning with practical recommendations on how to increase student involvement in their school experience
- the importance of school management embracing and promoting the above concepts, and of adults modelling positive ways of relating socially.

The research strongly suggests that students' social relationships at school will be supported when there are changes at the level of the classroom, but most importantly, when there are systemic changes which focus on the school as a caring community (Allan, 2001; Grenot-Sheyer, Fisher & Staub, 2001; Staub 1998).

While some sheets provide practical strategies, such as four ways to adapt curriculum tasks, other sheets provide key discussion points or questions and invite teachers and schools to work together and come up with their own ideas. The sheets are also accompanied by a teacher workbook that can be used as a reflective diary. It could also be used by a course facilitator to guide teachers through the resource.

The individual posters can be used as stand-alone resources – one does not have to follow the other, but the seven posters incorporate sufficient material to form the basis of a comprehensive professional development programme for all teachers at all levels of the school system. *Springboards to Practice* is an attractive resource. Being colour-coded, and with a consistent format, it is easily accessible and clear in its messages. It incorporates literature references for each *Springboard* poster to facilitate deeper study.

All teachers/educators would benefit from having access to the messages that this resource conveys. The opportunity to order more copies or to have the resource on a CD would be useful.

REFERENCES

Allan, J. (1997). With a little help from my friends? Integration and the role of mainstream pupils. *Children and Society*, 11, 183-193.

Alton-Lee, A. (2003). *Quality teaching for diverse students in schooling: Best evidence synthesis*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Grenot-Sheyer, M., Fisher, M., & Staub, D. (2001). *At the end of the day: Lessons learned in inclusive education*. Baltimore: Paul, H. Brookes.

Ministry of Education (2005). *Springboards to Practice*. Source: Donald Beasley Institute (Eds.), *Building capability in education for students with moderate and high needs*. Final draft of a literature review commissioned by the Ministry of Education: Wellington, New Zealand.

Staub, D. (1998). *Delicate threads: Friendships between children with and without special needs in inclusive settings*. Bethesda: Woodbine House.

REVIEWER PROFILES

Kate Donoghue

Kate is a Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTL B) based at Coromandel Area School. She has previously worked as a Special Education Advisor with the Ministry of Education, Special Education. She also has experience as a teacher, a special needs coordinator, and a guidance and learning unit teacher.

Jennifer Browne

Jennifer is a psychologist working for the Ministry of Education, Special Education in the school focus team in Auckland, and as an RTL B. Previously she has worked as an RTL B, a guidance and learning unit teacher, and has had experience both as a classroom teacher and a special class teacher.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Title: Springboards to Practice

Author: Ministry of Education

Date of Publication: 2005

Contact Details: This resource is free. To obtain a copy contact Joanna Curzon, Ministry of Education, Special Education, Wellington. Phone: 04 463 8260 or email joanna.curzon@minedu.govt.nz

THE SAGE HANDBOOK OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

Editor: Lani Florian

As noted in the preface, 'This *Handbook* is intended as a sourcebook of information and ideas about special education' (p xxiii). This aim is certainly achieved. *The Sage Handbook of Special Education* is dense with information and ideas about special education, predominantly in North America and Britain but with some interesting references to other parts of the world.

The *Handbook* is presented in five sections: how special educational needs are understood; the challenge of inclusion; knowledge production; teaching strategies and approaches; and future directions for research and practice, with sub-sections within each of these. There are almost 70 contributors including some internationally familiar names in special education such as Ainscow, Fuchs, Giangreco, Slee, Thurlow, Thousand and Villa, and New Zealand's own Bourke and Mentis. Most of the contributors hold an academic position which is of course reflected in the tone and content of the text.

Throughout this *Handbook* there is a plethora of historical information which provides a context for what this text seems to be, an academic description of special education. The emphasis is on special education as a specific discipline for service provision and research, rather than general or particular information about the various categories that are used to describe a learner's special educational need. While this *Handbook* is about special education, from special educators' perspectives, I would value more reflection on a genuine partnership between regular and special education, with some contribution from those working in the regular education sector.

There are two chapters I found particularly stimulating, probably because of personal interests and dilemmas. In chapter five, Brahm Norwich writes about "Categories of special educational needs". This chapter provides a useful history of the classification of learners with special needs, and describes the difficulties associated with both labelling and not labelling a special education need a learner may have. For practitioners in the field of special education this chapter could be illuminating as well as reassuring.

Chapter twelve by Roger Slee is titled "Inclusive schooling as a means and end of education?" This has been abbreviated to "Inclusive schooling?" as a header for each odd numbered page – what an enticing question mark. In this chapter Slee raises many issues about the realities of inclusive education for both special and regular educators with what seems to be an honest appraisal of what has been achieved in inclusive education to date. Slee is not denigrating inclusive education but argues that '... inclusive education is an important but fragile educational project' (p166). The information provided and questions asked are thought-provoking and stimulate some reflection on practice. I would be interested in a response to this chapter from an academic in regular education.

