

The Review of Special Education 2010

Public Response Summary

Published by the Ministry of Education, New Zealand, August 2010

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ISBN 978-0-478-34111-9 – Review of Special Education, Public Response Summary (print)

ISBN 978-0-478-34112-6 – Review of Special Education, Public Response Summary (online).

Contents

Foreword	6
Executive summary	8
Introduction	14
Overview of the main findings	15
Schooling (Q1a)	15
Successful schools	15
What we asked	15
Overall	15
Key question	15
What you said	15
Key themes	15
Overall	15
1. Skilled teachers	17
2. Strengthen internal school systems	19
3. Professional development for teachers' aides	25
4. Improve specialist services and programmes	26
Schooling (Q1b)	28
A network of successful schools	28
What we asked	28
Overall	28
Key question	28
What you said	28
Key themes	28
Overall	29
1. Working together to succeed	29
2. Options for special schools	37
Transitions and agencies working together (Q2)	42
Transitions	42
What we asked	42
Overall	42
Key question	42
What you said	42
Key themes	42
Overall	43
1. Improve information sharing	46
2. Commit more time to the process	47
3. Improve transition coordination and leadership	48
4. Better planning for transition	49
5. Involve parents, families and students more	51
6. Be flexible about resource use	51
7. More support for transition at the end of school	52
8. More support for transition to school	54
9. Increase acceptance of difference and disability	55
10. Develop a nationwide transition policy	56

Transitions and agencies working together (Q3)	58
Agencies working better together	58
What we asked.....	58
Overall	58
Key question	58
What you said	58
Key themes	58
Overall	59
1. Retain and improve existing services	59
2. Provide all services through a single agency	64
3. Involve families more	68
Funding and resource use (Q4)	72
Funding and resources for students	72
What we asked.....	72
Overall	72
Key question	72
What you said	72
Key themes	72
Overall	73
1. More and more flexible use of funding.....	73
2. Improve verification (for ORRS)	75
3. Improve decision-making.....	79
4. Expand fundholding (for ORRS).....	81
Funding and resource use (Q5a)	85
Funding and resources for students	85
What we asked.....	85
Overall	85
Key question	85
What you said	85
Key themes	85
Overall	86
1. Get more value from funding.....	86
2. Streamline the ORRS application processes.....	89
3. Manage funds more effectively	91
4. Use additional teaching more efficiently.....	94
5. Make better use of teachers' aides.....	96
6. Allocate teachers' aides more effectively	98
7. Use of specialist services more effectively.....	99
8. Better coordinate services	101
9. Improve accountability	104

Funding and resource use (Q5b)	107
Funding and resources for students	107
What we asked	107
Overall	107
Key question	107
What you said	107
Key themes	107
Overall	108
1. Acknowledge what is working well now	108
2. Acknowledge what is not working well now	111
3. Build on current programmes	113
4. Consider different service models	124
High-quality services and being accountable (Q6)	133
High-quality services	133
What we asked	133
Overall	133
Key question	133
What you said	133
Key themes	133
Overall	133
1. Upskill and support experienced staff	134
2. Develop a quality framework	137
3. Improve access to services	138
4. Change the model for service provision	141
5. Change processes	142
6. Collaborate across the sector	144
7. Value diversity and inclusion	146
High-quality services and being accountable (Q7)	149
Being accountable	149
What we asked	149
Overall	149
Key question	149
What you said	149
Key themes	149
Overall	150
1. Ways to be better informed	151
2. What to be informed about	152

High-quality services and being accountable (Q8)	159
Being accountable.....	159
What we asked.....	159
Overall	159
Key question	159
What you said	159
Key themes	159
Overall	159
1. Improve presence at school.....	160
2. Improve participation at school	161
3. Improve learning.....	162
4. Improve happiness	163
5. Options for special education in the school system	164
6. Measure success	167
High-quality services and being accountable (Q9)	175
Being accountable.....	175
What we asked.....	175
Overall	175
Key question	175
What you said	175
Key themes	175
Overall	175
1. Systems to prevent and minimise problems.....	177
2. Clear complaints process.....	179
3. Early, internal resolution.....	179
4. Third party advice.....	179
5. Advocacy	180
6. Mediation	181
7. Independent review and arbitration	182
Single most important change (Q10)	184
What we asked.....	184
Overall	184
Key question	184
What you said	184
Key themes	184
Overall	185
1. Maintain a range of schooling options.....	185
2. Increase funding and services	188
3. Increase professional development and learning for schools.....	189
4. Change attitudes and promote inclusion	191
5. Other key themes	193
Appendices	201
Notes on the summary document.....	201
Review overview.....	204
Glossary	212

Foreword

In February this year, the Government invited the public to provide feedback on the Review of Special Education. It is with pleasure we release this summary of public responses.

Thank you to everyone who contributed their views - students, parents, caregivers, educators, specialists and the range of non-government, community and private sector representatives. The depth and breadth of issues canvassed in your submissions were essential to informing the Review team alongside the research evidence, the *New Zealand Disability Strategy*, the *United Nations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* and other essential documentation and information.

Children and young people with special education needs deserve any improvements we can make as a result of the review. They, and their parents, have a right to expect the very best support we can provide so they can achieve success. This success is not just in education, but in society, and not just while they are at school, but for the rest of their lives.

Our challenge now is to ensure that every school delivers success for every child. We need to draw on all the resources and expertise available to deliver the result we want for all children and young people.

This step recognises that responding to the range of needs within our communities is a shared responsibility. It makes sense that all policies, funding and practices within the education sector reflect our shared responsibility. It makes sense that we begin to see that each and every one of us has an important part to play in helping children and young people with special education needs to succeed.

That means drawing on the entire community for the best result for every child. It's the child's need that should drive the system, not the system serving its own needs. We must ensure that those who provide services meet the child's needs in the best possible way.

We received more than 2,000 submissions from groups and individuals during the consultation phase of the Review of Special Education 2010. Oral submissions were heard in three locations around the country by Government and Ministry of Education officials who were available to hear people's experiences first hand. Themes emerged that have been invaluable in identifying where gaps exist, where work needs to be done, and what is currently working well.

Within the submissions it was clear that a lot of good practice occurs across the sector, with much of it captured in this summary. Submissions also showed that there are differing views on special education - from how it should be funded and who should manage that funding, through to how services should be provided and how they impact on the lives of children, their parents and caregivers.

Feedback has given us many excellent ideas, many of which align with what research says about improving student outcomes. It tells us that success for students with special education needs doesn't necessarily arise from more funding. Instead success comes from positive attitudes and using what we have better. It's what we do with what we've got that counts. The feedback gives a rich insight into the range of personal and professional experience that exists within the special

education sector. It also confirmed that families expect a great schooling experience for their children - schools that are welcoming and successful for every child and young person.

I would like to acknowledge the members of the advisory panel, Dr Roderick Deane, Dr Jill Bevan-Brown, Paul Gibson, Dr Brian Hinchco, Paul Kennedy and Heather Lear. They provided much appreciated advice and guidance, and wanted the Review to go further.

Feedback to the Review Discussion Document demonstrated much shared passion, commitment and strong support for providing high-quality education for all. Thank you to everyone who took part in the consultation. You made a valuable contribution to the final outcomes of the Review of Special Education and to helping us achieve Success for All.

Hon Rodney Hide
Associate Minister of Education

Executive summary

This year the public were invited to participate in the Review of Special Education by responding to a discussion document featuring questions on special education. Here is an executive summary of the public feedback. Refer to the appendices for information about how the information was analysed and presented.

Schooling (Q1a)

Successful schools

Respondents were asked what was needed to help schools succeed.

They said teachers with the right skills and knowledge were needed. About 20 per cent suggested trainee teachers needed more and better training about special education. Nearly 30 per cent said ongoing teacher education was needed. Views on training content and how training should take place were wide ranging.

About 40 per cent of respondents wanted improved internal systems and processes within schools, emphasising strong leadership, governance and whole-school professional development.

About 20 per cent talked about the need to improve the professional development opportunities available to teachers' aides.

Eighteen per cent wanted improved access to good-quality specialist services as well as training and programme development that was responsive to the school context.

Schooling (Q1b)

A network of successful schools

Respondents were asked how could schools work together to succeed.

Nearly half of respondents contributed positive ideas for working together, although many noted it would not be easy to achieve and needed to be well supported.

A wide range of ideas on how schools could share knowledge and staff were offered. Respondents suggested school clusters be developed to support special education practice based on successful clusters found elsewhere in the education sector.

Four options on the future of special schools were outlined in the discussion document. Most respondents did not express a preference outright, but did express support (19 per cent) for retaining special schools in some form. One per cent wanted special schools closed and regular schools improved.

One of the four options - option C, special schools as resource centres - prompted significant discussion about the overall merit of resource centres throughout the feedback. Various options for the governance and management of resource centres, beyond special schools were suggested.

Transitions and agencies working together (Q2)

Transitions

There was considerable agreement about what would make transitions work better, with respondents highlighting the need to focus on the transition to school and the transition at the end of school.

Respondents reinforced the need to continue using and building on existing best practice and the transition programmes that were proving successful. They supported information sharing, committing time and resources to transitions and improving coordination, leadership and planning. Involving families and students more, being flexible about resource use and increasing the awareness of disability in the community were other ideas emphasised.

The idea of a national transition policy that would incorporate best practice was suggested.

Transitions and agencies working together (Q3)

Agencies working better together

When asked how services could be better coordinated and focused on the needs of students and families, nearly 60 per cent of respondents indicated that services and agencies probably needed to continue as separate entities.

But respondents wanted agencies and service providers to find ways to overcome service fragmentation and streamline the range of assessment, diagnosis, funding and philosophical approaches across agencies. Respondents recommended services and agencies have a single coordinator for a family across all services and improve the way they shared information.

Nearly 20 per cent raised the idea of setting up a system of local centres that offered all special education services under one roof or through a single management structure. Agencies or entities put forward for the centre management role included the Ministry of Education, school clusters, a school set up as a resource centre or a separate agency set up specifically for the purpose. Only a few respondents suggested centres should go beyond education to include a broader range of services.

Funding and resource use (Q4)

Funding and resources for students

Respondents were asked to comment on their preferred arrangements for funding, decision-making, verification and fundholding.

Overall, they expressed concern about the strong demand for special education services and the finite level of funding available to meet that demand.

They also wanted to use funding more flexibly and loose restrictions such as those related to the amount that could be spent on specialists, teachers and teachers' aides.

About 17 per cent wanted verification processes improved, showing equal support for a national or local Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Schemes (ORRS) verification process. Some respondents were critical of the ORRS verification process, finding it impersonal and negative.

Eight per cent of respondents said the criteria for ORRS needed to change to include more students. About six per cent said more needed to be done to ensure the criteria were clearer to families and schools, fairer and more consistently applied.

About 18 per cent suggested ORRS funds be managed by a broader range of people and organisations such as schools, families, clusters of schools, special schools on behalf of regular schools, national providers, a representative group of school boards and non-Government agencies such as disability groups or new Government entities.

Funding and resource use (Q5a)

Funding and resources for students

Making individually-targeted services and supports more efficient was the focus of this section.

Fifteen per cent of respondents had ideas about the decision-making processes related to funding use. They suggested using funding more creatively, ie, to make schools more accessible and to increase a student's access to technology. These ideas had the potential to reduce a student's reliance on adult support because he or she could move more freely around the school grounds and better access the curriculum.

Rationalising the many funding schemes available and the administration time and resource spent on each one was suggested by about eight per cent of respondents.

Nearly seven per cent suggested the ORRS application process could be streamlined by having verifiers draw on existing assessment information generated about a student's needs. They also agreed with the discussion document idea that students who received Supplementary Learning Support (SLS) for a set amount of time should automatically become eligible for ORRS. However, some were concerned that, should this happen, other more needy students could miss out on ORRS.

Nearly 12 per cent showed general support for the discussion document idea of aggregating ORRS .1 and .2 teacher time with a variety of proposals for management given.

Around six per cent of respondents recommended making more efficient use of teachers' aides by clustering staff, matching staff to the needs of students and improving knowledge and skills. Streamlining the allocation of teacher's aide funding was a concern for around four per cent.

Funding and resource use (Q5b)

Funding and resources for students

Respondents looked at the current mix of programmes, services and supports to see if it was right and provided value for money.

About half commented on the mix of services, with 60 per cent saying they thought it was about right and 40 per cent saying it was not. Examples of what worked well tended to relate more to special schools, special units and residential special schools, although there were positive comments about regular schools as well. Examples of what needed to improve mostly related to regular schools. Feedback highlighted the ongoing challenges associated with special education in regular schools.

High-quality services and being accountable (Q6)

High-quality services

Respondents were asked how the quality of services could be improved.

Approximately a third said high-quality services relied on having skilled and experienced staff.

Thirty per cent wanted a better quality framework that set standards, provided opportunity for feedback and established practice guidelines for research or evidence-based practices. The framework would better explain services and be available to monitor quality performance.

Nearly 20 per cent said quality relied on improving access to special education services and involved being clear about what people could expect to receive and what outcomes were likely to occur.

About 18 per cent thought the service delivery model should change, commenting on the comparative pros and cons of specialist advice for teachers and staff versus specialists' direct, hands-on support.

Ten per cent of respondents wanted services focused more on the needs of students and families rather than the requirements of the school. About nine per cent said better collaboration would save time and costs across the education sector and about seven per cent said more acceptance of difference and inclusion would improve the quality of schooling.

High-quality services and being accountable (Q7)

Being accountable

Better information for families and schools was the focus of this section.

Respondents felt most informed about their child's programme at school and, to some degree, their child's progress.

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) was highlighted as a useful tool for sharing information. But respondents said there was a lack of information available about services, funding and outcomes. They said there was too little information about the performance of the system as a whole.

Respondents wanted more and better information for parents and schools, contributing a wide range of ideas and emphasising face-to-face contact for individual information and when things went wrong, and group and electronic material for service and system-related information.

High-quality services and being accountable (Q8)

Being accountable

Respondents were asked what successful special education would look like and how it would be measured.

Respondents said success would mean children were present, participating and learning at school. Success would mean schools and society would include children and young people with special education needs more often.

Around 23 per cent of respondents went beyond presence, participation and learning and used words like 'happy' or 'happiness' to express what students and their families would like to experience from the school system.

Happiness would be achieved when a student with special education needs had easy access to the education setting of their choice, when he or she was attending regularly and participating in the life of their school and when he or she was learning and feeling supported, not stressed or bullied.

About a quarter described the characteristics of a successful school system. Almost two thirds of these respondents wanted a system that offered choice with access to regular classes, units and classes within regular schools. Students needed specialist itinerant teachers, special schools, satellite classes within regular school sites and to feel included in all settings.

Respondents noted the benefits of using IEPs as a measurement tool and suggested using the Education Review Office (ERO) to monitor special education through school reviews and special reviews and measuring the post-school achievements of students.

High-quality services and being accountable (Q9)

Being accountable

This section asked respondents to say what arrangements needed to be in place to resolve issues when things did not go well.

Approximately half emphasised the importance of preventing problems early and using low-level solutions to sort out issues as and when they arose. They wanted clear policies, procedures and effective communication, as well as access to good information and someone to clarify issues with. Setting up a clear complaints process was raised in the discussion document and received support. Thirteen per cent of respondents agreed with such a process.

There was specific support for separate advocacy and mediation services when concerns could not be resolved by good prevention and problem solving. About 22 per cent commented on advocacy and an equal number on mediation. Respondents felt

these services needed to be independent and easy to access. They needed to be available to families most of all, but schools were also said to need such services. Advocates were needed on both a short-term and long-term basis, depending on the situation.

Nearly 15 per cent wanted an independent review and arbitration process. Respondents wanted a process that would deliver a final result or decision and avoid situations of no resolution.

Single most important change (Q10)

This final section asked respondents to describe the single most important change they wanted to see. Respondents gave many more than one idea for change.

Forty per cent talked about the need to retain the range of settings currently available within the school sector, expressing support for special schools as part of the range of options.

Nearly a third said the one thing that needed changing was the level of funding and services available, particularly the funding and services available in regular schools.

Twenty-two per cent said the professional development and learning of teachers and other school-based staff was the top priority.

Fifteen per cent said attitudes towards students with special education needs had to change and they wanted inclusion promoted.

Introduction

In August 2009, the Government announced a year-long Review of Special Education led by the Ministry of Education, Special Education.

The Review of Special Education's key aims were to ensure that policies and processes are fair, consistent, reach those most in need, provide choices for families and make the best use of Government funding.

In February 2010, the public were invited to contribute their views on the Review of Special Education by responding to a discussion document that featured a series of wide-ranging questions on special education. More than 2,000 responses were received by the closing date of 19 March.

Read on for an overview of the main findings. Refer to the appendices for notes on the summary document's structure, language and terms, editing approach and method of analysis, as well as more on the Review of Special Education's principles and processes.

Overview of the main findings

Schooling (Q1a)

Successful schools

This section looks at the issue of success at school. It starts by revisiting the Review of Special Education 2010 discussion document preamble to question 1a: What is needed to help schools succeed? It summarises the key themes that emerged from the Review of Special Education submission process and features some of the public responses to the question.

What we asked

Overall

The discussion document began this section by acknowledging the successful special education practices and outcomes prevalent in many schools and went on to outline the factors that contributed to success. Teacher education, paraprofessional training (also known as teacher's aide training) and school support programmes were some of the factors listed.

Key question

The discussion document asked:

- What is needed to help schools succeed? (Q1a).

This question received 1,382 responses, the majority were from education sector representatives (798). Special education sector representatives and parents or caregivers responded in equal numbers (459 and 457 respectively). This question attracted 216 responses from non-government or community representatives and 159 responses from health or disability sector representatives. Thirteen students contributed their views. Note, respondents could select to be represented in more than one group.

What you said

Key themes

1. Skilled teachers
2. Strengthen internal school systems
3. Professional development for teachers' aides
4. Improve specialist services and programmes.

Overall

Respondents said teachers with the right skills and knowledge were needed, with about 20 per cent suggesting trainee teachers needed more and better training about special education.

Nearly 30 per cent said ongoing teacher education was needed. Views on training content and how training should take place were wide ranging.

About 40 per cent of respondents wanted improved internal systems and processes within schools, emphasising strong leadership, governance and whole-school professional development.

About 20 per cent talked about the need to improve the professional development opportunities available to teachers' aides.

Eighteen per cent wanted improved access to good-quality specialist services as well as training and programme development advice that reflected the school context. Yet many also acknowledged that some schools were succeeding with the system as it was.

"Schools already have the necessary processes in place to identify children who are in need of help and intervention. What is needed is easier access to experienced resource people such as those in the special education sector. The present system is staffed by very professional and hard working specialists who have ... empathy for the children, parents and teachers involved and [have] experience working in the educational field." [Education sector representative]

"In the case of our school, the school community is what makes it successful. The continuation of what we and our school have been doing is what is needed." [Parent or caregiver]

"School community and management attitudes need to improve [and] change drastically before we would send our son to a local school. Require better communication between parents, family, caregivers and school management and staff. From our experience, normal schools are not a place for a child with an intellectual disorder and with special needs." [Parent or caregiver]

"Maintain the status quo. For my son and my family, the current system works well. My son attends a satellite unit, which is part of [a] special school. He has Very High need ORRS funding. The school provides the level of staffing to keep him safe and provides an environment optimised to help him learn. I know other parents whose children attend mainstream schools, whose children do very well in that environment." [Parent and health and disability sector representative]

"They are succeeding now. Families are happy their disabled child is part of a holistic education [where] each individual student [is] experiencing success and achievement." [Special education and health and disability sector representative]

1. Skilled teachers

Initial teacher training

Eighteen per cent of respondents commented on the need for initial teacher training to include learning about children with special education needs, inclusive education, and catering for diversity.

Suggestions included having newly-trained teachers more comfortable with and more capable of teaching students with disabilities and learning and behaviour needs.

There were many ideas, although no consensus, about how the initial teacher training would be most effectively delivered. There was, however, clear agreement that it should happen more consistently and perhaps become compulsory.

"The Ministry develop a plan to introduce mandatory education for all teacher trainees on the principles and practices of inclusive education." [Government sector representative]

"There needs to be compulsory pre-service training for all teacher trainees, incorporating meeting the needs of diverse learners, adapting the curriculum and effective classroom management." [Education sector representative]

"[There needs to be a] compulsory special needs component to teacher training, preferably enmeshed in all areas of the courses, not a separate module that can be opted out of." [Special education sector representative]

"[There needs to be] pre-service training as part of their course requirements (not optional, but required) to develop their abilities to cater more effectively for special needs students in the mainstream." [Education sector representative]

"Part of teacher training should hold a practicum based in a special school. Teachers can not teach what they do not understand." [Parent or caregiver]

"Teachers need to be trained at the bachelor of teaching and learning degree. They need a full placement (12 weeks) in special education, so that they can truly get a feel for special needs. They can see children being looked after from a health and educational perspective. They can view how to adapt a curriculum to suit all learning needs. They need to learn empathy for our kids who are all different and unique. They need disability awareness." [Parent or caregiver]

"Pre-service training for inclusion and differentiating the curriculum. [Resource teachers: learning and behaviour] (RTL) [are] well placed to fulfill some of these [training needs], [as they are] already involved in staff professional development and ongoing support for teachers and teachers' aides." [Special education sector representative]

“All teacher training providers [should] offer a compulsory and comprehensive course in inclusive education. A model of successful teaching is currently available at Waikato University.” [Non-government sector representative]

“All graduating teachers must have a general understanding of research-informed effective practices in working with children with special education needs and should be able to demonstrate practical competencies in teaching children with mild, moderate and High special education needs within the classroom context.” [Education sector representative]

Ongoing professional development

More than a quarter of respondents suggested offering experienced teachers professional development on special education – a theme also raised in response to other questions.

Respondents talked about experienced teachers lacking exposure to, or an understanding of, the teaching approaches for students with disabilities. They also talked about the need to support teachers, new to the profession, who may have an awareness of disabilities and difference, but who needed help catering [for] the range of student need in their classrooms.

Some respondents suggested setting up in-school specialists as resource people who would help teachers become more knowledgeable about particular learning needs, using technology or assistive equipment and adapting the classroom programme.

“Professional development for teachers [that is] ongoing in schools, targeting student’s specific needs, eg, [Autism Spectrum Disorders] (ASD), as well as whole-school development in meeting the needs of all students.” [Education sector representative]

“Teacher education needs to be strengthened, so that all teachers are equipped to meet the increasing learning needs of individuals. There is a need for ongoing courses to be offered to teachers, to upskill in the area of special education. There needs to be a nationwide focus on the educating of students with Dyslexia. Classroom teachers need to be made more aware of what resources are available to assist them within the classroom.” [Special education sector representative]

“Compulsory and ongoing training for all those who work or intend to work with children with special needs, ie, teachers, principals, SENCOs and teachers’ aides.” [Parent or caregiver]

Respondents’ feedback about ongoing teacher education (similar to their comments about initial teacher education) showed a range of views about the most useful, effective and best approaches. There was, however, general agreement on the outcomes.

"... their [teachers'] ongoing professional development needs to ensure they have the confidence, skills, and knowledge to educate all students, regardless of their diverse needs." [Education sector representative]

"Compulsory teacher training for special needs and diversity - an inclusive system needs inclusive training. Teachers presently get very little training in special needs, and this includes gifted children as well as those with learning disabilities. Ongoing professional development for special needs, disability and diversity is needed for all teachers. Every school should have a formally-trained [Special Education Needs Coordinator] (SENCO). Mainstream schools try to 'fit' the child into the curriculum - we need more assessment of children that is not curriculum-based. There should be an ecological assessment, that is, problems may be sensory or perception-based, not curriculum-based." [Parent or caregiver]

"Teachers and teachers' aides throughout all school levels need much-improved access to in-depth, high-quality and affordable professional development. Research findings (and the teaching implications) about learning differences and special needs is continually evolving, therefore, ongoing professional development is essential. Professional development needs to begin at pre-service training level and continue throughout every teacher's career. Schools seem to frequently focus on just a few areas (eg, Asperger's, sensory processing, Dyspraxia etc), depending on the expertise and advice of local professionals (eg, RTLB, occupational therapists etc) and a few school staff working with specific students. I believe that professional development delivery needs to be driven by upskilling school staff in all special education areas, rather than simply based around the needs of the few formally-identified known individuals within a school." [Education and non-government organisation representative]

"I believe that New Zealand as a whole lacks a clear vision for the education and care of special needs students. Although our overall performance in this area is probably favourable when compared internationally, ... we have a long way to go before we could confidently state that we are doing our very best for these special students. As an overall teaching profession, there is a lack of understanding and knowledge about special needs. This is reflected in the low priority given to this topic at both pre-service and in-service levels. Obtaining a qualification in this area for both teachers and teachers' assistants does not seem to be sought after. Professional development that is available in this area is expensive and usually has to be sacrificed because of other pressing needs. In order for schools to adopt inclusive practices as suggested by the review [of Special Education] document, they need much more professional support [that] is timely and purposeful. The lack of this support coupled with unsuccessful case management by existing services, has meant that schools resort to exclusive practices which are based at the survival level only." [Education sector representative]

2. Strengthen internal school systems

A significant number of respondents (nearly 40 per cent) noted that strengthening school systems would help schools succeed, with four ideas commonly arising through the feedback. These ideas have been grouped under the following sub-headings: systems and approaches, school-based professional development, resources and leadership and school culture.

Systems and approaches

There were numerous suggestions on the internal school systems and approaches that could support students to succeed.

Suggestions included early identification and intervention for students who developed learning issues. Other suggestions were to better share information within a school and to better plan and monitor students with special education needs. Including parents in all aspects of their child's education and having schools strengthen their focus on the needs of the student and their family was noted.

Some respondents suggested special education needs committees be established to share good practice, smaller classes be set up and positive induction processes be put in place for students and staff.

Other respondents spoke of the need for schools to have physical environments that were accessible, safe and flexible enough to suit a range of student needs. They spoke of schools where a student's peers and teachers worked together to support students with disabilities and learning and behaviour needs.

Having a teacher such as a special education needs coordinator (SENCO) within each school was frequently noted by respondents. The person in this role would coordinate all special education support within the school and among external support services and agencies.

Feedback suggested a good many schools that were considered successful in providing for students with special education needs had dedicated SENCOs. SENCOs were seen as able to spend time focused on the needs of students who struggled to access the curriculum for whatever reason.

"Many hours are required to juggle timetables and teacher's aide hours, to provide for the differing needs of children, as well as working with individual children and their teachers and this is very hard to do when you are a classroom teacher too. To tag this very important role onto the end of someone else's job, which many schools have to do due to lack of resourcing, does not do the job justice and reflects an attitude that the education of children with special needs is not a high priority." [Parent or caregiver]

"EVERY school should have a designated person (a SENCO) who has responsibility to support students and their families and ensure their educational needs are addressed, but also importantly support teachers when they have children in their class who have additional needs for support. They must plan internally using the resources they already have, eg, the [Special Education Grant] (SEG) to ensure the teacher is supported to fulfill her role in

teaching every child appropriately. (Too often the responsibility is delegated to the teacher's aide who often has goodwill but no training)." [Parent and special education sector representative]

"Each school needs to have a SENCO who must have the skills and knowledge to support teachers, students and parents to ensure the school provides an adapted curriculum that meets the special educational needs of students. The SENCO must be released from classroom duties and be paid at least two management units in order to do their job. The SENCO needs to be acknowledged by the school as a valuable resource and would have responsibilities in managing the SEG and liaising with external services and parents to ensure that the child has their allocated resources. SENCOs need the support of Ministry external specialist services to ensure that the SENCO position is managed appropriately and not misused by schools." [Special education sector representative]

School-based professional development

The professional development of all staff (from teachers to managers to school trustees) was seen to be an important part of strengthening internal school systems.

Teachers and teachers' aides were particularly highlighted for ongoing school-based professional development. The need for whole-school systems of professional development was seen as important by many respondents.

"Capacity building of the school as a whole as well as specialist whole school professional development according to local need, ie, ASD." [Education sector representative]

"There is a need to build the capability of the current work force. The RTLB can and does promote effective teaching rather than expert teaching. RTLB are engaged in providing whole-school professional development for teachers, teachers' aides and volunteers; facilitating SENCO networks; assisting with school reviews of special education provision; assisting schools in policy development and implementation; and helping schools to establish and support special education committees." [Special education representative]

"Building school and teaching capability by strengthening teacher education programmes is vital ... [so too are] school support programmes such as whole-of-school development programmes where schools may benefit from structured ongoing support. Ongoing paraprofessional training is important in special education, which will improve overall outcomes for the child and in the classroom because teachers' aides work closely with the children." [Special education sector representative]

"Three important elements are training [a] providing up-to-date knowledge and evidence-based strategies to give skills and competence for staff to manage all students who come their way. For educators and specialists this could include modules in their core training and the requirement for postgraduate studies and qualifications that ensure they have the skills to

research and critique best evidence and apply this to practice. Providing a core qualification for teachers' aides would also promote more understanding for those who support teachers and students in schools [b] reducing ineffectual use of teacher's aide time. Also supporting teachers in understanding how to use a teacher's aide in their classroom and maintain responsibility for the child themselves [c] fostering attitudes of inclusion and problem solving to meet the needs of all students in the school communities. This needs to be modelled from the beginnings of educators and specialists training and reinforced in fieldwork placements and throughout postgraduate training. My observation is that when this is modelled and demonstrated by principals in schools it flows on throughout the school and becomes the expected norm. Make work within the field of special education valued and something to attain, not leftover hours that someone needs to fill, as work in this area requires effective teaching skills and positive flexible attitudes." [Education, special education and health and disability sector representative]

Resources

Most respondents who commented on resourcing noted that there was not enough funding, staffing, time or professional development resource within schools and support services. Respondents said that schools needed to be well-resourced, have certainty of ongoing funding and the ability to use funding in different ways, while being transparent and accountable about their use of funding.

"Attitude and resourcing are the keys to successful schools and they go hand-in-hand. Many schools are more than happy to enrol students with special [education] needs but are honest about their lack of resourcing to be able to provide the support that they know is required. The lower-decile schools would appear to be better placed to provide for a child with differing needs because they receive more funding." [Parent or caregiver]

"Schools have limited funds available and are therefore forced to prioritise. To effectively teach our special education students, schools need substantially more funding to cater for their students with special [education] needs. This funding increase is desperately needed to employ more staff and purchase more resources to provide targeted support to those students who are unable to access learning effectively alongside their peers. This funding support is needed at both moderate and also mild needs levels. Another funding inadequacy is the level of ORRS funding, which is only a contribution by our Ministry towards the costs of High needs students. Schools are currently required to use their SEG for students with mild to moderate needs, yet schools' grants get substantially eroded by paying for High needs students ... ORRS funding needs to be increased to more accurately cover costs." [Education and non-government organisation representative]

"A big increase in special needs funding is required to meet the number of children with special education and behavioural needs - this is growing and current funding does not meet the child's special needs. The verification process is too rigorous. Many children miss out on ORRS verification and

children with moderate needs receive minimal funding.” [Education sector representative]

“The disparity between funding and resources for preschool and primary often causes distress for the parents as they think that level of assistance will continue and [this causes] huge pressure for the teacher who is under pressure to cater for a pupil who has been receiving much higher support than the school can provide.” [Education sector representative]

“An appropriate level of funding and resourcing for ORRS students to be able to adequately access the curriculum. Schools need the Government to meet its legal obligations in regards to the human rights responsibilities. Schools that are meeting their legal obligations and especially those with a disproportionate number of ORRS students such as ours, struggle to sustain this within the schools operation grant. The resourcing deficit impacts enormously over time and also impacts on the school’s ability to meet the needs of the students with moderate needs.” [Parent, education and non-government organisation representative]

Leadership and school culture

Feedback showed some respondents characterised successful schools as being welcoming, accepting of the diversity found in their communities and as places where positive role models were found. They were also focused on student needs and strengths rather than problems and weaknesses (ie, deficit thinking).

Respondents stated successful schools needed to understand and implement their obligations within the law and to reflect key policies such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the New Zealand Disability Strategy. Successful schools were also defined as being free from bullying and violence.

The importance of school leaders, principals and boards was highlighted in the feedback. Having principals and trustees who strongly supported a student’s right to enrol and were committed to supporting students with special education needs was considered an essential part of a successful school.

“Schools need to create a place for disabled students, by educating non-disabled students and staff and initiating relationships between disabled and non-disabled students. Walking through college [with my son] is like being at the zoo, except that we are the ones behind bars! Not once was [my son] presented as the first unique learner at college! For over two years, we have felt that inclusion for college meant squeezing him into the mold of all other students. It’s like trying to squeeze a circle into a square!” [Parent or caregiver]

“Inclusion of willing parents, families and the community to practically help schools achieve success. Advisory boards for each school that consist of parents of disabled children or representation of these parents on each board. Compulsory staff training for special needs and diversity, including all school

principals. A one-week compulsory internship working alongside Very High needs children. Write a reflective diary on their thoughts and experiences, related to the children's learning and support. " [Parent or caregiver]

"Attitudes to disability need to change in some communities. Schools and their communities need to understand that people with disabilities have rights the same as other people and that they and their families are valued members in the community. Possibly more community awareness campaigns about different disabilities and how they affect people." [Parent or caregiver]

"A well-functioning school board, strong leadership, dedicated and well trained and motivated teaching staff." [Special education sector representative]

"Have leadership in schools that inspires commitment by staff to special education and inclusion. For example, any management appointments to schools should include a previous record of commitment and competence to special education and inclusion. School management teams should actively monitor outcomes related to special education and target staff supports based on the data. Harness pupil voice for improvement, taking particular account of those least likely to do well. Empower pupil support staff in schools to inform and drive school improvement. Strategies that work for special education generally are of benefit to all pupils." [Special education representative]

3. Professional development for teachers' aides

Nearly 20 per cent of respondents talked about the need to establish professional development for teachers' aides. Generally they wanted teachers' aides to be well trained, to have access to a qualification structure and to be well paid.

"Upskill teachers' aides. Those working with Deaf students using New Zealand Sign Language need to ensure that their skills are up to the appropriate standard to match that of the student and are continually developed, taking account of New Zealand Sign Language concepts, vocabulary, etc related to the curriculum and subjects." [Non-government organisation or community representative]

"Support for appropriate professional development for teachers' aides - this should include an induction and training package to ensure that they are sufficiently skilled and confident to work with this population, ie, staff need to feel safe when they start work ... Lack of career pathway for teachers' aides means that some skilled staff leave due to frustrations." [Special education representative]

"There needs to be across the board basic training for teachers and paraprofessionals about the fundamentals of working with students with special [education] needs. Many teachers are scared of having students with High needs in their classroom because they do not know how to teach them or how to deal with behaviour difficulties. This creates a situation where some teachers really do not want special needs students in their classroom. Many paraprofessionals see their role as a care role, rather than a supportive teaching role. If students with special [education] needs are to reach their potential, teachers and teachers' aides need to feel confident and have the skills to teach them. Basic training around assisting communication and managing behavioural difficulties of students with special [education] needs does not have to be expensive and can be part of each teachers' ongoing professional development. Paraprofessionals really should have some basic training before starting the job." [Education sector representative]

"Strengthen teacher training so that schools have highly trained professional staff with specialist knowledge and expertise in Dyslexia to successfully teach children with specific learning needs. Provide paraprofessionals with specific training to effectively work with children presenting with learning difficulties. For example, SPELD (Specific Learning Disabilities New Zealand) introductory course ... (New Zealand Qualifications Authority approved)." [Non-government organisation or community representative]

"Our teachers, staff and teachers' aides need to have ongoing refresher training to improve their knowledge and experience in dealing with all children in our schools. This training should be covered at university level and ongoing from there. This specialist training should be reflected in the salaries of these staff. Ministry of Education, Special Education have wonderful courses already in place many of which are free or offer good value for money, eg,

tips for ASD, Inclusion by Design, Curriculum Adaptation.” [Education sector representative]

“Professional development for all staff to assist them to work in an inclusive way for all students.” [Special education representative]

“Teachers’ aides should have special training in the area of special needs, this should be ongoing and they should then have more responsibility in a student’s progress.” [Unknown]

“More trained teachers’ aides not just parents of neuro-typical children as one of my son’s teachers’ aides had no knowledge of ASD at all and talked constantly at him.” [Parent or caregiver]

4. Improve specialist services and programmes

Some respondents (18 per cent) were clear they wanted well-trained staff and systems within schools and said they also wanted schools to have access to high-quality external services when they needed them such as additional expertise, training and programmes.

The range of services mentioned included the Ministry of Education, Special Education’s current range of services, the Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLb) service, the Resource Teachers: Literacy (RTLit) service and the range of services provided by vision and hearing advisers and teachers, specialist itinerant teachers, non-government agencies and private providers.

It was often noted that schools needed a range of services and providers to choose from and they needed timely access to external services, as well as more say about the availability and quality of services.

“Specialist services EASILY ACCESSIBLE to mainstream schools, eg, psychologist, occupational therapy, physiotherapy. Presently to have a cognitive test done to determine a child’s learning needs the parents have to pay privately and our parents cannot afford it.” [Education sector representative]

“Improved access to support agencies and the services they provide, eg, Child Youth and Family Service (CYFS). Immediate support for students in need - sometimes by having to go through the lengthy process of getting the support needed the problem becomes more entrenched. The Interim Response Fund certainly helps but a more proactive, as opposed to reactive, approach is needed.” [Education sector representative]

“In school support from agencies like RTLb who work with teachers to improve outcomes for specific children and therefore all children in the class or group.” [Education sector representative]

“More specialist teachers and therapists etc such as speech-language therapists, vision and psychologists available in schools for early and ongoing

screening of children to identify special needs as early as possible. And then, enough of the above specialists to actually be able to provide the services to children in need without having to go on a waiting list for 18-months. For example, my three-year-old would answer a question in a complete sentence but the words used were not known in the English language. Had I waited for a public professional to see him, he would have gone to school in this way. School teachers need MORE support in the classroom to be able to teach the range of children in their class.” [Parent and community and non-government organisation representative]

“Schools need practical support - information and plans with explanations by experienced specialist teachers. Without these they need MORE funding for teachers’ aides than they need with it.” [Parent and education and special education sector representative]

“The one area we feel qualified to comment on is the need for schools to be able to access specialist services. It is unlikely that schools will ever be able to provide, in-house, all the services that their pupils need. However, targeted specialist services such as speech-language therapy, music therapy, physiotherapy, psychological support and occupational therapy can make a profound difference to a child’s ability to succeed and access the learning environment. Such targeted support, if delivered in a timely manner, can mitigate the need for additional support later on.” [Health, disability and non-government organisation representative]

Schooling (Q1b)

A network of successful schools

This section looks at a possible network of successful schools. It starts by revisiting the Review of Special Education 2010 discussion document preamble to question 1b: How could schools work together to succeed? It summarises the key themes that emerged from the Review of Special Education submission process and features some of the public responses to the question.

What we asked

Overall

The discussion document began this section by referring to the range of schooling options available within the school sector - from local regular schools to special schools and satellite classes within regular schools.

It went on to reflect on the legislation and key policies governing the range of options available within the schooling sector and proposed four options (A to D) for respondents to discuss or consider. The options were developed to stimulate discussion, rather than prompt respondents to select a preferred option. The options were:

- Option A - the current system
- Option B - no special schools
- Option C - special schools as resource centres
- Option D - current system but open access to special schools.

Key question

The discussion document asked:

- How could schools work together to succeed? (Q1b).

This question received 1,250 responses, the majority were from education sector representatives (733), with responses from special education sector representatives (422) and parents (402) being about equal. This question attracted 199 responses from non-government or community representatives and 144 responses from health or disability sector representatives. Ten students contributed their views. Note, respondents could select to be represented in more than one group.

What you said

Key themes

1. Schools working together
2. Options for special schools.

Overall

A range of ideas on improving the way schools could work together were given. Nearly half of respondents were positive about the concept overall, although many noted it would not be easy to achieve and needed to be well supported.

Ideas on how schools could share knowledge and staff were also offered. Respondents suggested school clusters be developed to support special education practice, based on successful clusters found elsewhere in the education sector.

Four options on the future of special schools were outlined in the discussion document. Most respondents did not express a preference outright, but did express support (19 per cent) for retaining special schools in some form. One per cent wanted special schools closed and regular schools improved to cater for all students.

One of the four options - option C, special schools as resource centres - prompted significant discussion about the overall merit of resource centres. Many, while rejecting option C, liked the idea of setting up a base school to manage the special education services for students within a group of schools. Others suggested amalgamating the specialist teaching workforce and having specialist teachers support a group of schools. Various options for the governance and management of resource centres were suggested.

1. Working together to succeed

Nearly half (49 per cent) of respondents commented positively about the idea of schools working together, contributing a range of views about how best to achieve that aim.

A few respondents noted that the self-managing model of the Government's Tomorrow's Schools policy had made schools competitive, which restricted their ability and, perhaps, their mandate to work together.

Some respondents stressed that successful cooperation and collaboration took time and resources, which were both limited. A couple noted the benefits of having early childhood education services and tertiary providers become part of the team or network of education facilities working together.

Respondents suggested the Ministry of Education or another group could help coordinate a network and facilitate opportunities for schools to work together. Others contributed ideas about using existing resources in new and different ways.

"It could work well if the schools in our area combined their efforts to utilise the programming efforts and share them. A local coordinating group from the school could combine their efforts so that schools access similar programming. For example, if one school is accessing the town pool, why can't that time slot be available to other schools [with students who have] similar needs? Work experience programmes, therapeutic programming, curriculum sharing, staff development by local area standardised to teach to bigger groups. The

Ministry of Education, Special Education could possibly organise and provide this service to the schools and it could be a mandatory item. Teacher-only days could be much more effective in special education if special education staff were directed to professional development delivered to the area schools. Staff time to plan is golden and a few days free from students could provide a much better service to the students.” [Unknown]

“Training needs to be given to school leaders around working in clusters and learning communities. Cluster processes should have definite leadership and guidelines. Principal peer support within clusters. Regular area (across cluster) SENCO meetings once a term. SENCOs released for half a day. Teachers and school leaders need time to network. Common cluster goals and vision would be important indicators of success.” [Unknown]

“Schools may be able to share particular experiences [with] children, eg, [at] camps, sports days. Schools may be able to share resources, eg, teachers’ aides, speech-language therapists. But I think schools should mainly operate autonomously, answerable to their communities.” [Unknown]

“Through the Ministry, retaining records of which schools are dealing with certain situations well and having advisors making referrals of one school to another for help.” [Parent or caregiver]

“External and joint funding should be made available to support schools in developing and maintaining effective relationships with other schools. Ministry of Education should provide guidance and support in establishing these networks and identifying the most effective models - allowing some flexibility to take into account local context. Develop cluster of schools concept, eg, principals liaison, special education coordinators liaison to share good practice and resources. Could be across same age schools, or linear from primary through intermediate to high school. Transition needs an interdisciplinary approach. Take note of places where it works well, eg, Westmere Primary to Pasadena Intermediate to Western Springs College.” [Non-government organisation]

Sharing knowledge

Respondents suggested schools could become more successful through sharing knowledge and resources more effectively, particularly knowledge and resources related to professional development and networking among SENCOs, teachers’ aides, principals and other staff.

Using SENCOs as network coordinators who brought together people from across schools was one model frequently put forward by respondents.

“SENCOs could form school neighbourhood clusters and support one another with ideas and develop best practice. Opportunities for RTLB, speech-language therapists and SENCOs to work and meet collaboratively so that a greater understanding can develop of one another’s roles thus achieving better outcomes for students.” [Unknown]

Respondents also noted the difficulty rural schools had in participating in such networks, however, they also saw it as something that could be overcome through better use of technology. Many respondents contributed examples of information and resource sharing, noting the time and resources needed to do it well.

“In order for schools to work together to succeed they have to be relatively close in terms of locality and have students with similar disabilities. Cooperation and joint activities and services take time to coordinate and organise. Individual teachers and SENCOs currently don't have time to do this. Getting relievers and release time for special needs units in mainstream schools is difficult. The Ministry of Education, Special Education currently offers some professional development and support to ORRS teachers in most areas. This could be extended to enable schools within the same district to share resources and join together for some special events which would benefit both staff and students.” [Unknown]

“Within clusters, by sharing expertise and a willingness to consider how all schools within a cluster could best meet the needs of special education students so that a few schools do not become magnet schools, but the strengths of individual schools are utilised.” [Unknown]

“For us the key is video conferencing. There are no nearby like schools (one nearest is 40 kilometres away). We work with local primary where we can and make use of itinerant services.” [Education sector representatives]

Sharing staff

Respondents who commented on the possibility of sharing staff most commonly referred to sharing Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Schemes (ORRS) teachers among a group of schools and, or amalgamating part-time roles into one full-time role (but without increasing the ORRS teacher's need to travel). Sharing teachers' aides and developing a pool of relief teachers' aides were also suggested.

“Clusters of schools with ORRS students to employ [or] share specialist (extra .1 and .2) teachers. In this way schools can employ a trained, experienced teacher rather than having to employ trained teachers with little knowledge or experience of children with disabilities.” [Unknown]

“We have developed an inclusive ORRS teacher scheme in [our district]. A local school has taken on management of the itinerant ORRS teacher scheme with support from the Ministry of Education, Special Education service manager. This scheme is very successful at giving schools an option to employ themselves (because they have a teacher who is skilled for the job) or to give their staffing to the scheme. Some funding under the scheme has been used to support travel, professional development etc. I think this should be rolled out nationally, it ensures the Ministry gets good value for the significant investment in ORRS teacher staffing and in our area it has led to greater consistency of teaching and better outcomes for students with special education needs. I regularly call the schools and ask them if they want to opt

in or out of the scheme. This makes principals think carefully about what is the best option for the student. Having a respected local principal manage the teachers is a really good move in terms of inclusion and respect for the scheme from the local principals. We run a management group with the Ministry, Special Education, principal, parent representatives and the resource teachers: literacy (RTLit). [The] management guidelines are used as the basis for managing the teachers.” [Special education sector representative]

“[Two local schools] are sharing personnel and facilities to enable, as much as possible, an efficient and effective service to the students of the local area. This efficiency is enabling students to benefit from the advantages both schools offer. This is one way schools can work effectively together. Geographical proximity assists this situation.” [Unknown]

Developing clusters

Many respondents used the RTLB model to describe how a cluster model could work, suggesting clusters could be responsible for developing specific programmes or support for all schools within the cluster.

For example, one school within the cluster could become the lead school for an area such as ASD. Another might focus on a different area of expertise. With this approach, clusters could provide a better level of service and support to students, whose special education needs were fairly uncommon, by pooling teacher expertise and by providing a means through which children with similar needs could socialise and get together.

“Some good models already exist, eg, [a] RTLB cluster where the strengths of different staff are available across schools and there is transparency in policies and allocation of funding.” [Unknown]

“Schools that have achieved positive outcomes for students with special education needs could mentor [and] support other schools. Sharing specialist .1 and .2 teachers across a cluster of schools. Support networks within clusters. Special needs coordinators meet within their cluster and this may also occur with teaching staff in some clusters. This networking provides an opportunity to share resources, what has worked well, etc. Pooling teachers’ aides across schools and clusters so that experienced teachers’ aides are not lost when a school’s hours are reduced. Teachers of the Deaf need to be included in the local network systems.” [Unknown]

“Schools need to work together with other schools to share their knowledge of working and resources in working with Deaf students. By working together schools need to enable Deaf students to have contact with peers and Deaf adults. This could take place in the form of a day school or a Kids-in-Touch Day. [Unknown]

“Group activities, similar to home-schooled children getting together. A cluster mobility van.” [Unknown]

“Clusters of schools working together with specialist teams including speech-language therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, RTLB, psychologists, special education advisors, kaiawhina [teacher’s aide], teachers of hearing and vision, ORRS teachers and realistic class numbers to provide quality services. Resourcing from special schools as requested.” [Unknown]

“I believe schools should belong to networks that develop sound structures and frameworks similar to a Reading Recovery model. Each SENCO must participate in termly meetings that include professional development and peer monitoring. The SENCO would coordinate with other schools for professional development for teacher assistants and teachers who needed support, link[ing] in with each other for colleague visits and [to] share successful practice models. There would be a lead SENCO coordinator who facilitates these networks. The lead coordinator or tutor would operate in a Reading Recovery model. They would be hired by the Ministry and be successful, experienced current teachers who are well versed in working in schools and ... liaising with a variety of agencies and health professionals. They would monitor and supervise the SENCO network and ensure there was seamless and even delivery throughout their region.” [Education sector representative]

Setting up centres of support

Some respondents felt setting up centres of support could help schools work well together. Most preferred local support centres. However, there was also interest in a national centre of support for students with vision and hearing needs in particular.

Support for centre models tended to fall into two camps - one centred around a special school and one requiring a new entity to be set up to provide services. For example, principals’ groups suggested a model of special school resource centres, while an education consultancy firm put forward a model referred to as a ‘network’ or ‘hub model’. Resource centres were talked about in response to other questions as well.

“[Our] model also takes into consideration successful models currently operating in New Zealand and teacher education, paraprofessional training and school support programmes that will be required to support this model. In order to help schools succeed what is needed is a continuum of provision and funding that is based on need, service provision that promotes the intent of the New Zealand Disability Strategy and provides for inclusive educational provision for all children in a way that maximises and enhances their participation and all aspects of life, the disestablishment of current organisational structures and providers, to a model that brings the expertise, funding and services closer to the child, whānau and those providing learning opportunities for the child. [Education sector representative]

Some respondents had experience working within a support centre model and talked about what worked well.

“A number of educational options have been presented for consideration in the discussion document. [We] strongly favour the model it already follows

and which is not included in the proffered options, in that it includes the Homai Campus School. [Our] model is a cohesive network of services, which provide a range of educational placements for learners who are blind, deafblind and [have] low vision, with the choice of fluid movement between the options according to the learner's need. The options include [i] regional outreach services with learners having educational placements in their local communities, supported by resource teachers of vision who are based in regional Visual Resource Centres. This is the norm for the large majority of learners, [ii] school for a small number of learners, where the IEP determines it the most appropriate placement. This provision includes a satellite option in a local secondary school, with an intention to further develop other satellite provisions, [iii] national assessment service for comprehensive trans-disciplinary assessment, both on the main campus and regionally, [iv] national immersion programme for learners nationally in elements of the expanded core curriculum. This includes group courses through to single learner immersion placements in the Homai Campus School, [v] an early childhood [education] centre at Homai Campus to serve the local learner population and as a national resource for early intervention programmes and [vi] a residential facility to support these educational activities." [Special education sector and non-government or community sector representative]

Respondents writing on behalf of Deaf and hearing-impaired students also supported a support centre model that worked over a large geographical area.

"Local schools need more transparent processes between the Ministry and Deaf education centres. [The] current system is very unclear and difficult for the local schools to work within. The two regions that Deaf education are split into do not work for some families. There are services in [our] region that Wellington families want to access and cannot because they live in [another] region. This is not a national service. Option D - Deaf schools should be open and first choice options for families, not last resorts. They should maintain a residential option also. They should continue to produce resources for schools and families. The Deaf schools should be run under a nationally-coordinated service and managed by one board instead of two separate boards. In the towns that do not have a Deaf school, there should be satellite classes where the learners can have a social and academic grouping. Resource teachers should be working in satellite classes and would be assessed for their New Zealand Sign Language and English language skill levels. Satellites would mean that children can be educated in mainstream class [or] in the Deaf class, depending on need. Parents are not currently encouraged to consider special schools and this can put the Deaf child at a disadvantage." [Unknown]

"Specialist teachers work intensively with Deaf students and their teachers and are available to establish strong collaborative working arrangements and relationships with the schools their students attend. The Specialist Resource Centre of Excellence model that is the way [our organisation] operates [and] could be extended to assist more students and their mainstream schools. This would be achievable if the ORRS teacher time associated with verified Deaf students was allocated to the Deaf education centres to increase the specialist teacher workforce. Increased pre-service preparation for regular teachers in

effectively meeting the needs of Deaf students would see them better prepared to work with [the] students they encounter and better prepare them to work in more effective ways with specialist staff from other providers such as those from the Deaf education centres. Planning through IEPs and related programmes needs to be specific enough to address the particular learning needs of the students and make clear the roles of the staff involved.” [Special education representative]

Some respondents favoured models that required changes to the whole system.

“A change of organisation from the top down. We would like to suggest a change to the current model of administration, funding and educational support to eliminate the variations presently seen at all levels in provision of services, quality of services, pedagogy and expectations of learning. This model would provide countless opportunities for schools to share their wealth of knowledge, best practice and resources. [It would have] three levels. Each level would have a clear mandate to provide services and supports at their level. The Ministry would be responsible for teacher education and professional development, quality and provision of service staff, ie, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech-language therapists, psychologists, consistent national standards and IEP goals, curriculum and differentiation models provided verification of ORRS recipients. Verification of schools to receive SEG funds. Management of funds. Educational conferences. Special Education [within the Ministry] would be the only fundholder - no more special schools, schools and agencies holding funds. The aim is to provide consistency and governance in the way that funds are held and distributed. The fundholders would be determined by population and geography, eg, Auckland would have eight fundholders and would change as reflects the population and area. Each Ministry, Special Education region as fundholder would be mandated and have a national code of practice [and be] responsible for [i] managing funds in their area, [ii] ongoing professional development for specialists including speech-language therapists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, psychologists and school-based educators, [iii] education and ongoing support for boards of trustees [iv] providing coordination of the Ministries of Health, Education and Social Development and other agencies such as the Accident Compensation Corporation, Work and Income, Needs Assessment Service Coordination Association (NASCA) and schools through a case worker who has a code of practice outlining role and responsibilities. Boards, principals, educators, specialists from early childhood [education services] through to secondary schools [would be responsible for the] employment of specialists and relief teachers’ aides, RTLB service. Offer courses for teachers at the regional or local school, geographical, cluster level. Sharing and, or purchasing of resources and services extra to that provided from a national model as seen to reflect the nature of the regional and local community. Operating The Correspondence School [(Te Kura)] for rural schools or those of special character or small size that cannot host a specialised environment without great financial cost. The rules governing this should be carefully written to make it easy to access, but not to fail to provide inclusive practice at the local level. Organising frequent opportunities for students in their regional and local [area] to meet other students of

similar ability and need in social, cultural and sporting events. Students from the centres and residential units should also be involved to build friendships and opportunities outside of their environment. This would involve networking with allied agencies in the region, such as [Sport and Recreation New Zealand] or the Halberg Trust. Families who are homeschooling their children would also be involved at this level to access activities and specialised support and funding in the local area. Early childhood [education] centres, schools and residential and specialist centres, tertiary institutions would [i] promote the United Nations Conventions and New Zealand legislation on the inclusion of all students [ii] be accountable to local families as well as to the Ministry fundholders for the education and social development at their level with IEP and transition expectations in line with family and Ministry, Special Education guidelines. Separate special schools would be phased-out gradually to become integrated in the local neighbourhood schools as learning support units. Guidelines and staff training need to be provided so that satellite units can be successfully integrated into the local school. [Specialist staff from the Ministry, Special Education would] work together to share resources, philosophies, information, etc, to meet the needs of all of their students enrolled in their schools. Not only classroom-based programmes, but also school-wide programmes and even further, community-based programmes for clusters of schools will occur. All teaching practice and resources will be evidence-based and suitable for New Zealand schools supporting the New Zealand Curriculum.” [Unknown]

“Schools should be grouped into and governed in school districts. This would allow more equitable support for special needs. In this situation boards of trustees would not be needed and thus remove the expense to run the elections. School character could be retained internally by, say, the parent teachers association. Each school district needs a resource centre to supply suitably trained teachers’ aides and the additional specialist teachers to be shared across schools. These persons would not be employed by schools but by the resource centre but would work in individual schools for as long as they are needed at that school. This would also give them better job security. The resource centres should hold specialist equipment and have ready access to occupational therapists, psychologists, speech-language therapists etc. These centres also need to work with one another to facilitate equipment and support as required, by schools and students, not when it can be provided, ie, just because a centre does not have a specialist ASD teacher it should be able to supply this requirement by working with another centre. The specialist teachers should be specialists in special education. Some will be trained in ASD while others in teaching the blind, Deaf etc. Because New Zealand is a small country, it is not feasible to have a specialist in every specialist discipline in each school area, however, each district should be able to work together on this and share their specialist teachers. There are some good initiatives currently underway, eg, [the] ASD project in the Wairarapa - this needs extending over the whole country. While there are a variety of special schools in the country, some could effectively be combined into special needs units within mainstream schools, however, others such as the health schools and Deaf and blind schools have a special niche that, if abolished, could water down the effective work they currently do. Each special school needs to be

examined on a case-by-case basis, having regard to the needs of the local community and of the capacity for services to be structured to meet those needs appropriately.” [Parent or caregiver]

2. Options for special schools

Nineteen per cent of respondents indicated support for continuing special schools, while one per cent were interested in closing special schools and improving regular schools to cater for all students.

Retaining special schools

Although most responses did not express a specific preference for one of the four options (A to D) outlined within the discussion document, there was substantial support from respondents for retaining special schools in some form.

Some respondents suggested special school enrolments could still be managed by the Ministry, but with changes made. For example, the restrictions related to special school enrolment could be lifted for ORRS-verified students.

Other respondents said special schools should only exist in high population areas or should be modelled on services currently available to Deaf and hearing impaired students, where a base school had been set up with a regional support structure that linked to regular schools. Some respondents looked to the Regional Health School model, where three schools supported students wherever they were located, ie, at home, at a centre or at hospital. The future of special schools was referred to in response to other questions as well.

“Special schools are extremely well equipped to deal with disabled students. They have the specialist staff, the expertise and experience; they have economy of scale and a concentration of resources. They also have the wherewithal for ongoing staff training. If teaching is considered to be a calling then teaching special needs children is a very different calling. Many very excellent mainstream teachers feel uncomfortable dealing with special needs children - they lack the training, the experience and the calling. So my recommendation is to work to the very clear existing strengths in education by enhancing the role of special schools. The four options outlined on page 19 of the discussion document appear to be based on the premise that enrolment of a disabled child in their local school is the best option for the child or at least that enrolment in a special school is a lot less attractive. However if we accept that as one moves towards the higher end of the disability scale special schools are significantly better placed than mainstream schools to meet the child’s needs then the predisposition to the local school is illogical (assuming that parents are motivated by seeking the best outcomes for their children). We readily accept the concept of high and low-decile schools. In the context of disability, the special school must surely rank better than the local school that could well be ill-equipped to cater for the child especially if that child is the only one in the school who suffers from their particular disability. Parents who seek the advantages of having their child attend the local school need to accept a trade off as against the advantages of the special school. Suggest

[we] maintain the current system, but look at reducing the bureaucracy surrounding entry to special schools. For example, can Section 9 be made more user friendly? So, if a child qualifies for ORRS then there is an automatic right of admission to a special school if that is the parents' choice. Would it be realistic to say that if a child qualifies for ORRS then the special school should be the first choice for that child? Enhance the special schools satellite structures - this structure works very well. It enables mainstream schools to tap into the expertise of the special school and it also allows the disabled child to access the mainstream school - achieving the best of both worlds for the disabled child. Possibly (if this is practical) all special units might be restructured as satellites of a special school. Options B and C in the discussion document are highly inefficient given the existing investment in special school buildings and infrastructure. One must recognise that the situation in Auckland - and for that matter, in the other main centres - is very different from the situation in outlying areas. We are fortunate to be living on Auckland's North Shore. What would our daughter's position be if we lived in Kaitia or Eketahuna? Yes it would be different. But the differences should be accepted rather than becoming the lowest common denominator. Just because some resource is not available to a disabled child in Eketahuna should not mean that the resource should be withdrawn from children in a special school in Wellington or Auckland." [Parent or caregiver]

"Some schools have a more welcoming attitude than others towards special needs children and therefore attract more than their fair share. If you are the parent of a special needs child who visits schools then straight away you [can] recognise by body language or what is said [if] your child is not welcome at that school, particularly if there is no ORRS funding attached to that child. Some principals are blatant and more or less say [if there is] no funding, we don't want them because we don't have the money to support them. These attitudes need to change firstly." [Parent or caregiver]

Some respondents liked the idea of having a special school or a satellite class within a regular school as a student's base. Others favoured having specialist itinerant teachers from special schools work with students enrolled at local schools.

"Use the rich funds of knowledge held by those already working in the sector in satellites or special schools." [Unknown]

"Respect the right for those children with intellectual disability to access special schools in the same way as the blind or Deaf are respected. Retain special schools and enhance the itinerant teachers of special education programmes whereby special education teachers from special schools visit other special schools and regular mainstream schools to share their expertise. I have a grandson in a satellite class, which is regularly overseen and checked by specialists from the special needs school. In conjunction with his class, I have visited the special needs school on several occasions and am always most impressed by the staff there and the special security measures in place to ensure that the children there do not injure themselves by access to the swimming-pool and other potentially dangerous sites at the school and particularly preventing access to the adjoining roads. If special needs children

in that category were integrated into normal schools, not only would the education of all students be detrimentally affected but the TREMENDOUS COSTS of making all schools as safe as the special needs schools would require a vast increase in the education budget.” [Parent or caregiver]

“Several parents who have experienced both mainstream and then a special school have seen amazing changes in their children. With our son, his aggression stopped almost overnight, he was happy and for the first-time he wanted to go to school. In addition, we actually saw some concrete changes in terms of improvements in his expressive and receptive language, problem solving skills, self help skills, numeracy and literacy. He was actually able to attend school for a full day (previously [he’d] only coped for an hour at a mainstream school). He felt comfortable being with other children with ASD (he was always very anxious with most neuro-typical children). I strongly believe that there is a need for both special schools (especially for those with anxiety-related disorders and High complex needs) and mainstream schools. In terms of working together, mainstream teachers could benefit from sitting in on a special needs class to look at their programmes and teaching style. Conversely teachers’ aides in the special needs and mainstream schools could swap to gain see what works and what doesn’t.” [Parent or caregiver]

“I would strongly prefer my child, who is Very High needs, to have the opportunity to go to a regular school three days a week and then spend two days a week in a special school. This way she could get the best from two worlds. I feel very strongly about this.” [Parent or caregiver]

“Special Schools need to continue to exist. Special schools have the expertise because their sole focus is working with students with special [education] needs. A school that has a focus on all levels of achievement is in a poorer position to develop and grow expertise in programmes for ORRS students.” [Unknown]

“Resource centre model with flexible funding and the opportunity for students to move across and around school settings based on their need. Non-competitive cooperative funding mechanisms for dual enrolment, eg, percentage of time spent in mainstream school [and] percentage of time in [a] special school base. This is already happening in some areas based on the goodwill of the board, principal and staff. Resource centre model where all resources can be shared across a network or community. Special school base school, satellites have revolving doors where students access targeted programmes.” [Unknown]

“Greater sharing of expertise, eg, ORRS teachers among clusters of schools in the same fashion as Supplementary Learning Support (SLS) teachers. Fewer or no large special schools but more and better resourced special classes within clusters so that students can more readily transition where possible to their local mainstream school.” [Unknown]

“Developing communities of interest regards best practice, sharing tips on what works well for inclusion. Small schools combining to employ part-time

staff to support students, but this is very limited as the difficulties of time lost travelling between schools and the cost of fuel from travel tends to make this option unattractive to employees. Limited role for special schools, catering for the needs of those students who are so fragile that safety in the mainstream cannot reasonably be achieved. I believe that there would be very few students who would meet this criteria and a unit at a regular school may better meet their need for partial inclusion. This is difficult to achieve in a rural area, no special school or unit exists and the demand currently is not there in terms of students.” [Unknown]

Closing special schools and improving regular schools

A small number of respondents (one per cent) supported the closing of special schools and having regular schools enrol all students with special education needs.

Respondents who talked about this idea also stressed the need to have the appropriate funding and support systems in place in regular schools before special schools could close. They also suggested regular schools would need to understand and share in the good practice available.

“Close special schools and resource mainstream schools accordingly. There needs to be more funding [for] children with major special needs.” [Unknown]

“There are schools in New Zealand, including a number of rural schools, that have been welcoming and teaching disabled students for decades. The work of these schools provides us with tangible evidence that inclusion is a genuine goal, that schools can work to be inclusive and that some schools hold close to key values that see all children and young people as human, members of the school community and as, therefore, having an unquestioned place in the community school. These schools are assets and they should be upheld by the Minister and the Ministry of Education as good examples of inclusive practice. They should be supported by the Ministry of Education to ensure that all teachers and students receive the supports and resources needed for academic and social success. Schools can learn from one another but opportunities for shared learning cannot happen in a vacuum. To share good practices, teachers need release time from the classroom. They need guidance and monitoring in order to gain knowledge about what an inclusive school and good practice looks like from leaders in the field of teaching, learning and inclusive education. This involves more than simply talking with one another. Teachers need to become critical and informed thinkers who are supported by their principals, policy makers, practice and curriculum advisors, researchers and the Ministry, who are well informed about inclusive education. The discussion document raises the possibility of special schools as resource centres. As noted earlier in this submission, special is not ordinary and special is not associated with inclusion. Teachers and others working in support roles need to understand the New Zealand curriculum and the approaches to teaching and learning that are used in ordinary classrooms. They need to be able to work with a diverse group of students, not just with disabled students. The research is critical of special education approaches to teaching that are associated with low expectations for student achievement and with ideas that differentiate

students because they have impairments. It is dangerous to assume, then, that teachers who currently work and have special education paradigms within segregated settings such as special schools and units will have the skills, values and attitudes needed to work in support roles in regular schools. Some will, but these will be principals and teachers who want to close their schools, who understand and believe in inclusion and who have developed and maintained strong outreach links with children and teachers in regular schools. Careful thought needs to be given to the qualities of teachers and others who take on support roles with school staff. In New Brunswick, Canada, where inclusive education has been in place for two decades, support teachers in schools are released from the classroom to work collaboratively and on a full-time basis with teachers to assist them in their planning and teaching. Support teachers are regular trained teachers, are known to the staff and families of the school, have credibility with the staff and families of the school, receive ongoing support and professional development at a regional and national level, are in touch with advances in thinking about assessment, teaching and learning, are supported in their work by inclusive education policy, structures and practices at all levels of the education system. In some American states, a co-teacher model is used in which teachers with experience in teaching for diversity are attached to each regular school and actually co-teach alongside other teachers within the school as needed. In this way regular teachers are upskilled through the ongoing support of an experienced colleague and mentor. There are examples of similar models in the research literature that can inform discussions about alternative ways to support classroom teachers in regular schools in New Zealand.” [Unknown]

“It’s every child’s right to an education - every child should have the opportunity to attend their local school and have their needs met. Mainstreaming all children, including those with special needs, seems to be the most cost effective way to manage.” [Unknown]

Transitions and agencies working together (Q2)

Transitions

This section looks at the issue of transitions. It starts by revisiting the Review of Special Education 2010 discussion document preamble to the question on transition. It summarises the key themes that emerged from the Review of Special Education submission process and features some of the public responses to the question.

What we asked

Overall

The discussion document began this section by acknowledging transitions as times of vulnerability and outlining the factors that lead to successful transitions. For example, it noted cooperation between professionals as students move from class to class or between years.

It proposed giving people more choice in the way they use existing funding. It suggested improving information about the career, life and education opportunities available to students with special education needs when they leave secondary school. It encouraged respondents to contribute their own ideas about improving student transitions.

Key question

The discussion document asked:

- What needs to be done to make transitions work better? (Q2).

This question received 1,290 responses, the majority were from education sector representatives (747), with responses from special education sector representatives (442) and parents (406) being about equal. This question attracted 206 responses from non-government or community representatives and 152 responses from health or disability sector representatives. Eleven students contributed their views. Note, respondents could select to be represented in more than one group.

What you said

Key themes

1. Improve information sharing
2. Commit more time to the process
3. Improve transition coordination and leadership
4. Better planning for transition
5. Involve parents, families and students more
6. Be flexible about resource use
7. More support for transition at the end of school

8. More support for transition to school
9. Increase acceptance of difference and disability
10. Develop a nationwide transition policy.

Overall

There was considerable agreement about what would make transitions work better, with respondents highlighting the need to focus on the transition to school and the transition at the end of school.

Respondents reinforced the need to continue using and building on existing best practice and the transition programmes that were proving successful.

They supported information sharing, committing time and resources to transitions and improving coordination, leadership and planning. Involving families and students more, being flexible about resource use and increasing the awareness of disability in the community were other ideas emphasised.

The idea of a national transition policy that would incorporate best practice was suggested.

Feedback provided an insight into respondents' experiences of transition and ways to improve those experiences.

"Special needs children need transition-to-school programmes, school is a huge change in what they have been used to, most haven't had the structure of a school environment and need help adjusting to this, which puts a great strain on the new entrance teachers." [Unknown]

"An essential contributing factor to positive outcomes for students with special [education] needs is the transition process from one area of education (eg, preschool to primary school, primary school to high school, special school to primary etc)." [Unknown]

Most respondents showed support for improving transitions.

"There needs to be a clear pathway with resources in place. There needs to be a positive attitude towards transition. There needs to be teamwork between early childhood education services and schools. There needs to be preparation and support during the transition process." [Unknown]

"Transitions need to begin early, so the parents have a chance to look thoroughly at what is on offer, so they can make an informed decision over time, for their child to be placed in the best possible school that will cater to that child's needs. Agencies and different Ministry [of Education], Special Education offices need to speak together - not just pass files over, when a student moves districts. A lot of time can be wasted with the new lead worker trialling strategies that may have been tried and abandoned in the past, if this is not documented accurately or spoken about between lead workers."
[Education and special education sector representatives]

A few (about five per cent) said they were satisfied with the status quo as they were experiencing it, while a similar number (nearly seven per cent) said transitions were working well but could be improved.

"I feel transitions are effective at present." [Education and special education sector representative]

"I don't know, my son's transition to [school] was well planned and executed." [Parent and health and disability sector representative]

"Our experience shows that seamless transitions are prevalent in Southland with schools liaising with special education units with workshops and businesses." [Government sector representative]

"RTLB provide a seamless year zero to 10 service, which facilitates transition from primary to secondary sectors. Good protocols between RTLB and the Ministry [of Education], Special Education ensure effective transitions between early childhood and primary sectors. RTLB regional and national association facilitates communication between clusters, assisting effective transitions between geographical regions. No additional funding required." [Education sector representative]

"The present transitioning system has proven to be very useful, from preschool to primary and primary to intermediate. This of course depends on the personnel involved." [Education sector representative]

"Special education is currently providing a wonderful job in transition[ing] children within and between schools. This is reflected by the client satisfaction survey, expertise, planning and professionalism of staff." [Unknown]

"Transition programme for ORRS students is working reasonably well through Ministry of Social Development funding. However, there could be greater success, if a coordinator was employed in the last two years of each student's schooling, to source more specific and appropriate work placements or programmes in the community. Each community is unique in what it offers and it takes considerable time to find suitable positions for special needs students. Since 'Pathways to Transition' was introduced, many of the providers are no longer able to offer suitable employment. This was targeted at people with physical disabilities and has disempowered our students with intellectual disabilities." [Unknown]

Others (18 per cent) believed transition needed to change. Many from this group also gave examples of what worked or could work to make transitions more effective.

"MUCH! There are changes at school levels that need to occur, there are changes within the workforce that need to be developed and changes within society and the community to ensure that our kids can move to employment. Some of our kids with special needs will not have the skills to manage full-

time work, but they should be supported to extend their skills always. As well, when transition starts it should be done in consideration with families. Not every kid with special needs will stay at school until they are 21, some may want to leave at 18 like their siblings. Therefore, schools should be encouraging planning with families about future opportunities and as part of that, considering future opportunities of transitions into alternative environments. Be it having a job, doing a course, or further education. As well these options need to be available for our kids.” [Parent or caregiver]

The majority group (nearly 60 per cent of respondents) did not say what their current experience was in regard to transitions, but showed support for positive transition processes and described the components that make transition work well.

Overall, there was a significant level of agreement among respondents about the things that contribute to a good transition. For example, there was considerable support for the Christchurch Lead School Transition Service described briefly in the discussion document and for the discussion document’s suggested areas of improvement.

Respondents generally agreed there was not enough time, commitment or resources available for transitions. Feedback suggested that improvement to the transition process would arise from better relationships among agencies, schools and services and better sharing of information.

Some respondents expressed a need to improve the transition process not only for students with High needs, but for students with moderate special education needs as well. It was noted that the transition process should also be improved for students with ASD, a group of students particularly vulnerable to the unpredictability that comes with change.

“Students identified as having moderate to Very High needs can be disadvantaged by the current systems and processes practised by the Ministry [of Education], Special Education. There is a perception that their limited budget is inaccurately targeted to meet administrative and management needs rather than keeping tabs on children who are already in the system - children coming into primary schools meeting ORRS criteria for example.” [Unknown]

The top three transition periods noted as most crucial included the transition to school, the change (or changes) between schools and the transition to employment, further education or community-based activities at the end of a student’s school career.

A few respondents noted several other (more frequent) transition phases as important. For example, respondents said moving between classes was difficult for some students, as was coping with the absence of familiar teachers and other school staff and adjusting to relief teachers. They said the same factors that needed to be in place for more significant, but less frequent transitions needed to also be in place to improve these day-to-day changes.

Respondents contributed a range of both positive and negative examples of the transition process.

“There are a few great organisations that readily facilitate the transfer of information and this has been hugely beneficial for the provision of learning for students. Astec (Christchurch) has been the best team our school has worked with - proactive before we even received a student.” [Unknown]

“Research demonstrates the value of well-planned transition. Why would we fund a student in early childhood and then withdraw all support when they are moving to a new environment, new teacher, new peers?” [Unknown]

1. Improve information sharing

Feedback on sharing information included a range of ideas such as agencies improving the way they worked together or having a single-agency approach that would make information more readily available to everyone involved in the transition process.

Respondents generally wanted information to be easily available and up-to-date to ease the transition process and to transfer what was learned from one setting to the next.

Generally the value of having information about what a student could do and what they liked to do and sharing details about what had worked with a particular student and why, was seen as essential in a student’s transition from one school or class to the next.

Parents noted that having agencies, schools and service providers who worked together well and respected one another’s part in the transition made it easier for the family and child or young person to make a successful transition.

There was general support for sharing assessment and programme information, although concerns about sharing personal information were noted by respondents. Also noted was the need to follow the appropriate protocols for keeping and sharing information, ensuring that parents and, where possible the child or young person, were well-informed of the process as it occurred.

Respondents also said that having comprehensive, up-to-date and accessible information about the support and services available and agency responsibilities was very important.

“We couldn’t agree more with the comments about agencies needing to share assessment data so that students are not ‘assessed to death’ as sometimes happens. We have developed a simple one-page assessment summary, which has be[en] trialled. We use this when transitioning students from one educational setting to another. We also take responsibility for physically taking students to their new school the term before, making an official visit and taking pictures of parts of the school, eg, the office, the tuck shop etc. We use this to make a pictorial resource for them so they are as familiar as possible with their new surroundings. If the change in setting involves moving from one SLS teacher to another within our cluster, we both work with the student either before and, or after the transition to ensure they are secure

and comfortable. We try to meet the staff who will be responsible for our student in their new setting so we can share information orally as well as providing written records.” [Special education sector representative]

2. Commit more time to the process

Taking the time needed for a successful transition and getting the timing right were both considered important components of a good transition for all students, but particularly for students with ASD.

Starting the transition process early enough and allowing people time to establish relationships, modify property, set up equipment and to get everyone comfortable and confident with change was strongly advocated.

However, some respondents said committing time to the transition process was often not valued or prioritised. Therefore, parents felt pushed to the next service or setting, rather than guided and facilitated and left with a positive experience.

“Time needs to be allocated to transition. It is an extremely important time and needs to run smoothly for all. It is hard when information becomes lost or assessments are being done again. All agencies need to be committed.”
[Unknown]

“Time set aside to liaise regarding the transition of the student from year to year and school to school. [The] lead worker transitions [the] student for a length of time. Schools need to have skills to help with transitions.”
[Unknown]

“Time - both with parents and school. Parents need to feel assured that the educational placement is correct for their child. Parents may need to talk to other parents about a decision. Parents need to be aware of the services and facilities available to their child at different schools and be happy with their choice. Parents also need to understand that different schools do not necessarily offer the same choices (unit versus mainstreaming) and classroom support. Parents need to be very aware of what (finite) funding comes with their child and how it will be used. The child's incoming teacher and other children need to be aware of the child's needs and preparation and equipment needs to be in place prior to the child's arrival and during transition visits. Staff at both centres need to meet and see how some familiarity can be kept during and after the transition. The child needs to be well informed of what is happening as best as possible. Use of photos, pictures, explanations of timetables etc. With intermediate and high school transitions visiting the school, without other pupils, to be geographically orientated and to meet staff before starting school.” [Unknown]

“To enable a positive transition, there should be good communication between agencies and the stakeholders should be informed ahead of time. They should have other options open to them and not be coerced to take one path due to lack of another option. There should be feedback from all parties concerned.

Services and support should be appropriate, fair, regular, consistent and accessible. " [Unknown]

3. Improve transition coordination and leadership

Respondents talked about the need for well-coordinated transitions. For many, this idea was expressed as a need to work with the same person (ie, an education support worker) across settings (ie, early childhood education service and school).

Some felt a well-coordinated transition would ensure information, processes and practices were transferred across settings successfully and would give the transitioning student the continuity of support from a known person. Using SENCOs or RTLB as transition coordinators was often suggested.

Some respondents suggested student transitions be coordinated by a lead worker using a lead agency approach where roles were formally appointed. Others suggested specialists from a separate agency took the lead, with an added advocacy role.

The need for agencies and schools to value and adequately fund the transition process was seen as important. Respondents referred to the need for schools and agencies to see transition as an integral time in a student's life - a time that could set up his or her educational future.

"In our district, each school has a special education liaison person. In addition each child who is ORRS verified has a lead worker at the school. Transition works well when [the] early intervention teacher can handover [the] lead worker role during the later stages of transition to the lead worker at the school. If the child is not verified, that lead worker is generally a speech-language therapist who is generally continuing to work with the child in the school setting. Between the liaison person and the new lead worker transition has [the] potential to be seamless." [Education and special education sector representative]

"Improve collaboration between Health and Education in preschool years. [It] should be mandatory that there is evidence of multi-agency collaboration and service delivery for all preschool children for whom an ORRS application is made and [for] all students who receive early intervention services. [Have] common pathways and agreed protocols regarding service delivery between all organisations [that] are or should be involved." [Health or disability sector representative]

"It would be good to have someone who would take responsibility for the overall care, coordination of the various personnel. Sometimes there are a number of agencies involved and they need coordinating and accountability processes. Transitions need to be well planned and well-resourced ensuring adequate transition funding is available for a suitable length of time. The fact that schools have to manage personality conflicts that can arise between the various stakeholder is time consuming and stressful." [Education and special education sector representative]

"In our cluster, the early education transition advisor is proactive, as we are ourselves, and the transition into primary school is well-coordinated with early interventions, supportive parent and teacher meetings with early childhood education [services] and primary teachers etc. The problem area seems to be transition from primary into secondary school, which can be fragmented and not as supportive or coordinated as it needs to be. Primary staff attempt to negotiate a real transition process but it tends not to be such a priority for secondary and can end up as lip-service transition. It would be useful for secondary to have a mind shift to realise how important it is to link between the sectors and parent community to set students up for success. It may also be useful to have RTLB linking between the schools to coordinate the transition, especially for students with moderate special educational needs."
[Unknown]

4. Better planning for transition

The need for long-term planning guided by the goals and aspirations of families and students was emphasised by respondents. Some respondents recommended developing either individual education or transition plans to help people plan, prioritise and follow up.

The need to ensure planning took account of what a student could do and what a student struggled with (but could achieve with support) were identified.

"Individual plans should be collaborative with evidence of parent directed, teaming with key issues, accountability and intervention outcomes clearly identified and measured. Transitions out of school at the end of schooling should be part of the IEP in the last two to three years of schooling." [Health or disability sector representative]

"An individualised transition plan is required for each special needs student. It would be useful for a series of standard templates to be available for the various groups of students, which can be individualised as required. For example ASD students need [i] multiple visits starting well before the end of the year prior to starting the new school [ii] meeting with future teachers. [iii] a booklet relating to the new school containing: pictures of their new school, basic timetables, lists of food available from the canteen, school rules and expectations, school map, teacher photos, [the school's] social story. It is useful for the student to know who their form teacher will be and if they have several teachers throughout the day have met those as well. Secondary schools often do not know at the end of the year who is teaching what in the next year. In this case the student being transitioned should be allowed to attend school a day or so early to meet briefly with all relevant teachers. Each teacher, with whom the student comes into contact, should be given a profile of the student which is updated each year. Input needs to be gained from staff, parents and any health service with whom the student is working. When planning the form classes all efforts should be made to place the special needs student with at least one student they are comfortable being with. Schools need to be made aware early on that a special needs student will be attending

so they can ensure they have ramps, equipment and knowledge in place from the students' first day." [Parent or caregiver]

"Feedback from our parents indicates that they have no idea of what is involved in each step from early childhood to intermediate and secondary and beyond. The greatest source of stress was reported for the secondary transition to the workplace/tertiary placement and the associated after school activities/supports. 1. The code of practice would provide for learning and transition plans at each stage from teacher to teacher, from school to school and from school into the community. The transition plan would look like an IEP. The plan should include documentation and verbal transfer of notes and assessments from one teacher and school to the next, one department to the next and should include information provided by schools, families and other involved parties. The transition plan should be presented to the board of trustees. Models of transition plans should be on a website and in publications to inform schools and families of options and procedures that nationally follow best practice. Included in this plan would be all the learning goals (National Standards and IEPs) set when the child is four years of age for the remainder of their school years. This plan could be used in conjunction with the Ministry of Health, Accident Compensation Corporation, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Social Development. The transition plans must have parental input and reflect the family goals for their child. All parents of children of all ages are continually thinking about the future of their children. They need to know and keep in mind the preparation required at a young age to ensure employment and community involvement when their child is an adult. Families without special needs students also do this. Why should the families with special needs child[ren] be denied this perspective and support?" [Health or disability sector representative and community or non-government organisation representative]

5. Involve parents, families and students more

Two sub-themes emerged within the broader theme of involving parents, families and students more.

They were to:

- involve them in the development and implementation of the transition process
- have schools and agencies be accountable for giving them information and support and for the commitments schools and agencies made to families.

Most respondents noted the importance of having parents and families (the adults) involved in transitions. A few noted the need for other children and young people to be involved in problem solving and social support.

“Most importantly the student’s voice and their family’s voice needs to be heard.” [Unknown]

“Recognition that transitions involve the child and family. Early transition visits and involvement by parents and child in the planning for the next steps is good for school, child and parents.” [Unknown]

“Guidelines for parents, early childhood education services and schools with suggested timeframes, questions and ideas to support the process. A key worker identified (within the education sector?) who has the knowledge and skills to guide the process and work across agencies to coordinate and organise the process with families.” [Education sector representative]

“Clear communications between parents, schools, agencies, caregivers; student involvement in decision-making where possible and reasonable.” [Unknown]

6. Be flexible about resource use

Respondents commented on the discussion document idea about using resources more flexibly, giving a range of examples.

They suggested starting school any time between five and six-years-of-age to better reflect students’ needs and adapting the resources to suit. Staying at primary school and going directly to a secondary school (missing intermediate altogether) or staying longer at intermediate school and using ORRS teacher’s aide time in work or community settings in the transition from school were suggestions made.

Feedback suggested some people were enjoying a degree of flexibility when it came to resource use, while others experienced an inflexible system.

“The allowable funding for transition out of school should be able to be used more flexibly as transition out of school often needs to take more than one year. This should be able to be arranged on a case-by-case basis.” [Parent or caregiver]

“A greater overlap when transitioning between early childhood [education services] and school. The sudden change of service from early intervention to school on the child’s fifth birthday (or a couple of weeks after) is quite traumatic for the parents when all previous hands-on physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech-language therapy services are stopped.” [Unknown]

“Some transitions need to be more gradual than they currently are as preschools in general do not seem to prepare children well for the school environment. Flexibility in funding could be helpful, for example, supporting a skilled preschool staff person to accompany the child and support them at school for a period of time until a teacher’s aide can be trained.” [Unknown]

“At present the funding in this package is allocated inflexibly, whereas support needs often vary over time and typically are greater at times of transition. One suggestion is a system of banking the ORRS funding package over time, with the IEP determining the funding needed over the ensuing six-month period and if the full funding for the year has not been spent, the capacity to bank any remaining funds to support future needs.” [Community or non-government sector representative]

“Greater flexibility in the use of the student’s ORRS funding package is favoured by [our organisation] and the blindness sector as a whole. This approach recognises that needs vary over time and are greater at times of transition. We envisage that greater flexibility would enable funding to follow the student between schools and that if funding sits with an agency such as [our organisation] and the blindness sector as a whole that the agency would maximise the benefit to be achieved from that funding.” [Community or non-government sector representative]

7. More support for transition at the end of school

Respondents noted the limited options available to students ready to transition to life beyond school. Some felt no options were available to young people with the most severe needs and others noted particular difficulties for students living in more rural and remote areas.

Better coordination and stronger links with the Ministry of Social Development and post-school providers was emphasised, with feedback suggesting the need for better information about the options and support available. In some areas, however, feedback showed a satisfactory level of information was available.

Respondents talked about ensuring that students could leave school when it was age appropriate by using education funding such as ORRS and Gateway as well as Ministry of Social Development funding for vocational support. Changing Government policy so that Very High need students did not need to wait until they turned 21 before Ministry of Social Development funding became available was considered a positive change.

“Transition from high school to the next step has many problems. For example, accessing information is trying for parents, with [the] need to connect with several agencies. [Also] the transition coordinator role is not very successful, as they tend to be visiting presences while the school does the practical aspects of the work. [And] there are too few jobs for people with High needs. Where they exist, they often require independent travel to the workplace and that can be beyond some individuals. Employers continue to use occupational safety and health regulations to deny positions to High needs individuals.” [Unknown]

“When students are contemplating leaving school, there doesn’t seem to be enough flexibility and time allowance for the post-school transition agencies. These students may need several years to make successful transitions.” [Unknown]

“Transition can be effective. We have a programme that includes i) regular IEPs with multi-agency team. ii) Attending subjects at an interest level or finishing off credits (correspondence or in house). iii) Attending work experience with support from school or agency depending on needs. iv) Attending life skill courses outside school to begin transition into the wider community. v) Using teacher’s aide or .1 teachers to develop appropriate independence skills (cooking, travel, leisure etc) agencies and family [or] whānau are pleased with the programme as it is flexible enough to meet the needs of students but also starts the process of including outside agencies who will eventually take on a coordination role. This process usually takes two to three years to be successful.” [Education sector representative]

“For us in a college setting, we regard all the years our students are with us (13 to 21 years of age) as transition to adulthood years. Our programme and IEP goals always bear in mind, what will the student most need in their future? We find using EMERGE in the last year students are at school very helpful. I think it’s also good practice for students to have work experience or transition visits to the after school agency ... in the last few years they are at school. This of course relies heavily on teacher’s aide support, to get students to work experience and support them when there to acquire skills needed for success. All funding is needed for students at school! Extra funding is needed to support students to safely participate in community or work settings, once they leave school.” [Education and special education sector representative]

“Students who leave school need appropriate supports to transition into the community. Goals must be documented well before students leave the education system. The PATH Plan (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) provides a sound model for transition. Planning needs to include family [or] whānau, specialists, teachers, the child, funding providers. Valued post-school options for students with High and Very High needs are still very limited. Supported Employment Services work very hard with limited funding to enable students to access valued work in their local community, however, traditionally young people leaving school at 21 are still marginalised and often families [are] very isolated. Families who have received high-quality services and support within a special school are often required to leave their jobs to

look after young adults who have little funding and limited options post-school. We suggest identified ongoing funding that acknowledges the true meaning of transition. This funding should not be taken from the education budget as suggested. It could come from the Ministry of Social Development.” [Education sector representative]

“There is a lack of clarity regarding transition from school. No-one seems to know who holds all the information so this is a fragmented and poorly managed process and can be incredibly stressful for families. There appear to not be enough places in post-school day programmes and training programmes and these often seem to be run by caregivers rather than educated [or] trained staff. This is an area the Government probably needs to review and budget for a significant improvement in options and services.” [Unknown]

“There appears to be no focus on transitioning students out of the secondary sector. With a progression of students to no service at the end of secondary school, 21 year old special education students often find themselves isolated. The provision of specialists who could assist families in gaining some independence for their [children] would be a worthwhile investment in the future of these young people. Communication is the key. The provision of specialist careers advice within schools would also assist students in creating connections whilst at school with future employment opportunities. There are some effective structures within schools already which could be applied, with specialist attention to special needs students.” [Education sector representative]

8. More support for transition to school

Respondents expressed concern about the transition of young children who, in early childhood, were supported by an education support worker and Ministry of Education early intervention specialists, but who, at school-age, no longer qualified for ongoing specialist support. Respondents were, however, supportive of early intervention teachers who supported a new entrant’s transition into school.

“Transitions from early childhood [education] services to school generally work very well for students who have access to ORRS funding. Other children with moderate needs who are not eligible for funding tend to have the most difficulty during this time. These children may not yet be eligible for SLS funding, or other specialist services and are left to struggle in schools without direct support. This is most often the case for children with ASD whose needs are not severe enough to meet criteria for ORRS. These children have often already been identified at preschool as requiring support, however, there are no options for them at school. Early childhood intervention services are often not funded to continue to work with the child as they enter school, yet this is a vital part of supporting the child to transition into school. Continuing to provide this support will ease the stress of the transition for the child and their family and also by supporting the school to understand the child’s needs.” [Unknown]

Involving RTLB in the transition of students from early childhood education services to school was seen as an option, as was involving SENCOs.

“Transitions could be improved by having early childhood [education service] staff better educated in what is going to happen when their role finishes and the child moves into the compulsory school sector. [And] ensuring there is flexibility in the system to allow special needs children to remain in the early childhood [education service] sector until they are six-years-old without a loss in support worker [and] funding SENCOs in each school to coordinate the transitioning of a child into their school, along with the early childhood [education service] sector key worker, instead of the compulsory sector key worker.” [Parent or caregiver]

“Being flexible about the transition processes and setting up ongoing relationships and processes between early childhood education services and schools can enhance the transitions and make it a an ordinary experience for all children. Less rigid ruling around children with special needs having to start school at five or their funding cut off. This is bullying. They are legally entitled to stay in preschool [un]til six and should be funded to do so if necessary.” [Unknown]

“Many schools allow their class teacher or SENCO to visit the child in his or her early childhood setting, prior to school enrolment. This works well and allows the early childhood [education service] teachers opportunity to pass on important aspects of the child’s wellbeing and learning. All schools should consider visiting the early childhood [education] centre as an important part of the transition process.” [Education sector representative]

“Transition into primary school is a milestone for New Zealand children. Let it be just the same for children with disabilities; welcoming, enthusiastic and normal in that it is just what we would expect for them as for any other child. As a parent of an ORRS-funded student I am still moved when I think how affirming and positive the experience of starting school was; for us as parents but also for her [so very proud] and quietly so for her older brother. This sister COULD be a part of his normal world. No fuss or fanfare. Behind the scenes make sure there is good communication, everyone involved knows each other and their roles, and all are open to ask whatever questions concern them. Remember that the young school-starter needs to be a full part of this. They need to see and feel that all is well between the adults around them. A critical factor is that the non-family people involved must respect the values and vision of the child and family; just as we do for the other families who want their child to be a fireman, lawyer or schoolteacher.” [Unknown]

9. Increase acceptance of difference and disability

Respondents said early childhood education services, school, tertiary providers and the wider community needed to be more accepting of difference and disability for transitions to work well.

Society needed to see inclusion as an issue affecting the whole community. It needed to believe people with disabilities should be and can be included in the life of the school, work and community.

Respondents said that while young people with disabilities expected a relatively smooth transition into the tertiary sector, the tertiary sector was not always well prepared to receive them. One respondent particularly noted that the tertiary code *Kia Orite, Achieving Equity: The New Zealand Code of Practice for an Inclusive Tertiary Education Environment for Students with Impairments*, had not been implemented in all institutions.

Respondents also noted employers were wary of employing young people with disabilities, failing to see the many strengths they would bring to the workplace and choosing only to see the problems.

Feedback suggested developing friendship groups, as part of transition planning, to give students access to a wider pool of knowledge, support, understanding and acceptance.

“There needs to be much more awareness of invisible impairment - far too many principals and teachers untrained in special needs think students in wheelchairs are the only form of impairment! Mainstream teachers and principals need to understand the spectrum of difference in disability - people with special needs have individual needs, as they are not all the same simply because they have a disability or impairment.” [Parent or caregiver]

“Schools need to be more understanding and accepting of all pupils at all stages.” [Unknown]

“Schools need to have a ‘can do’ attitude and accept families and children regardless of their needs. They need to be welcoming and open to support children in their needs.” [Unknown]

“Commitment across [the] education sector to [the] concept of inclusion. Need for total buy-in by schools and teachers to [the] philosophy that children with special needs have [the] right to be educated in mainstream to ensure successive teachers in a student’s school life will take responsibility for that student when he or she moves into their class. [This] links back to [the] need for whole-school training (ongoing) in special needs.” [Unknown]

10. Develop a nationwide transition policy

The theme of having a national policy or plan was mentioned by a small number of respondents. However, the idea brought together much of what people said was required to improve transitions.

For example, feedback suggested the policy would need to cover all Government and non-government agencies working in disability, education and post-school services. It would outline what is already known about good transition practice and be available to support and guide people working with students during the transition period and,

perhaps, become mandatory. Multi-agency protocols would be developed to get consistent use of good practice and common processes. Training was suggested as well to support the policy's implementation.

"A nationalised profile of guidelines for transitions of special education students." [Unknown]

"In my experience this can sometimes be done quite well by schools, but other times it is poorly done or not at all. Set a protocol guideline for schools or other services to use. This would give schools and SENCOs a guide or checklist to assist them in transition ... This might suggest to run a transition meeting with current and future teachers, therapists and parents etc. The guideline might suggest things to consider at the meeting like current academic abilities and last IEP. Current level of support and external agencies involved. Property modifications and if an application needs to be considered at the new school. Current equipment and the use of it and handover papers for each school to sign. Parent's and child's concerns. Support agencies and how they can support the transition. Any new referrals required to [an]other service. A walk around [the] new environment. Planned visit to [the] new school and new teacher if appropriate. There are currently poor options for special needs children leaving school at 19-to-21 years of age. Opportunities at this end of schooling are essential." [Education sector representative]

"Consistent formalised national model, eg, Christchurch transition model." [Education and special education sector representative]

"Schools need agreed policies on transition and the passing on of information. Transition from early childhood [education services] to school, for instance, needs to be better handled and protocols for early childhood [education] services and schools to use would be helpful. The Christchurch lead school transition service model needs to be replicated, but this is not sufficient. Students moving from one district to another are also in transition and, therefore, national policies about the handing on of information and entitlement to support need to be in place. We have heard of examples where ORRS students, whose financial entitlement to aid ought to be able to move smoothly with them, have lost their entitlement when they changed from one school to another. This is wasteful, if the child has to be reassessed and is destructive for the child and family." [Education and special education sector representative]

Transitions and agencies working together (Q3)

Agencies working better together

This section looks at the issue of better cooperation among agencies typically involved in special education, ie, the Ministries of Health and Education, Accident Compensation Corporation and Ministry of Social Development.

It starts by revisiting the Review of Special Education 2010 discussion document preamble to question 3: How could services be better coordinated and focused on the needs of students and families? It summarises the key themes that emerged from the Review of Special Education submission process and features some of the public responses to the question.

What we asked

Overall

The discussion document began this section by reflecting on the typical experience of families and whānau whose children have special education needs. It reflected on their level of interaction with multiple agencies and the separate eligibility and funding application processes for each one.

The discussion document proposed a single assessment or eligibility process to make it easier for families and whānau. It proposed agencies work more closely together with one agency acting as the lead agency.

Key question

The discussion document asked:

- How could services be better coordinated and focused on the needs of students and families? (Q3).

This question received 1,161 responses, the majority were from education sector representatives (682), with responses from special education sector representatives (396) and parents (376) being about equal. This question attracted 174 responses from non-government or community representatives and 147 responses from health or disability sector representatives. Six students contributed their views. Note, respondents could select to be represented in more than one group.

What you said

Key themes

1. Retain and improve existing services
2. Provide all services through a single agency
3. Involve families more.

Overall

Respondents contributed a range of ideas about better coordinating services and improving the focus on students and families.

Nearly 60 per cent of respondents indicated that services and agencies probably needed to continue as separate entities.

But respondents wanted agencies and service providers to find ways to overcome service fragmentation and streamline the range of assessment, diagnosis, funding and philosophical approaches across agencies.

Respondents recommended services and agencies have a single coordinator for a family across all services and improve the way they shared information.

Nearly 20 per cent raised the idea of setting up a system of local centres that offered all special education services under one roof or through a single management structure.

Agencies or entities put forward for the centre management role included the Ministry of Education, school clusters, a school set up as a resource centre or a separate agency set up specifically for the purpose.

Only a few respondents suggested centres should go beyond education to include a broader range of services.

1. Retain and improve existing services

The majority (more than half) of respondents looking at this question felt services and agencies should probably continue to function as separate entities and cautioned against losing or diluting the specific focus of particularly agencies (which worked well) or setting up one super agency that ran the risk of becoming impractical to manage and unwieldy.

However, there was overall agreement about the need to overcome service fragmentation and streamline the range of assessment, diagnosis, funding and philosophical approaches across agencies.

The idea put forward by most respondents was that of keeping separate agencies but improving the way they work and having more coordinated services.

Coordinating services

Respondents cautioned against making changes that would make access to services more difficult or time consuming. They also emphasised the importance of maintaining a level of flexibility within the system that allowed for local solutions to local issues.

They raised the possibility that, if not managed well, involving too many agencies in processes such as assessment may result in added complication or confusion,

particularly for families. They also said any change needed to give people access to the range of services currently available.

“At present our school receives prompt service from RTLB, but it takes significantly longer for pediatric assessments or response from the Ministry of Education, Special Education. There is a fear that the process would take longer to set referral meetings if representatives of each of the main agencies had to be on a panel. There is also a concern that politics would come into play when one lead agency is perceived to be in charge and directing others. At our school, the SENCO has significant release time so can coordinate IEPs, where there can be sharing of information from parents and all agencies. Length of time to access services is pathetic. Better access to Ministry of Education, Special Education staff who KNOW and can support school. Need for regular support of SENCOs, teachers and teachers’ aides by Special Education staff who KNOW STRATEGIES to employ and are prepared to work effectively with other agencies.” [Education sector representative]

“Services to Deaf children are well-coordinated and focused. Specialist teaching services are supported by an effective management structure that monitors assessment programme planning and implementation communicating with the community and maintaining a rigorous self-review programme. This effective specialist teaching service could be provided to more Deaf and hearing-impaired students if ORRS teacher time was deployed in a different way to increase specialist teacher positions for services to students in mainstream contexts and improve their learning outcomes. This would also improve accountability for use of the ORRS teacher component. Currently Deaf Education Centres and the Ministry of Education, Special Education provide services to Deaf children. The services provided by these organisations complement each other. Clear definitions of roles, understanding of each others roles, good communications and collaboration is essential. It is essential that governance, management and resource allocation decisions be kept at regional and local levels for the effective and coordinated specialist teacher provision to be maintained and student outcomes continue to be enhanced.” [Special education sector representative]

Working together

Having a single person or coordinator available to support a child or young person with special education needs, also to support their family, was the most commonly suggested way to work together better.

A few respondents thought the role should start early in a child's life, continue throughout his or her life and involve working with a child's family.

Respondents suggested the coordinator role could be carried out by: [i] someone independent of a service agency or agencies, (ie, an independent advocate), [ii] by someone within an agency, albeit, with a specific role (ie, an advisor or coordinator), or [iii] by someone very involved in a child's service provision (ie, a child's case manager, key worker or lead worker). Respondents did not, however, show a strong preference for any particular one of the three ideas listed above.

"Every child and family should have a navigator to coordinate services for them - one person to deal with to coordinate care." [Parent or caregiver]

"An advocate assigned to each child that can follow them through." [Parent and education representative]

"A key worker needs to maintain contact with the child, family, specialists, community and school over a sustained period. To effectively lead the team they need to see the child more often than the IEP. SENCOs would be the obvious choice for this role. However, they must have access to ongoing professional development to fulfill this role effectively." [Special education sector representative]

"Appointing lead workers who coordinate the efforts of everyone. These should be in a central location with meeting rooms and places for parents and teachers to meet and work with everyone involved with the child. Being on the same site allows informal conversations and sharing of ideas and resources. This has worked very well in Greymouth where the RTLB and [the Ministry's Special Education staff] share an office." [Special education sector representative]

Respondents in favour of the lead agency idea suggested any future system should ensure that the agency with responsibility for coordination, appointed staff to fulfill that role. Many respondents referred to the Strengthening Families programme as a useful model for working together and providing a child with a range of well-coordinated services.

"Appoint a lead agency to manage the student all the way through from the first point of intervention through to self management in the community if able." [Education and special education sector representative]

"There needs to be a lead agency with responsibility for coordinating the services and other agencies involved with the family. There must be continuity so that the family is able to develop a relationship with that lead agent and

trust can be developed. This service needs to be in place before the family is in crisis.” [Education sector representative]

Respondents who wanted independent coordination or advocacy expressed a range of views about who was best positioned to fulfill the role.

“By using an agency, with a parents’ advocate, to help parents with unbiased information about any transitions...schooling etc. available to children [and] special needs children. The emphasis needs to be on being unbiased or connected with any one schooling system.” [Parent or caregiver]

“Parents advocating for their children need a readily available, totally neutral and easily accessible advocate to deal with inappropriate and unacceptable school, principal and education issues.” [Parent or caregiver]

“I believe a single assessment process with a single set of supports would be efficient. I also think that independent coordinators or advocates be assigned to each family as a matter of right, not necessarily as a matter of need.” [Unknown]

“In my experience families of special needs students appreciate it when one key agency takes responsibility for case management and acts as a coordinator of other agencies involved in the case. It is extremely frustrating for families when the personnel involved in cases keeps changing (this occurs frequently, unfortunately). If one agency takes the lead, at least the family has one service that they get to know well and can easily communicate with. There is typically a gap between services working in health and those working in education. At both a local and national level there is very poor coordination between the various services. Private providers of services also need to be incorporated into inter-agency coordination.” [Education sector representative]

Sharing information

Respondents stressed the need for all agencies to share information about the services and support offered to families, as part of a culture of working together. They also wanted agencies to share access to good-quality information about the child’s (and family’s) requirements and the interventions the agencies were involved in.

“Often some of the tension is not the number of agencies involved, but the repetition of the requirements for funding and support each agency generates. There needs to be some structure that eliminates a lot of the duplication. There needs to be a structure that allows specialists to be available to all children with special educational needs without the need for significant travel by either party. This could include rotating specialists to rural areas.” [Education sector representative]

“Creation of a one-file system. This would be a computerised, centralised file where all the professionals on the team would post assessments, planning and evidence of efficacy and implementation of strategies. Families would have

open access to all files at any time. Certain files of a sensitive nature may be private, eg, where a family member or student has expressed a criticism of another agency that is off the record. This would also enable internal and external case managers to assess at a glance if service delivery is up to the required standard. An independent body ... could provide auditing.” [Parent or caregiver]

“We concur with the acknowledgement in the discussion document that ‘parents and children [may have to] repeat processes’ and assessment of their needs. For many families, this is a frustrating and often demeaning part of the special education experience. We would propose a move to a model similar to the Local Area Coordination (LAC) model. LAC takes a citizenship approach to service provision based on facilitation, not assessment. This fits well with the approach proposed in the Step Change Report, particularly in terms of funding-holding and facilitation of education choices. With this model, a disabled person and their family develop a relationship with a key worker who gets to know the family, understand and build their aspirations for a good life, facilitates natural supports and builds inclusive communities and assists people to access any services they need. They also allocate discretionary funding to individuals and families, with simple and varying levels of accountability that match the level of resourcing. An LAC system would also be able to provide a holistic approach to service provision. For example, a family may have needs [that] may not be directly related to the school environment, but do have an impact on the education of disabled children and young people. A good example is where a key worker finds that a family cannot afford an accessible desk for the young person to do homework on. Under an LAC system, the key worker working with the whole family would be able to apply for funding to provide this as a service - a low-cost outcome of benefit to the student and their family. We strongly recommend that while the LAC model is being considered for New Zealand, that outcomes for educational provision are also considered. We believe that the LAC model also holds solutions to questions addressed in 5(a) and 5(b).” [Non-government organisation representative]

“The discussion document aptly points out the potential for students with special educational needs to be in contact with a myriad of agencies - the difficulties this creates and the often numerous assessments that occur bear testimony to the concerns that exist. [Our organisation] supports the view that agencies should coordinate their activities. A single shared understanding of what is required to meet the student’s needs along with responsibilities as to who does what would [then] become clear. Therefore, agencies should take a more consistent and holistic approach that leads to core data being exchanged by them. This would lessen the likelihood of stress for a family where unnecessary, repetitive assessment processes occur, as each agency seeks to obtain the same core data set. We take this opportunity to identify a model being piloted that has agencies working together and sharing their assessments. This is the Lu’i Ola Auckland Pacific Disability Plan’s Mangere Access Pilot. Agencies involved include Ministry of Health, Ministry of Pacific and Island Affairs, Ministry of Education, Accident Compensation Corporation, local district health boards, Housing New Zealand, local councils and Ministry

of Social Development. Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Pacific and Island Affairs are the ... plan's sponsors. [Our organisation] firmly believes that over-assessment of students is detrimental and that everything must be done to minimise stressful situations arising for students with special educational needs. We encourage the Ministry of Education to explore the feasibility of using concepts from the above mentioned pilot, for special education. Regardless of what is put in place for students with special education needs, it is paramount that this is done in coordination with the student, their parents, families and the school." [Special education sector representative]

Single assessment process

A small number of respondents commented about a possible single assessment approach that could be used across multiple agencies, noting the benefits of fewer assessments for families and believing the move could make the system more child or student focused.

"You raise the possibility of a single assessment and eligibility process and a single agency providing supports. We note that this would be consistent with the Whānau Ora policy currently under development. We believe that there would be efficiency and effectiveness gains if pupils and their families had only to deal with one agency, which had the authority, resources, local knowledge and trust of Government to make assessments and seamlessly provide the support that they need." [Government sector representative]

"A single assessment process, ensuring a whole of Government response to an individual child's circumstances which results in the appointment of an independent whole of Government service coordinator for families as early as possible, would be the most efficient and whole child-centred option. The current system results in parents contacting various people, repeating personal stories a large number of times and filling out similar but numerous forms - 'it's depressing and repetitive filling out all those forms, afterwards you're left thinking of all the problems and the negative'. The Ministries and agencies need to communicate in a more effective and efficient manner. Communication with parents, carers and schools needs to be improved to result in a more informed and child-focused support system. There is also a need to hold the NASC agency more accountable to Government, parents and carers. There is a need for the NASC agencies to provide the service coordination aspect of their contract. The NASC agency needs to be able to talk to and coordinate with the education arm of Government. Greater value needs to be placed on parent and family involvement with all processes. Ensure that the funding is as close to the child and family as possible. Families must be involved in all decision-making about the child. The Ministry of Education must assert their leadership role in ensuring equitable, integrated and effective outcomes for disabled children." [Non-government organisation or community representative]

2. Provide all services through a single agency

Providing services through a single agency, under one roof was a theme suggested by around 18 per cent of respondents.

Special education services

Some respondents were interested in amalgamating all special education services as a way to work together more effectively and better meet the needs of students, families and schools. They talked about a model of local centres and, in some cases, connected local centres to a regional or national infrastructure.

They also contributed ideas on how the local centres should be managed, suggesting that the Ministry of Education, school clusters, a school developed as a resource centre or a separate agency could pick up the role. The idea of local centres was referred to in response to other questions as well.

"[Have] all special education agencies under [the] same management, but not school principals [as] they have schools to run. Needs to be another agency like the Ministry of Education, Special Education but under [a] different, more encompassing, more community-based structure where RTLB, psychologists and speech-language therapists can work together (that's all we need, no need for special education advisors or physiotherapists; they can work in the health sector) and have all current funding (RTLB and Ministry, Special Education) under their management." [Special education sector representative]

"Developing clusters of schools [that] will get the current resourcing and allocate it to meet the needs of the students in the cluster." [Education sector representative]

"Resource centres would involve a small community that could work closely together and be easily accessed by schools and families. Being part of the community would ensure more awareness and familiarity with the local needs of students and their families. Local knowledge provides greater understanding of the needs and pooled professional experience would be more efficient and effective in meeting the needs. Less bureaucracy enables better access for families through centres, which are people friendly, [eg,] adequate car space, welcoming entry spaces etc." [Education sector representative]

"By having all sectors working in special education employed by the one agency and removing the current splitting of funding contracts, which has inevitably led, despite the best intentions of good staff, to territorial ownership and protection of information and systems ... which has ultimately effected the delivery of services to the students we are all supposed to be helping. There is also the added costs of multiple management and administration services." [Unknown]

"Simply a one-stop-shop, no-wrong-door approach. Agencies and schools are a daunting proposition for most service users. They are cold, unfriendly places often in high-rise buildings. All services need to be easily accessible through local networks of learning support ... a heartlands-type approach where people are treated with warmth and dignity and feel wanted." [Unknown]

“Governments lately have been tacking on additional services to an already fragmented and confusing system, eg, SLS, ORRS extension. What is needed is to clear the board and start again - redesign special education from the ground up. It would be best to have RTLB, .1 ORRS teachers, Ministry, Special Education staff, hearing and vision, moderate physical services (etc) all under the same employer and in the same office. Each office could support a local cluster of schools. Could be linked by a national professional network for service development, but locally managed and, therefore, responsive to the needs to the local community. This would create a one-stop-shop for parents and schools and improve coordination of services.” [Unknown]

“I think having special education as a national service as part of the Ministry of Education is the best way to provide specialist services. There is just always room for making this better. Having one organisation do this means it is easier to be consistent across the country. Special education staff also have a really good view on inclusion and good skills to support schools with this, as opposed to staff who work in special schools who often seem to be out of the loop.” [Unknown]

“I think it is urgent that the Ministry of Education work as one organisation rather than having major areas of duplication in both management of special education services and non-special education services. There needs to be a way forward to resolve the segregation of the .1 and .2 specialist teachers, the running of special day and residential schools and most particularly the RTLB service. Students and parents are not being well served when two or three arms of the Ministry deal with RTLB for example. One looks at governance issues, while another is on the management committees for case loads and programming and another on accommodation and travel. There needs to be one manager locally who makes sure students and families receive a coordinated service from the Ministry. Locally, all local offices have two managers at the same management level trying to coordinate services for schools, early childhood education services and parents.” [Unknown]

“A central special needs unit attached to a lead school. The unit with all the specialist services attached could then be the liaison point for both mainstream school and families.” [Unknown]

“Again reduce the agencies down to one to be called something like Education Assist to work alongside schools to concentrate on the needs of the student and family. Must be owned and controlled by the Ministry. Will be less confusing if [there is] only one place to go, providing all aspects required can be met. Listen to what the schools and parents are telling you about this child. They have the best knowledge regarding the child.” [Unknown]

Other respondents thought setting up combined, mostly national, services for students with hearing and vision impairments, focusing on education-related services, would improve services and better meet the needs of students and families.

“One national agency in Deaf education with overall responsibility that could better communicate within itself rather than currently different organisations with different systems and responsibilities.” [Unknown]

“Services for Deaf education would be better coordinated and focused on the needs of students if the advisers and specialist teachers worked for the same agency - ideally this would be a specialist centre of excellence. If all this resource was under the same agency a shared vision of best practice would result in less time spent on coordination and more time focused on the needs of students and families.” [Unknown]

“[Our] sector believe[s] there should be more support from the Ministry of Education for families when they initially engage with schools and principals. Parents want choice as to who they have as a lead or key worker. There is a need for a more consistent and holistic approach from the agencies who work with families. The sector recommends that core data is exchanged by agencies to avoid the stress for a family of unnecessarily repetitive assessment processes, as each agency seeks the same core data set.” [Parent and non-government organisation representative]

All services

A small number of respondents suggested amalgamating services (other than those related to special education) into a single agency. Most people talked about separate agencies working together better, as described in the sections above.

“It takes resources to coordinate services. The major problem with New Zealand is the fragmented services we have, especially in the health and education sectors, with all these agencies with their little pots of money rather than a fully-integrated service. We could [deal with] up to five health and education-funded agencies ... at one time and all the unnecessary duplication or agencies hiding behind the Privacy Act. New Zealand has to work towards an integrated service where all the services across the board (in all sectors) are delivered in one local agency such as a children’s centre as happens in Canada. This one agency holds accountability for all services provided including those funded by Vote Education and Health and regularly consults all stakeholders including the parents and school. If we adopt Option C there would be a good chance in future to amalgamate the health-funded services with education to give a fully integrated service.” [Parent and education sector representative]

“Streamline the access, have [a] specialist one-stop-shop that crosses across the health and education sectors.” [Parent and education sector representative]

“A resource centre that has all the agencies on one site. For example, all educational services on one floor. Health Services on another floor.” [Unknown]

“Perhaps have some of the service providers combine under one roof instead of RTLB and the Ministry, Special Education and Access Ability etc. This could cut costs and then there is one common building, one set of admin staff, one place you go to etc.” [Parent or caregiver]

3. Involve families more

Nearly a quarter of respondents commented positively on the discussion document’s points about involving families and students more in assessment, planning, evaluation and any decision-making.

“Involve the families in all decision-making and on decision-making bodies. Acknowledge that parents are the experts about their children and are the ones who know what the needs are for the future.” [Unknown]

“Families with special needs children need more power in a school setting. Currently we are at the mercy of the class teacher. Parents have the job of coordinating all of [the] health and education services for their child and when their child has High or complex needs this is a real stress and is added to when [parents are] kept out of the loop or not included in decision-making at school (including with involvement of education therapists). Currently in health, [the] therapists’ focus is ‘what is best for the child and family?’, yet in education the focus is ‘what is best for the school?’ This leaves parents out of the loop unless schools choose to include them. Our children are our responsibility; [in the] long-term we need to have a significant say in how education works for our children. There is also an issue around the number of therapists involved with our children and the overlapping and coordination of those services. Parents are left to coordinate yet are often out of the loop and no one talks to anyone else and often the child misses out because parents don't know what should be happening. This is even more important in rural places where we see therapists less due to travel and funding.” [Parent or caregiver]

“It has been my preference to leave the arrangements for provision of services to the school to coordinate on my behalf with my input, consultation and agreement. They know best for the area of work that they cover and I know my child best. We always work together to ensure we are achieving the best possible for our tamariki.” [Parent or caregiver]

“Have the student the centre of every conversation, what is it they need to access this and that? Is it realistic?” [Unknown]

“If you want to ensure that services are focused on the needs of students and their families, it is important to listen to what parents and the educators of our children have to say. We must keep special education schools open and not shut them and insist that all students be mainstreamed. One size does not fit all and some students cannot and will not cope in a mainstream environment, especially when the teacher at the normal school has received NO training regarding special needs. It is just ludicrous to expect either the teacher, special student or the other classmates to do anything else other than fail.”

Bullying will increase, teacher frustration will mount resulting in a lower quality of education for all, the special student may become stressed and refuse to go to school, especially if they're teased for being different. No savings will be made for the Ministry of Education in the long-term as any money saved in closing or reducing special schools will be spent cleaning up the mess that forcing everyone to be mainstreamed will cause, ie, truancy, parental stress, divorce, financial loss, teacher burnout etc." [Parent or caregiver]

"Recognise that families and school staff work and live with these students every day. Value their knowledge. If students require building modifications put them in place BEFORE the student arrives. The stress caused to family and staff when students requiring adaptations arrive at school and these modifications (such as gates, toilets, ramps) are not in place is huge and, sadly, happens regularly. Even with years of notice. The same applies to issues like organising a taxi. If you know a student is coming to school then have a guideline as to who organises the transport and have it in place BEFORE the student gets there." Allow the sharing of information between key agencies, family and school. Once again clear timelines and responsibilities between all groups would develop more transparent transitions for all. Use ORRS, SLS, RTLB knowledge to prepare transition reports if the Ministry of Education, Special Education lead worker does not see the student often. Set up timelines beginning two terms before the child or student is moving on, not two weeks. Use the research on transition to inform practice rather than the repeated chaos currently in place. Transition should not rely on families having to battle for information or on the personality of a key lead worker. Allow for the sharing of information and clear timelines amongst all parties. Provide information to families in more than one format, eg, use visuals, DVDs, books, [and] workers talking through procedures. Allow for the transfer of funds from one Ministry of Education district office to another when students transfer areas. Why is it that a student may receive funding in one Ministry area, but when they transfer to another area they are not entitled to the same funds and level of support? Where is the consistency and transparency in this? Why should families and schools have to repeat the exercise of applying for funding when the same issues are being dealt with?"

[Parent or caregiver]

"An attitude of support for the family needs to be paramount. When the family feels supported, the child has a better chance of succeeding. Schools, particularly secondary schools, are not accustomed to being inclusive to families and are fairly rigid with their exclusion of parental expertise. The parents need to be officially recognised as the 'expert' on the child, particularly if the child has a rare syndrome. School staff and boards of trustees need to be taught about the need to respect parents' expertise through awareness and compulsory professional development so that they can feel comfortable being life-long learners themselves. They currently feel threatened, out-of-their depth, defensive and territorial. They need to feel reassured that we are all on the journey together. Special schools could offer this type of training. Specialist therapists (Ministry of Education, Special Education) seem to work in an isolated fashion without a holistic picture of

the child's learning. A team approach is vital for the success of the IEP in a mainstream setting and all input needs to be well communicated and coordinated, with the parent as the key person. " [Parent or caregiver]

"[Our organisation] believes there should be more support from the Ministry of Education for families when they initially engage with schools and principals. This support could be in 'parent and family education contracts', possibly delivered by parents for parents etc. Parents want choice as to who they have as a lead or key worker. There is a need for a more consistent and holistic approach from the agencies who work with families. [Non-government organisation or community representative]

Providing more information in better ways

Ensuring parents and schools had all the information they needed about services and support and how to access them was highlighted by respondents. Developing the right information, making it available at the right time, in the right way and through the right people were all noted as important.

"I think the whole service needs to be more focused on parent and child needs. It seems we have spent his whole school life battling, which is exhausting. A booklet telling us what services are available, what we can expect from school, what people may be involved and how to contact them. A set way of monitoring needs ... yes we have the IEP but teachers don't seem trained in how to make it specific or how to measure outcomes. " [Parent or caregiver]

"I worked on [the] Better Information to Address Barriers to Learning project for two years with the Ministry of Education, Special Education. This resulted in a resource for educators that was all about clearly identifying children's learning needs, having respectful conversations with families about their children's development and encouraging information sharing between the early childhood education services and schools in differing areas, including other agencies where appropriate. This would have been a great support for teachers if it was disseminated into the sector, beginning with teacher trainees. I have [also] been involved with the B4 School checks for Pasifika families and they are often ill-informed and narrow referrals to special education, as the person who does them is unknown to the family. In comparison, the educator (at preschool) is in a much more informed position to identify any specific needs of the child, which might be best addressed before they go to school. " [Parent or caregiver]

"Parents need to be on board, keep them updated with newsletters (frequent) with helpful tips and news and ways in dealing with special education children and let them know the services out there to help. Have monthly meetings with other families with children with the same or similar needs. Let them work together and set up social groups and work out routines that work at school and home. " [Unknown]

"Regular communication with the school community is essential. " [Unknown]

Increasing funding and staffing

Respondents said services could be improved and needs met through the availability of more services and increased funding for classroom teaching, specialist teaching, specialist services and professional development.

"We are all tired of hearing that there is a lack of funding for our children's needs. We are also tired of the little bit of funding that we do get being withdrawn as soon as the special needs child shows any small sign of improvement. The funding needs to be consistent and ongoing, not just used [as] a band-aid in times of need. Existing service providers need to be more accessible and approachable." [Unknown]

"INCREASED STAFFING levels - too often the fabulous resource personnel and therapists etc have huge caseloads resulting in students receiving minimal service and leaving schools struggling to cope. This impacts hugely on students, their families and school staff who are all left floundering." [Unknown]

"Special schools have resources to meet the child's needs by adapting the curriculum to each child's requirements. Also the number of students in each class is to be kept small so the student can achieve their educational potential. In mainstream schools this will not happen. We have had many years of experience in this issue. Schools require special teachers who will accept the child ... specially-trained teachers' aides are paramount to ensur[ing] a child's educational, medical, health and safety, social and toileting needs [are met], specialist therapists (drama, music, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech, RTLB ..." [Parent or caregiver]

"ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL!! Each individual child with special needs must have his or her own package of care and support. Schools and teachers must have input into what is required for special needs children to be included and to fully participate in mainstream programmes. Such a package should not have to be limited because of financial constraints but should also be realistic and achievable." [Unknown]

"Specialists funded to spend more time working on one child's case." [Parent or caregiver]

"Families are very clear about what they want - inclusion, full-time hours and special support. I believe resources are well-coordinated and focused on the needs of students and families. What is needed is more resources. One issue, however, is that not all .1 and .2 ORRS specialist teachers or SENCOs have special needs training; this should be mandatory." [Unknown]

Funding and resource use (Q4)

Funding and resources for students

This section looks at the issue of funding and resource allocation. It starts by revisiting the Review of Special Education 2010 discussion document preamble to question 4: What arrangements for funding, decision-making, verification and fundholding should we have? It summarises the key themes that emerged from the Review of Special Education submission process and features some of the public responses to the question.

What we asked

Overall

The discussion document began this section by looking at the two main funding allocation methods (ie, individually-targeted funding such as ORRS and group or population-targeted funding such as the SEG). It went on to look at each method's ability to deliver fairness, efficiency, predictability of expenditure and quality.

Under the subheading *Who decides which students get which resources?* the discussion document noted the range of considerations for decision-makers as they allocate resources and services and listed the key people involved in decision-making from parents and caregivers through to schools and central Government agencies.

Key question

The discussion document asked:

- What arrangements for funding, decision-making, verification and fundholding should we have? (Q4).

This question received 1,219 responses, the majority were from education sector representatives (704), with responses from special education sector representatives (408) and parents (388) being about equal. This question attracted 199 responses from non-government or community representatives and 146 responses from health or disability sector representatives. Seven students contributed their views. Note, respondents could select to be represented in more than one group.

What you said

Key themes

1. More and more flexible use of funding
2. Improve verification (for ORRS)
3. Improve decision-making
4. Expand fundholding (for ORRS).

Overall

Overall, respondents were concerned about the strong demand for special education services and the finite special education funding available to meet that demand.

They voiced concerns about the (sometimes) inefficient and unfair funding allocation methods (ie, individually-targeted funding such as ORRS and group or population-targeted funding such as the SEG). They raised concerns about the way capped, individualised funding had to be pooled and managed by fundholders so that some students had to receive less than what they needed.

Many felt more funding would help. Others wanted fewer Government officials and agencies involved in fund management, suggesting schools, families and local service providers were better placed to fulfill this role.

A lot of respondents contributed very specific and practical ideas about improving the way funding was allocated, managed and spent. For example, some suggested banking a student's funding to spend it at times when that student most needed it. Others were strongly in favour of improving the ORRS verification process by making it less reliant on paper-based applications and getting verifiers to meet children face-to-face.

1. More and more flexible use of funding

Respondents expressed the need for more direct, targeted funding for individual students, as well as more bulk (population-based) funding for groups of students.

Overall, they wanted more funding to better meet students' needs but also to eliminate or reduce the difficult allocation, decision-making and management practices that resulted from trying to balance strong (sometimes overwhelming demand) for special education support and services against capped, finite budgets.

Respondents, for example, spoke about the use of the SEG, a bulk (or population-based) fund, intended for children with moderate needs, to instead buy services and support for students with High and Very High needs.

Many agreed with the need to have individualised funding for children and young people with the highest needs and population-based funding for students with more moderate needs. Others, however, felt the situation was more complex than described in the discussion document; citing the combined issues of too little funding, a allocation model that was not needs-based and funding requirements that impacted on local decision-making.

"Whilst the Review of Special Education indicates that one of the key strengths of individualised funding such as ORRS is that individual assessment is against set criteria and this ensures that students are treated equally, this does not provide an equitable system. The battle for funding within a region is all about overs and unders and juggling the pool so that it fits. [Parent or caregiver]"

“There needs to be some individual allocation of funding for Very High needs and general funding for moderate and low needs based on population and decile rating. Decisions about the allocation of general funding should be made by school clusters in consultation with parents, schools (teachers or principals) and specialists involved in providing services. This would account for variability in numbers in any school who require additional funding in any year. Verification of moderate needs should be undertaken by mobile specialist assessors such as RTLB, SPELD New Zealand, RTLit or educational psychologists administering appropriate assessment tools to identify needs. Progress should be reviewed regularly to ensure funding is targeted most effectively.” [Special education sector representative]

“My child has ORRS funding but because her school is a magnet school, the unit she attends swallows her funding into a pool, which supports double the number of funded children. Somehow we need to allow schools to access funding based on the need of the child and in the environment of choice. The teacher’s aide hours available would not enable support for my daughter in a total immersion situation at high school, so the unit was the best option as it allowed flexibility according to her strengths, interests and needs. The population-based funding does not take into consideration the magnet schools so the best way around this would be to make the SEG a cluster resource rather than a school resource. Then the cluster will have to come to their own consensus as to the best [way to] deliver special education services. This would allow them to buy in specific expertise, eg, speech-language therapy, physiotherapy and psychological services where there is a need in the population. In addition, there must be specific auditing of this provision to ensure that SEG, RTLB funding etc is not spent on, for example, capital works - a situation I am aware happens. Some board members are not even aware the SEG exists and there seems to be no expectation that there is a question asked at every meeting about how that specific funding is utilised. In clusters it would have to be more transparent and contestable.” [Parent or caregiver]

“The present funding system is not working because it is inflexible, unresponsive to genuine need and too many children and their teachers are receiving inadequate levels of support at the local level. [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization] (UNESCO) in their policy guidelines on inclusive education emphasise that it is important for teachers to have secure access to specific professionals and professional knowledge when it is needed. In addition, teachers, other educators, disabled people, disabled students, non-teaching support staff, parents, communities, school authorities, curriculum developers and advisors and educational planners are all among the actors that can serve as valuable resources in support of inclusion.” [Non-government organisation or community representative]

“[We] would like to see the current funding categories that exist within the special education [funding] diagram ... changed. [We] would like to see a much more seamless approach to verification and funding. The verification process be done away with and replaced with a need assessment process. This, we believe, would allow for more specific allocation of funding and perhaps

create opportunities for more prudent allocations based on need rather than the current approach of bulk allocation as per ORRS. By doing away with all the current pockets of funding, parents would be clearer of accessing a specific education fund that, if, as a result of the needs assessment, funding [and, or] resources would be allocated. The measure of how the funding [and, or] resources are used should be qualified through the personalised learning programme. We see this as easier-to-understand and perhaps [a] more appropriate use of Government funding. A system of banking of the specific education funding package over time is favoured, with the personalised learning programme determining the funding needed over the ensuing 12-month period. If the full funding for the year has not been spent any excess should be banked to fund future support needs. Our thinking here is around the current waste we see with ORRS bulk funding. In general terms we see entrance to high school as perhaps a high cost year, [with] transitioning and possible technology costs. We see year 10 as perhaps a less expensive year. Year 11 might require a technology upgrade, year 12 less cost with perhaps more costs being assessed for year 13 with the transitioning out of school etc. We can achieve efficiencies in cost allocation compared to the inflexibility of ORRS. These efficiencies could be saved and allocated when needs change. We would like to explore the option of fundholder status being made available for parents and other non-government organisations should that be their choice.” [Non-government organisation or community representative]

2. Improve verification (for ORRS)

Respondents who talked about the ORRS verification process, expressed almost equal support for a national verification process (about four per cent) and local verification processes (nearly five per cent).

“The current system of verification and support for students with special [education] needs is rigorous, transparent and robust. It allows for an equitable allocation of resource across students from one end of New Zealand to the other, and in rural as well as urban settings, and provides for access through provision of transport assistance where it is needed and for the modification of school sites and educational settings. This system has been developed and implemented now for several years and has now reached a level of consistency, transparency and fairness that would be hard to replace while retaining the same standards of equitability.” [Unknown]

“The national system of verification works very well - it is fair. It needs to be needs-based and not contestable. Retain [a] national, needs-based system.” [Education sector representative]

“Verification must be kept at national level [or] else district variations creep in and pressure can be put on people at local level.” [Education sector representative]

“Centralised verification works well - all students around the country are considered on the same basis. We are concerned that if verification is disseminated to regions or districts there will not be a national standard,

which is fair to all students. The moderation process allocating hours per student using the rating scale in all districts is a fair and equitable system. The Ministry of Education, Special Education should continue to be the fundholder for mainstream schools.” [Non-government organisation or community representative]

“We favour the regional/district body or school cluster model (rather than the central Government ORRS moderation) and the local level SLS moderation. The SLS service began initially with central Government moderation of students based on set criteria. This has now devolved out to a regional level moderation (through a district management committee) and works very well. At present RTLB or Ministry of Education, Special Education staff are responsible for submitting referrals for the SLS service, but this could change. If this model was followed for all students on the special needs continuum (SLS through to ORRS) within a district we would favour schools being able to submit referrals directly following set protocols and timeframes. If a regional/district body model was introduced it should include representatives from schools as well as specialist services. We see the SLS style (regional/district body) of moderation and allocation of special needs services working as a unified system for all special needs students, as currently there is misunderstanding about the difference between SLS and ORRS. The ORRS verification process needs a radical overhaul. There need to be verifiers in each district who are actually meeting the child, family, professional team around them face-to-face and having several meetings across early childhood [education] centres and schools to determine the supports needed.” [Education sector representative]

“ORRS funding should be locally-based. Verifiers should visit all ORRS students.” [Education sector representative]

Nearly 17 per cent of respondents expressed the need for verification (as a process) to improve.

Respondents were concerned about it being a paper-based process that relied on strong writing skills and suggested incorporating the use of information and evidence such as video footage.

They were concerned about the impersonal nature of the process, suggesting verifiers should visit students to observe their learning and to meet their families before making a decision. The process also took too long and could be more transparent.

“Funding decisions need to be made by people close to the child. Parents, early childhood [education service] professionals and support workers know the child’s impairments, needs and capabilities. Schools know what supports will be required to include and educate the student. Families have better things to do than sort the system getting unnecessary support for their children. In partnership with early intervention professionals they are more than able to be trusted as gatekeepers for funding decisions. The system needs to be equitable. Currently the ORRS system is referred to as a lottery or worse still a prose competition. Funding for misunderstood and complex conditions such as ASD is the domain of those able to fight for it. Those with the

education, supports and endurance may succeed in battling the system to fund their child. Those less fortunate miss out. Hundreds of precious family and productive hours are wasted battling the system for individual cases. Early intervention teachers and other specialists are unable to spend critical preschool time working with the child therapeutically as their role becomes a funding gatekeeper entering battle with their own Ministry on behalf of families. Families and professionals are being traumatised by this process. Anecdotally stories of post traumatic stress are not uncommon within families.” [Parent or caregiver]

“More transparency around the ORRS funding application process. From a health perspective we are seeing children we consider to have High needs (ie, in the top one per cent of the population) being refused this level of funding on the basis of having a number of perceived strengths. A recent example of this was a child with ASD who could recite numbers by rote was perceived as being able to count, however, this was not a skill the child could use functionally.” [Health or disability sector representative]

“Verification should not be such a negative and soul-destroying experience for families. There should be family advocates employed by the Ministry of Education, Special Education to help those who are struggling to articulate their children’s needs.” [Parent and education sector representative]

Eight per cent of respondents noted that the ORRS criteria needed to change to include more students. Others (about six per cent) said more needed to be done to make the criteria clearer, fairer and consistent.

“[Our organisation with help from a principals’ organisation], have analysed ORRS teacher’s aide allocation for 2007, 2008 and 2009. A researcher was engaged and interviewed families, schools and Ministry of Education staff and the report with conclusions will be presented separately by [our organisations] in the near future. [We found] the ORRS fund is substantially under-funded. The majority of ORRS students require far greater number of teacher’s aide hours to meet their needs as assessed and allocated at moderation. [For example], in 2009, 54 per cent of Very High needs students and 78 per cent of High needs students were allocated more hours than brought to the ORRS fund from verification. The qualifying criteria for ORRS is too restrictive as the verification process is a gate keeping process keeping students out not in. This results in students not being able [to] access appropriate support for their needs. The funding cap percentage of the school population needs to be raised from one per cent, to support the number of students with diagnosed special needs. For example, the Ministry of Education, Special Education advised in 2004 that 50 per cent of ORRS applications were declined. This would indicate that the funding cap should be no less than two per cent. An up-to-date review of the number of students declined for ORRS funding would provide the current position. However, this will not take into account the number of students who are discouraged from applying for ORRS, due to the unlikelihood of them being verified under existing criteria. The verification process needs to be reviewed as it is cumbersome, complicated and has a totally negative impact on the family and those involved. Students with moderate needs are

falling through the cracks with insufficient support. [Have] a new category of extremely High needs. Students with extensive health and safety needs should be introduced and funded separately from ORRS. The role for this category is caregiver not teacher's aide and in many instances the student requires two people to attend to their needs, eg, [for] toileting. Could this be funded by Health rather than Education? A student with Very High needs requires a minimum of 30 hours per week to attend school, which must include cover over break times and lunchtime. The current maximum allocation of 25 hours per week as set at moderation is inadequate. The importance of teacher's aide support must not be underestimated. It ensures that the student is engaged in the classroom, participating as a class member and accessing the curriculum to the best of their abilities." [Non-government organisation or community representative]

"The generic verification system does not work for Deaf and hearing-impaired learners. It is often found that children with a mild to moderate hearing loss, that fail to be verified, will fall behind their hearing peers then require intensive support. The ORRS system does not reflect the specialist type of support required by some Deaf or hearing-impaired learners. The system needs to be flexible to allow it to cover the cost of New Zealand Sign Language interpreters or other specialist services where appropriate. All children diagnosed with a hearing loss should be verified as-of-right then monitored by a national Deaf education service to [the] determine level of support required. Funds should be centrally managed to enable more flexibility with delivery and distribution of service and resources." [Special education sector representative]

"Some kids with Very High needs don't meet the criteria and therefore get very little assistance. My younger son, who is autistic, is compliant but with very limited comprehension skills and has never got ORRS funding. While another child at our school has much better cognitive and comprehension skills but gets ORRS as he is less compliant. Some parents work really hard at things like toilet training but this then means their child has less chance of getting ORRS. Given that those making the decisions about ORRS funding never meet the children in question, a successful application often depends on the ability of those writing the application to fully describe the child's needs. Many families boast that they got ORRS because they put in such a good application when children with similar needs are unsuccessful. Why not spend an hour observing the child and make a decision based on that?" [Parent or caregiver]

"Consideration has already clearly been given to broadening the scope of verification of student needs. Some students (for example, those with severe speech-language disorders) struggle to have their needs qualify within the architecture of [the] ORRS criteria. Other students become the victims of their own success, eg, a Deaf student who works successfully with a specialist teacher may learn to read (because of the specialist's presence) at the next verification review the success becomes ground for removing or reducing the level of verification and the student subsequently falls behind because the specialist teaching input is reduced. We need to learn to have verification conversations that acknowledge that some students are succeeding because of

the specialist input and that if it is removed their success rate will likely diminish. When this scenario plays out (as it currently can and does) parents express distress and disbelief that decision-makers cannot see the logical consequences of their funding decisions. The system needs clarification of the needs schools are expected to meet through the Operations Grant and which needs are expected to be met through individual resourcing. This delineation then needs to be reinforced by clear policy. An example of the need for change is the lack of rigour in the instructions to boards with regard to [the] provision [of] specialist teaching using ORRS-generated teacher time. Boards appear to be asked nicely to use their best efforts yet the ERO has reported that significant numbers of schools cannot demonstrate the presence of a specialist teacher on their staff in response to the receipt of special education teacher time (ORRS part-time teachers).” [Special education representative]

“There are still students requiring application once they are in the school system (ie, not preschoolers). Schools are generally unable to complete the application form without specialist help but the expectation is that they should do just this. Early intervention-level applications are completed by a team of specialists alongside the preschool teacher and family. Currently there is not a significant component of Ministry of Education-ORRS time available to help support schools in making applications.” [Unknown]

3. Improve decision-making

Respondents expressed a range of ideas about the decisions involved with population-based funding, referring often to the SEG. There were a wide range of views on how SEG should be distributed - by population, decile or by need. But no consensus was evident.

Respondents wanted schools to be more accountable for the funding they used. They also raised concerns about the demand for population-based funding such as the SEG (designed for students with moderate needs) for students with High needs.

“The present SEG appears to be working well. Data indicates that it is a cost-efficient method of funding students with moderate needs. If the Government has concerns about the way SEG is being spent further checks could be put in place through the ERO process.” [Special education representative]

“Auditing of SEG should be tighter to ensure it is spent on the children with special needs. SEG to be per capita-based rather than decile.” [Special education representative]

“Approaches continue to be piecemeal, depending on the school rather than the child. All funding, including special needs grants should be targeted towards students in an accountable way. There is considerable concern around provision for students assessed as having moderate needs. Special education framework ... indicates funding for moderate to High-level needs now includes RTLB, school SEG - funding sources. These services are clearly now supporting many High-level needs children, who didn't get ORRS, missed out on the SLS funding round and have no other funding. [Fewer] children with moderate

needs seem to be qualifying for funding and as a result some schools are becoming more reluctant to make referrals. Moreover resourcing for children with mild to moderate needs is less and less clear and transparent. Commonly assessments provided, for example, under the moderate needs contract for fine and gross motor concerns result in a programme provided but there is no resource available from the moderate needs contract or within the school itself to implement. Alternatively children are taken off the moderate needs physical contract as their motor development is found to be in keeping with their cognitive development, so they get no service.” [Health or disability representative]

“Population-based funding for SEG plus decile weighting.” [Education sector representative]

“Population-based funding is not always equitable as there is no reliable formula. There may be a cohort of students in a school requiring support above what is allocated through the formula. Allocation by need would be more equitable but more costly to administer - it would also need to be verified and would require a skilled administrator. There is currently no accountability in SEG. Tighter guidelines could be put in place around how the funding is used.” [Education sector representative]

“Presently, the family does not have any information about what funding support their moderate needs child receives from the Ministry of Education. It apparently goes into one pot called SEG and the school has the sole authority as to the distribution of this amount of money. There has to be more transparency.” [Parent or caregiver]

“Population-based funding for SEG without decile weighting. Learning needs are not economically determined, ie, a decile 10 school with [a] disproportiona[te] number of ASD students and those with Dyslexia.” [Education sector representative]

“SEG should be individually-based not population-based to support magnet schools. [Have] a sliding scale of funding from the SEG / moderate needs up to Very High needs, individually funded to allow for smaller but significantly life-changing interventions.” [Education sector representative]

“Funding for SEG should not be based only on decile but [also] on annual special needs - schools should be asked for their High needs each year and the SEG topped up accordingly. [In] some years schools need twice the SEG because the intake is unique that year and there are many more special needs children than normal.” [Education sector representative]

“Targeted or generalised funding? There is ongoing debate in consideration of how funding should best be allocated. Some people argue that in the absence of effective reporting or any requirement on schools to show that they are meeting their obligations towards disabled students, special needs grants should be targeted towards students rather than to all schools. It is clear that some schools receive the money but do not provide the same level of support

or access to disabled students as others. Bulk funding should be tied to reporting on the way in which the funding can be demonstrated to have been used to improve outcomes for disabled students. However, there is also a desire that some funding be used to promote more inclusive environments, rather than being targeted just on individual students.” [Health or disability sector representative]

4. Expand fundholding (for ORRS)

Eighteen per cent of respondents contributed ideas about who should be a fundholder. Examples included families, schools, clusters of schools, special schools, national providers, a representative group of boards, non-government agencies such as disability groups or new Government entities.

There were also calls for the fundholder to have more flexibility in its use of funding and the way it allocated specialist time, additional teacher time and paraprofessional time.

There was general agreement about who should make decisions about the services available, ie, the people closest to a child or children for whom the funding was there to support. Respondents agreed that as much of the funding as possible should be spent on the child or children for whom it was intended.

“Funding has to be as close to the school and student as possible. Direct resourcing in the form of money rather than teacher and teacher’s aide would give schools and families the ability to personalise the supports. Verification of the child should be at the regional level with full family and school input. It is important that all those involved in the process know the child and the needs, to enable the child to be fully supported into the classroom.”
[Education sector representative]

“All money (including any SEG, speech-language therapy, RTLB, ORRS) [needs] distributed to schools and not attached to individuals. Open up ORRS fundholding to all schools. Ensure funding enough for the 9-3pm day.”
[Education sector representative]

“I agree with the current ORRS funding for children with High and Very High needs. Ensuring that the percentage of ORRS funding for specialist services is actually spent on these services to the child. Handling of funding should be taken away from the Ministry of Education, Special Education and given to either parents or schools to administer. Parents should have final sign-off on all spending of their child’s ORRS funding. Parents should be fully informed of where the funding is spent.” [Parent or caregiver]

“Give each child a voucher [to pay] for [a] number of services and allow families, in consultation with teachers, to spend it where it would achieve the most benefit for the child. Then if services were not performing, they don’t get funded.” [Parent or caregiver]

"Parents could be able to be their own fundholders (subject to assessment) like is available in the health sector with individualised funding (eg, Manawanui In Charge)." [Parent and health and disability sector representative]

"Funding for ORRS students should be centralised to one fundholder. That fundholder would be the special schools who currently hold the expertise to deliver across schools, eg, with therapy, school-wide programmes. ORRS, teacher's aide time and finance should be put through bank staffing so we have greater flexibility [to] meet special children's needs." [Education sector representative]

"Fundholders should be either individual schools or a lead school for a school cluster. The Ministry of Education's special education district offices have become too big and bureaucratic, paying salaried staff who are not familiar with individual students with disabilities. By significantly downsizing the special education district offices it would free up funding to spend on specialist teachers in a school cluster who directly deal with the students with disabilities. A pilot programme should be set up to see how it works with a non-government organisation, eg, Autism New Zealand, New Zealand Down's Syndrome Association or a private organisation as a fundholder. ORRS funding should be allocated to each student's fundholder based on a formula, eg, 70 per cent teacher's aide time, 25 per cent specialist services, five per cent resources. Those parents who choose should be able to take the 25 per cent funding and use it to provide their own specialist services for their child. Otherwise the school or the lead school for a school cluster allocates the 25 per cent specialist services. Also, if a parent chooses to have all of the ORRS funding spent on teacher's aide time, then they should be able to do it. Parents should be able to have the final say on the mix of their child's funding, whether it is all used on teacher's aide time and if not, how much is spent on specialists." [Unknown]

"The multiplicity of fundholders seems to cause some confusion out there so perhaps one national fundholder or one fundholder for a region - four fundholders for the country. This could ensure a consistency of service provision that is not always evident. Decision-making should be done as close to the student as possible while maintaining some consistency over the country and region. A transparent and open moderation system for the allocation to teacher's aide is vital. Stakeholders such as representatives of schools and parents (non-government agencies etc) should also be involved in the process." [Special education representative]

"Individual packages per child to be used only for that child's needs. More power to schools to make decisions on how the funding is allocated, eg, more specialist teacher and less teacher's aide time if appropriate. Funding held by schools - input by families and the Ministry of Education, Special Education. Regular review of package by the Ministry, the school and the family to make changes ... needed once a year." [Parent or caregiver]

“We would want equitable funding allowances for students in normal and special schools. Fundholding status should be more flexible. We want the ability for clusters of schools to be fundholders. This is what [we] did in the past which allowed dedicated support into secondary schools taking into account transitions. Verification should continue as is. All funding should be pooled.” [Education sector representative]

“Fundholders in a cluster group is attractive. Different levels of education - preschool to secondary - working as a team, enables first-hand knowledge of disabled students throughout the special education system. Specialist funding is necessary but perhaps not needing to be vested in one provider. Funding should be able to be used for the services of the specialist considered best able to meet the needs of the disabled students.” [Parent or caregiver]

“Allow the Special School Resource Centre to develop within their local communities. Give them the resource to grow capacity. This will mean there will legitimately be more local options available to families. Fundholding considerations should include open[ing] up fundholding to allow Special School Resource Centre to deliver specialist services to ORRS students in mainstream and other settings and include administration training and development programmes and specialised resourcing. Expansion and resourcing of the Specialist Education Itinerant Teacher (SEIT) service across the country. This creates a skilled teaching specialist for every student and ensures more effective programming and intervention and better value for money. Suggest services are grown from new applications. Enforcing mandatory hand-over of .1 and .2 [staffing] may create resistance and possible industrial issues. Develop a supportive and facilitat[ive] role for Ministry bureaucracy. This would reflect development and capacity of different regions. Services need to develop and run more centrally to the child. Entitlement funding for teachers’ aides ensuring people are at the centre of the provision and ensuring an ongoing development of the workforce. The sector is increasingly reliant on trained teachers’ aides. There is another tier of professionalism that needs to be properly catered for. Funding of other special education allocations based on schools’ needs, not decile ratings. Collaboration and flexibility in the application of funds such as SEG to meet wider cluster needs. Funding mechanisms in place to ensure the Special School Resource Centre management, teaching and specialist structure remains in place in the event of roll decline, ie, a non reliance of notional roll for delivery of community service. Transport funding to be managed by Special School Resource Centre. A fundholding model and resourcing formulae that ensure the ongoing capacity of [a] Special School Resource Centre to meet the needs of students equitably across the educational continuum. With regard to verification and ORRS decision-making, improvements could include an ORRS application process that is simplified and has an accompanying and consistent assessment tool. At present [the ORRS process] is reliant on the skill and subjectivity of the assessor to create a strong deficit-based application. We note there are some overseas models that have some strengths and if standardised for New Zealand conditions could be applied to the ORRS process. A review of the national statementing process needs to be undertaken alongside a review of national need. [Have] an appeal process that utilises local assessment / attestation.

Along with a .1 or .2 entitlement a teacher's aide entitlement also follows [the] child." [Special education representative]

"Special education disbursement boards should manage local area funds. These should comprise a board member from each contributing school (or, if size is an issue, an elected group from with[in] the school trustee boards, with 50 per cent change every three years). May include a Ministry of Education representative as an advisor, but not a controlling interest. Fundholding should be controlled at [the] central Ministry of Education and decisions from local special education disbursement boards communicated to [schools] for action. Schools should be able to act immediately [up]on a decision knowing that the Ministry will pay out through central funding. ORRS must become larger and simpler and could be administered through clusters with periodic verification and audits. Somehow schools should be given tagged staffing for a SENCO to be able to have a well-trained person guiding staff, completing applications, meeting with parents, supporting and training teachers' aides and even working with children. RTLB should be able to work hands-on with children as well as guiding staff." [Education sector representative]

Funding and resource use (Q5a)

Funding and resources for students

This section looks at the issue of funding and resource allocation. It starts by revisiting the Review of Special Education 2010 discussion document preamble to 5a: How can individually-targeted services and supports be made more efficient? It summarises the key themes that emerged from the Review of Special Education submission process and features some of the public responses to the question.

What we asked

Overall

Under the subheading *Making better use of resources*, the discussion document directly asked for feedback on making better use of the resources provided through ORRS, specifically extra teacher time and teachers' aides. It also sought comment on the process, suggesting streamlining it could be possible and noting the Office of the Auditor-General's recommendation that the Ministry provide clearer information about ORRS eligibility.

Key question

The discussion document asked:

- How can individually-targeted services and supports be made more efficient? (5a).

This question received 1,109 responses, the majority were from education sector representatives (646), with responses from special education sector representatives (385) and parents (345) being about equal. This question attracted 184 responses from non-government or community representatives and 141 responses from health or disability sector representatives. Six students contributed their views. Note, respondents could select to be represented in more than one group.

What you said

Key themes

1. Get more value from funding
2. Streamline the ORRS application processes
3. Manage funds more effectively
4. Use additional teaching more efficiently
5. Make better use of teachers' aides
6. Allocate teachers' aides more effectively
7. Use specialist services more effectively
8. Better coordinate services
9. Improve accountability.

Overall

Respondents had a range of ideas about how to improve funding and resource allocation.

Fifteen per cent had ideas about the decision-making processes related to funding use. They suggested giving school staff the opportunity to use funding more creatively to reduce a student's reliance on adult support and to find ways for students to better access the curriculum. They also thought there was insufficient funding available now.

Rationalising the many funding schemes available and the administration time and resource spent on each one was suggested by about eight per cent of respondents.

Nearly seven per cent suggested the ORRS application process could be streamlined by having verifiers draw on existing assessment information generated about a student's needs.

They also agreed with the discussion document idea that students who received SLS for a set amount of time should automatically become eligible for ORRS. However, some were concerned that, should this happen, other more needy students could miss out on ORRS.

Nearly 12 per cent showed general support for the discussion document idea of aggregating ORRS .1 and .2 teacher time with a variety of proposals for management given.

Around six per cent of respondents recommended making more efficient use of teachers' aides by clustering staff, matching staff to the needs of students and improving knowledge and skills. Streamlining the allocation of teacher's aide funding was a key concern for around four per cent.

1. Get more value from funding

Fifteen per cent of respondents had a range of ideas about getting more efficiency and value from the existing pool of special education services available.

Some suggested coming up with ways to measure and track services, others suggested changing teaching, classrooms and schools, and using equipment and technology more effectively to reduce reliance on adults having to support individual students. Improved collaboration and relationships were suggested by others.

"Accurate financial scoping of service provision and supports and monitor ... what is being delivered. Ensure efficiency is linked to effectiveness. Services should be delivered in a way, which is evidence plus outcome-based."
[Unknown]

"Hire more staff ... who are trained properly. Accept help from volunteers who are experienced." [Unknown]

“Creating accessible environments to reduce reliance on individualised supports. Where schools create accessible environments, and where students have the correct equipment and resources, it may be possible to reduce spending on individualised support. For example, if children have good access to Braille teaching at a young age, and [are] provided with equipment to produce Braille and text in the classroom, then this can significantly reduce the need for teacher’s aide support. However, whilst the majority of school environments and teaching practices remain stubbornly inaccessible, individually targeted services [will] continue and the following issues should be considered. Relationships are central to better use of funding and resources, schools need clearer accountabilities, parents should have more say, rename ORRS funding - should be called something like learning/education funding, follow preschool concepts of holistic and collaborative approach involving whānau and considering the whole learning environment. When considering individualised funding for parents and families, make sure panels of disabled person’s networks are included as they can often see the greater picture that parents may not have had the benefit of. Therefore, they are not receiving unqualified advice but advice that is informed. Sometimes parents who do not have impairments are not always able to see the full picture for their child, whereas adults with impairments similar to their child(ren) has a greater understanding and direct/lived experience.” [Non-government organisation or community representative]

Respondents also noted that the existing pool of services wasn’t enough to meet the needs of students, schools and families and noted that special education delivery was complex in the way it needed to suit a huge range of individuals, needs and settings.

“If efficient equals saving money then it is never going to happen. The funding for children with special needs is inadequate and there is little thought given to what each child actually requires.” [Unknown]

“It seems that there is inadequate services and supports for individual children in the system so it is difficult to say how to make them efficient.” [Unknown]

Respondents suggested a range of ways to better use funding, also expressing the need for more, adequate or sufficient funding and noting the many challenges involved with managing tight budgets.

They suggested reducing the bureaucracy related to the different funding streams that existed. They also noted the variation of eligibility, information and administration related to each service, ie, ORRS, SLS, RTLB and the Physical Disability Service. Respondents thought itinerant ORRS specialist teachers and their services were not funded as well [as] other specialist teachers, eg, RTLB.

Some suggested, using funding more flexibly could be the key, eg, using transport money to send a student to a local school (not just a special school) and banking specialist teacher funding for future use at a school or family’s discretion.

“As an experienced new entrant and junior school teacher, I have long held the belief that, while having .1 of a teacher is great, I would far rather see

the .1 in the first three years banked. My feelings are that in those first years the needs of these children can be catered for by the class teacher and a teacher's aide. So, with that in mind, having the .1 banked to be used from year 4 on, the student would be allotted more teacher's aide time to cater for their needs in those early years. Experience has shown me that ... specialist teachers, who roam from school-to-school, spend the majority of their time travelling and this is time that should be spent with students. Also not being based in one school means that accessing resources to teach with can also be a problem and again more of the allocated hours are wasted preparing for multiple numbers of students in multiple numbers of schools. They seem to be able to justify this! I realise in the case of SLS teachers there is no other option and strangely enough the issues I have raised seem to have been sorted by these teachers. Providing training to upskill teachers would be a great advantage so long as the associated costs were not expected to come out of schools' already stretched budgets. There would, however, need to be some accountability from teachers who are upskilled in terms of [the] amount of service they would need to deliver as part of the training programme."
[Education sector representative]

"The current funding systems do not enable sufficient differentiation between the needs and costs for different conditions and ASD, hearing, vision and mental health are areas that are not adequately met. Allocating teacher's aide funding on a formula and determining it on hours needed rather than amount of money. As teacher's aide expertise is developed and they move up the scale, essentially schools have less money to allocate. Teacher's aide resource should be able to be used more flexibly and not only attached to one student in particular when others can benefit from input in the same class at the same time." [Education sector representative]

"If funding from RTLB [and] special schools is transferred into direct resourcing for ORRS (an expanded version, more than three per cent of the population) there will be huge opportunities for building a network of specialist teachers within almost every school as the children will be identified and attending as opposed to being taxied to a school 20, 30 or 40 kilometres away. Furthermore there will be accountability around resource application." [Special education representative]

"I think schools get hung up on MONEY as being a solution. The inclusive attitude and the subsequent acceptance of all children can mean the sense of belonging will enhance a child's life more deeply than dollars for [a] teacher's aide!!!" [Unknown]

"Schools could be allowed to convert some specialist teacher time [in]to paraprofessional hours or paraprofessional training, if that is in the best interests of the special needs children at the school." [Non-government organisation or community representative]

"The interference regarding how ORRS funding is applied is inappropriate and does not take into account local and individual situations. Again this is bureaucracy at its worst with little regard for the integrity of professionalism"

of special needs schools. Nor does this take into account the individual and diverse needs of students - there is no allowance for movement as the funding allocation is mandatory. Guidelines need to be in place which would allow for individualised needs to be recognised and managed effectively. [Special education sector representative]

2. Streamline the ORRS application processes

Nearly seven per cent of respondents contributed ideas on streamlining the processes involved with applying for special education services.

Many agreed that using assessment information (from a range of agencies) and having a single assessment eligibility process would produce greater consistency and improve communication and efficiency.

Some suggested teachers and families could do with help to apply for ORRS to ensure their time was used more productively.

“Less complicated administration, less relian[ce] on the right answer as parents who don't have the support of special schools are left to complete the funding forms themselves, due to the lack of expertise in mainstream schools.” [Parent or caregiver]

Clarifying the eligibility criteria for ORRS and other services such as transport assistance, SLS and special school enrolment would help manage expectations and make decision-making more transparent and consistent.

“ORRS applications made through [a] centralised and independent evaluation agency or parent-help system similar to advocacy so the application process is not so random ... Applicants to ORRS need clear and consistent advice to ensure that applications are completed with enough and the right kind of information. Currently some students miss out on verification due to lack of knowledge in schools around how to write the application. Transport criteria [needs to] be more consistent across the country with the criteria for what constitutes a school 'able to meet the needs of the student' defined and in writing. Rubrics developed to ensure the transport criteria are consistent and not able to be interpreted differently by individuals.” [Education sector representative]

Some respondents believed it was necessary to reduce the paperwork involved in applying for services by changing application forms, developing templates and accommodating face-to-face applications.

“Have a database of the students and their needs, possibly through ENROL. This way all of the information is accessible by all parties that need to access it and it is clear where the funding is allocated. Too much time is spent on reapplication for funding where continuity needs to be provided.” [Education sector representative]

Having set times for agencies to process applications and a process for checking where in the system an application was at (similar to a courier-tracking system) were other suggestions.

The discussion document idea that students who received SLS for a set amount of time should automatically become eligible for ORRS was generally accepted. However, respondents were concerned that, should this happen, other more needy students could miss out on ORRS.

“Autistic children are remaining on the SLS roll when often their progress will become static in some areas. Children whose behaviour-needs are significant would be better on [the] RTLB roll than on SLS. Often it’s just a matter of classroom management. [The] SLS programme works really well for children with just learning needs. Many children can be caught up to speed quite quickly thus making room for more children to have help. For older children, level two of the curriculum is too early to discontinue from SLS support.” [Special education sector representative]

“On entry to year 7 and year 9, students identified as having significant learning needs (two or more years behind cohort) ought to have access to specific funding and expertise for learning support.” [Education sector representative]

“ORRS applications need to be made user friendly. Training [is] needed on how to fill the form out so it is fair to all. Categories need adjusting, ie, some children can read by rote (but not comprehend at the same level) thus they don’t qualify for funding.” [Unknown]

“There needs to be easier entry to ORRS. The problem with automatically including students on SLS and behaviour who have received services for three years is that there are huge waitlists for both services and those waiting may have far greater need than those children already receiving a service. Expansion of ORRS numbers and extension of the criteria could reduce this possible issue.” [Special education sector]

3. Manage funds more effectively

Eight per cent of respondents talked about how to use funding more effectively.

In general, this group felt the existing system had become too fragmented and saw some merit in centralising or pooling funds.

Some respondents suggested setting up a single agency, while others mentioned a single agency with several resource centres. Schools were put forward as possible funding agencies by others and the possibility of parents managing the resources was also suggested.

Respondents saw potential for efficiency within each of the models and expressed a range of perspectives on the need for spending guidelines and accountability.

“We must ensure that schools are held accountable for the funds they receive for students with special [education] needs. At present, while some schools add additional resources for ORRS-funded students, others divert resources, such as the specialist teacher component, and families and specialists struggle to ensure students access their entitlements. I would like to see specialist teacher positions become permanent positions for highly-qualified people employed by a central specialist agency, to ensure skill levels are appropriate and there is accountability for delivery. We should continue to have a range of highly-qualified specialists employed by a central agency and able to deliver services across a geographical area. We could look at locating smaller geographic teams on school sites but still with a central employer. This would reduce operational costs as well as ensure teams are in closer contact with the facilities they serve. Operational cost savings could be redirected into increasing staff to ensure all teams are able to provide the range of services required. Teams require a high-level of management to ensure they deliver appropriate highly-skilled services. We should also consider developing Māori focus specialist teams.” [Unknown]

“Local control of the funding to make decisions on the needs based on clear criteria and accountability (ORRS, Learning Support, RTLB, RTLit, Public Health Nurse, Police, Special Schools etc). Less paperwork and bureaucracy. Increased practical support in schools (eg, specialists in classrooms, working with teachers). Proactive communication between the stakeholders to meet students’ needs. Funding adequate to needs. Available resources clearly communicated to school sector. Resources could be pooled, where possible, within individual schools. Clusters of schools could also pool resources and work more collaboratively. Schools could work together to provide teachers and teachers’ aides with better professional development around special education, which might reduce the need for more expensive specialist intervention.” [Special education sector representative]

“Reduce bureaucracy. The funding should go to the school to be managed according to the needs of the child. The school should be able to purchase the services required. This would make the providers accountable and ensure the

child receives quality support. One centralised single assessment eligibility process. Interagency collaboration (more streamlined). Single set of supports provided to produce greater consistency and ease of communication. Lead agency required where multiple agencies are involved for coordination and accountability. [Education sector representative]

"In any model used, there are issues of governance that need to be picked up by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry needs to be involved in governance and ensuring [the] provision of services [is] occurring and being implemented." [Education sector representative]

"Allow schools like ours - who have developed good systems - to still be funded to run these programmes and resources for these children. [We have] provided professional development for teachers' aides, employed a SENCO who is highly skilled and has built up a huge amount of knowledge and expertise around specific programmes. I know it has been suggested that all resources would be combined in clusters and allocated from here. I can see that this would be beneficial for some schools without their own resources and expertise, however, there needs to be flexibility for schools like us (and I know of several others) who have a system that is working exceptionally well for our pupils - as confirmed by ERO in our recent review and would be confirmed by our Ministry of Education, Special Education lead worker - to continue to do this as I think we would lose continuity of care and the ability to respond immediately to the needs of our children should these services be allocated from a cluster. Obviously we would be happy to provide reports on our programmes and use of the resources for accountability purposes. RTLB, as stated above, we have built up expertise to identify children who need support and it is often frustrating waiting for the RTLB referral process, we have to wait for a referral meeting, then for approval for teacher's aide funding. If the money to provide this service was allocated direct to schools then we could make more efficient and timely use of our already skilled support people. The actual RTLB service is now not meeting our needs in terms of advice as the experience of staff here can be used for observations, training of support staff and support for classroom teachers at the same level, and often better, than that provided by the RTLB. SLS staffing [should] be allocated direct to schools." [Education sector representative]

"Funding could be contained firstly in a centralised pool and then allocated easily across local district governance groups as needs changed. This would allow students and families easy access to services regardless of where they lived." [Special education sector representative]

"I think for some families the option of having their child's funding given to them for them to divide up between their priorities would work, but there's a huge majority for whom this would be a nightmare. Maybe a choice? Some of the families I work with are really savvy and would like more ownership over their child's support." [Special education sector representative]

"The issue is complex and affects the parents of special needs students and the students themselves (in our case we need to be our son's advocate as he

has no communication) in different ways and to a greater or lesser extent. So, it is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Needs of the student fed up-line to the school and, or school cluster who are the most appropriate decision-makers. However, decisions made under the overall policy framework. Specialist teaching support is expensive, however, best value for money is in staff training and incentives to retain staff for continuity of teaching. For rural areas with no special school or special unit in mainstream, video conferencing may be used to bring the special needs teacher to the students or to train the local teaching staff. Please note, this is used extensively in the United Kingdom to great effect. In fact ALL special schools should have video conferencing facilities to enable staff to regularly meet to learn from each other. Saves a lot in travel time and, therefore, cost and more than pays for the [video conferencing] equipment.” [Parent or caregiver]

“Some sort of local special education resource centre needs to exist to provide a balanced perspective on the reality of support needed. Inexperienced schools often do not have the big picture of special education and think their child will always need full teacher’s aide cover and experienced specialist teaching. Access to well-trained experienced professionals - speech-language therapists, psychologists, special education advisors, physiotherapists and occupational therapists is imperative for the wellbeing of students in schools. These should always be available to advise and support classroom teachers and provide reassurance for parents that the best educational plan and programme is in place for their child.” [Special education sector representative]

“By using a consortium approach, where a cluster of schools have expertise attached, ie, therapists, specialists in ASD etc. Look at the current specialist expertise (early childhood [education services], therapy, teaching etc) within each cluster and share this around all schools in the consortium. This approach will result in efficiencies such as savings in travel time and result in more hands-on support for students. The consortium would pool their ORRS-generated teaching time to purchase specialist teacher expertise. Currently if a school only generates a small amount of ORRS teacher time, it can be difficult and expensive to employ part-time expertise. The consortium could be the fundholder for students from within its schools. A board with representation from each school would be responsible for allocating the funding and purchasing the expertise for the benefit of all of the schools in the cluster.” [Unknown]

“We have an obligation to ensure that all students requiring support receive support. If we cut down on the bureaucracy, we are more likely to achieve this.” [Education sector representative]

“Discard all cluster-type models - there is no accountability. Targeted funding works better.” [Unknown]

“Once again the efficiency can be enhanced by making special schools more [aware] of resource centres where skill, expertise and experience can be transferred to other schools in the local area. Improve reporting channels and measure against specified outcomes.” [Unknown]

4. Use additional teaching more efficiently

More than 10 per cent of respondents showed general support for the discussion document idea of aggregating ORRS .1 and .2 teacher time. A wide range of ideas and models were suggested.

Some suggested .1 and .2 teachers be employed by special schools, others suggested employment by a designated school in a cluster or that the employer role be outsourced to a private provider.

Some respondents suggested linking or attaching specialist teachers to a specific national or regional service, ie, services for the Deaf. Others suggested the Ministry of Education could be another possible employer.

Respondents thought setting up a single employer of additional teachers would work well, giving all schools access to a national pool of trained and skilled staff. The ongoing professional development and learning of additional teachers would be easier to achieve and would be consistent across the service. There would be greater accountability for resources and specialist knowledge too.

Some respondents disagreed with this model, preferring specialist teachers to be employed by schools and, therefore, more involved in the life and culture of their schools.

Others wanted the flexibility to use additional teacher funding to employ other kinds of staff, for example, SENCOs, teachers' aides, coaches, tutors and local health agency nurses.

"The concept of pooling the .1 and .2 teacher time to benefit a cluster of schools has merit. This may ensure better accountability for this resource to be used as intended and reduce the ability of schools to use it as teacher's aide time as is sometimes the case currently." [Parent or caregiver]

"There needs to be an urgent review of how the .1 specialist teacher role is funded and used. Some schools use this well, many don't and it does not target the needs of the child it is targeted to. The model of SLS would be a good model to follow, but not based in mainstream schools. The recent SEIT pilot carried out in Auckland appears to have been successful, but again depends on the competency of the people employed." [Special education sector representative]

"[We] agree that there is a paucity of specialist teachers and that specialist teaching is important. Parents and schools need to have the information they need to make informed decisions regarding the benefits of specialist teacher versus teacher's aide time. Specialist teachers need to support and provide structure for teachers' aides. Untrained teachers' aides are at increased risk of deskilling children with special educational needs if day-to-day support is provided in the wrong way." [Non-government organisation or community representative]

“Two worries about the options given (if they were to replace the current ORRS specialist teacher) ... if the specialist teacher is a roving teacher who covers a range of schools then they are not on site ... when required or when a child needs [them]. Their timetable becomes restricted based on travel time and other students and not on the NEEDS of the children. If the teachers’ aides were to take over this aspect of the job then they would need to be drastically upskilled and have the qualities of a teacher in order to provide what a specialist teacher can and does provide.” [Education sector representative]

“The combining of the .1 and .2 allocations of extra teacher time for ORRS-funded students within a cluster of schools (where there is not a special school as fundholder) so that teacher’s aide services and specialists can be rationalised is recommended. Within clusters, or if employed collectively by an independent provider, teachers could be more able to support and mentor each other; some could specialise in particular areas of need and travel to those students who require this particular support. There would be [a] more consistent standard of support to ORRS-funded students and their schools. There is a shortage of specialist teachers but if more training opportunities were available resulting in specialist qualifications, with secure employment being provided through the cluster of schools or an independent provider, there would be more incentives to become ORRS specialist resource teachers.” [Non-government organisation or community representative]

“Bring[ing] together the .1 and .2 teacher roles for ORRS [is a] fantastic idea. [This] would improve [the] consistency and the standard of that teaching. Bringing those teachers under the Ministry of Education, Special Education umbrella would be the best option as it would promote coordination with other specialists and therefore streamline service provision.” [Special education sector representative]

“Collating .1 and .2 teacher time and employing more specialist teachers in these roles could be successful or a complete disaster. Often teachers employ current staff members to undertake the ORRS-funded teacher time, which means having someone on board who already knows and works within the culture and routines of that school. An outsider who has absolutely no knowledge or understanding of a school’s environment or procedures, teachers, or students, may come into a school for a short period, do their allotted time and then leave again (which makes developing and fostering positive working relationships with the ORRS-funded child difficult). For some schools this would work. For the majority, I believe it may not.” [Parent or caregiver]

“It should be possible for schools to convert the ORRS additional teacher time into teacher’s aide hours in special circumstances where this could be shown to be a more effective use of the resource. [This] should be via [an] application with clear criteria and be by exception so as not to undermine the availability of the additional teacher resource nationally. The additional teacher resource needs to be aggregated and sit alongside RTLB as a national specialist teacher workforce - attached to clusters and under the auspices of clear and accountable management.” [Education sector representative]

"[I'm] opposed to [a] cluster-type model for .1 and .2 additional teachers. This hasn't worked that successfully for RTLB - why replicate a model that isn't sound? Maybe in some rural areas?" [Special education sector representative]

"Outsourcing the .1 and .2 teacher time to a specialist (private) service that provides teachers with specialist knowledge. If the school's .1 teacher does not have the necessary knowledge or training, schools should have the option to outsource this role to specialist providers. The preferred option is to have the .1 teacher well qualified." [Non-government organisation or community representative]

"Teachers should be amalgamated as per the suggestion in the Review [of Special Education] on page 31 but it might include RTLB to create SENCO roles in schools. This has the additional value of producing schools which are prepared to accommodate children regardless of their current role and children with a variety of need as catered for." [Education sector representative]

"The pull out model of education simply does not work. Students need to learn in their own classroom room with resources brought in for [the] entire class to benefit from. Consideration should be given to concepts such as co-teaching, where specialist and general education teachers teach lessons side-by-side, adapting the lesson where necessary and assisting with the many and variable intelligences in every class. Where students have more significant learning needs they should be in an appropriate special unit and incorporated into mainstream programmes as much as possible for lunchtimes, free [time], play times and electives (arts, dramas, etc)." [Special education sector representative]

"The idea of creating an itinerant ORRS specialist teacher service is impractical, particularly in high schools where the school timetable is so complex. In addition, as with itinerant services such as RTLB [and] SLS, the provision of services to the students will be diminished due to inconsistency of service provision from one cluster to another, other expenditure such as travelling allowances, funding to host schools, etc." [Special education sector representative]

5. Make better use of teachers' aides

Around six per cent of respondents recommended making more efficient use of teachers' aides by clustering staff and matching staff to the needs of students.

Some respondents wanted teachers' aides to have specialist training and take more responsibility. Yet, at the same time, many also wanted teachers' aides to stay true to the