This text would have been excellent when I was studying special education at a post-graduate level, and may be of particular interest to policy makers and devisers of systems. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a handbook as a 'book giving basic information or instructions'. I am not sure that *The Sage Handbook of Special Education* achieves this, particularly for practitioners in special education. However, as noted in the preface it is a sourcebook and encourages reflection with the information provided.

REFERENCES

Jordan, A. & Stanovich P. (1998). *Exemplary Teaching in Inclusive Classrooms*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, California, April.

Clark, C., Dyson, A., Millward, A., & Robson, S. (1999). Inclusive education and schools as organisations. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 3(1) 37-51.

REVIEWER PROFILE

Suella Quinn has worked in the field of special education as a speech-language therapist, teacher and special education coordinator. She also worked for The University of Waikato coordinating SE2000 professional development contracts in South Auckland.

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Title: The Sage Handbook of Special Education

Editor: Lani Florian

Publisher: SAGE Publications Ltd

Date of Publication: 2007

ISBN: 13-978-1-4129-0729-3 (pbk)

RRP: £85.00

Kairaranga goes Digital



Woven through this special issue of *Kairaranga* are strong threads – learning, sharing, challenging, inquiring, analysing and reflecting. Pulling them all together is an unwavering focus on evidence, or what one school referred to as “that data thingy”.

The data takes many forms. Surveys, interviews, running records, classroom observations, samples of students’ work, formal assessments and reflective journals are just some of the ways schools have captured the changes made during their EEPiSE projects. And, fittingly for this so-called digital era, some schools have chosen to use digital data. Three of these digital accounts are presented on the DVD in the back pocket of this special issue.

James Hargest College brings together students from the school’s Learning Support Centre and the drama class in a uniquely New Zealand interpretation of Macbeth. Their project focuses on fostering friendships across the school and the production is called ‘Macbeth – a catalyst for inclusion’. As a direct result of the students’ collaboration in Macbeth, there has been a significant increase in the nature and number of student interactions, both in and out of school.

You have read about the changes Ferndale School made to the lunch break – now you can see these changes for yourself. The “before and after” shots provide strong evidence of the impact of this project.

Taumarunui School reveals a talented cast of students and teachers who wrote, produced and performed a bitter-sweet and thankfully fictitious account of ‘The way we were’. The tamariki and “Mr T” make enthusiastic use of black humour as they highlight the contrast between the bad old days and their current, effective use of formative assessment and learning intentions. The music used is composed and performed by students of the school.

The teachers who took part in EEPiSE are typically diffident and modest. They don’t think they are doing anything special. But you, the 4,000 readers of this special issue of *Kairaranga*, will find that it is both reassuring and motivating to read, see and hear what is being achieved for students in New Zealand schools by teachers like you. Now we hope you are inspired to create learning for all in your own schools.



Joanna Curzon is the Team Leader: Research in the Ministry of Education, Special Education Professional Practice team. She was responsible for leading and managing the Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education (EEPiSE) programme from January 2005 until its completion.

Contact

Joanna on DDI: +64 4 463 8260 or
email: joanna.curzon@minedu.govt.nz

Guidelines

GUIDELINES FOR PAPERS SUBMITTED TO *KAIRARANGA*

- *Kairaranga* considers the following education related papers as written documents:
 - Practice Papers** – Papers celebrating effective practice and implementation of programmes. (Up to 2,500 words).
 - Position Papers** – Papers outlining a writer's view on a current educational issue. (Up to 2,000 words).
 - Research** – Papers summarising research studies involving quantitative and/or qualitative analysis of data, or reviews of the literature. (Up to 3,500 words).
 - Storied Experience** – Papers reporting the experiences of children, parents, caregivers, teachers, support staff and professionals in various learning settings. (Up to 1,500 words).
- * If you have the kernel of an idea that doesn't quite fit the above please email kairaranga.journal@minedu.govt.nz and you will be connected with one of our editors who will support you on your road to publication.
- An abstract of not more than 150 words should be submitted along with each article.
- Articles sent as hard copy should be on numbered, separate and single sided sheets, with double line spacing. Articles can also be emailed to kairaranga.journal@minedu.govt.nz. Figures or graphs, illustrations and diagrams should be sent separately as tiffs, eps or jpeg files, as well as being embedded in the text of a word processed document. A disk or email version should be saved in Microsoft Word with the filename extension.doc.
- Authenticity of articles will be the responsibility of the submitting author.
- Minor abridgement of articles will be at the discretion of the editing team. If time allows, authors will be contacted before the publication of edited articles.
- *Kairaranga* will retain copyright of all articles published.
- Articles submitted to *Kairaranga* should not have been published with exactly the same format or content elsewhere.
- Authors are asked to submit a 50 word personal profile of themselves, their organisation and/or other affiliations for reader interest.

PEER REVIEW PROCESSES AND GUIDELINES

- *Kairaranga* is a journal evolving through work submitted across the education sector. Peer review involves constructive feedback on your written contribution. The suggestions made will help you in editing your final piece of work.
- The peer review process for *Kairaranga* is "blind". This means that neither the name of the author nor the name of the reviewer will be known to each other.
- Written contributions will be matched to peer reviewers who have topic, professional or cultural strengths in the area of the written work submitted.
- You will receive feedback which may involve
 - a) Accept as is
 - b) Minor editorial revision by the author
 - c) Revision of content by the author and modifications based on this review
 - d) Not accepted for publication.
- When papers are declined reasons will be given and resubmission may be possible.
- The peer review process is as follows:
 - a) Papers are submitted to the Editorial Board.
 - b) A decision is made by the Editorial Board to forward the article through to peer review, with a view to future publication.
 - c) Papers are returned to the Editorial Board.
 - d) Feedback is given to the author.
 - e) This feedback may include an offer of peer support by the Editorial Board for amendments made to the article submitted.
 - f) The Editorial Board retains the right to decline papers for publication. This will be reflected in the feedback you receive from the peer reviewer. Resubmission is possible.

Submissions for Volume 8, Issue 1, 2007

Deadline: December 20th, 2006

Submissions for Volume 8, Issue 2, 2007

Deadline: May 1st, 2007

Send to: kairaranga.journal@minedu.govt.nz
gnobilo@xtra.co.nz



GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWS OF TEXTS, RESOURCES AND PROGRAMMES

- Reviewers are asked to submit a 50 word profile of themselves, providing their professional details and affiliations at the end of the review. This information may also be submitted as part of the review.
- Reviewers will take responsibility for the appropriate and correct use of people, places, companies, publishers, etc.
- Reviews will become the property of *Kairaranga*.
- Reviews will reach the *Kairaranga* address by the date published on the letter of invitation.
- Abridgement of the review will be at the discretion of the Editorial Board.
- We are looking to explore many varied and potentially contradictory views on issues relating to educational practice which may be included within the texts, resources or programmes. This should result in views being expressed that do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Editorial Board.



Subscription

When paying by cheque, ensure your name and school/organisation are clearly stated. Accounting services seldom supply any details.

Name(s) of person subscribing under this remittance:

Name of school/organisation to be invoiced for this subscription:

Address of school/organisation to be invoiced:

Ph:

Fax:

Email:

Number of copies required per issue:

Amount to be paid: \$ _____ (\$15.00 per issue or \$25.00 for two issues per year)

NB: *Kairaranga* does not have a GST number.

All payments to: *Kairaranga*, PO Box 12 383, Chartwell, Hamilton.

This issue and its contents including pages, documents, online graphics, audio and video are subject to copyright laws of New Zealand. The copyright is owned by the Ministry of Education unless indicated in the body of the document. Copyright protects the original skill and effort of an author of copyright works from unauthorised replication of that work.

You may view this issue and its contents and save an electronic copy, or print out a copy, of parts of the attached DVD solely for your own information, research or private study, but only if you: (a) do not modify the copy; and (b) include the copyright notice “© Ministry of Education, Wellington, New Zealand” on the copy.

You must not reproduce, transmit (including broadcast and website), adapt, re-distribute or otherwise exercise the copyright in the whole or any part of this issue and its contents for any other purpose except with the prior written consent of the Ministry of Education and any conditions specified by the Ministry.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial, Editorial Board and contact details	2
Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education (EePiSE) In it together – <i>Vijaya Dharan</i> Practice paper	3
Enhancing Effective Inclusive Practice Knowing, doing and believing – <i>Martyn Rouse</i> Keynote address	8
Teaching Māori Children with Special Education Needs Getting rid of the too hard basket – <i>Jill Bevan-Brown</i> Keynote address	14
Teaching Strategies: For some or for all? – <i>Lani Florian</i> Keynote address	24
A Torrent of Change: Enhancing effective change in special education – one school's journey – <i>Chris Morris and Shirley Katon</i> Practice paper	28
Within our Circle of Influence – <i>Namratha Hirannah and Bernadette Mahoney</i> Practice paper	33
Reflections on an Action Research Project An interview with staff at Mt Richmond Special School – <i>Savi Bhupala, Gurjeet Toor and Kathy Dooley</i> Personal experience	39
Putting Enjoyment into the Lunch Break Enhancing effective practice at Ferndale School – <i>Dorothy Wilson and Stephen Evans</i> Practice paper	43
Raising the Bar in Reading – <i>Taryn Naidoo and Roshilla Naicker</i> Practice paper	48
Building Resiliency in Students with Special Education Needs A journey of discovery – <i>Alan Mears and Rosalie Stevenson</i> Practice paper	53
Motueka High School Storied Experience Teaching and learning strategies – <i>Tracey Ellery and Jan Trafford</i> Practice paper	56
What Does it Take to Facilitate? – <i>Bruce Kent</i> Research/practice paper	59
Challenging Teachers' Practice through Learning Reflections on the Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education programme of research and professional practice – <i>Roseanna Bourke</i> Research/practice paper	64
Book Reviews	69
Kairaranga goes Digital	71
Submission Guidelines	72
Subscription	74



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga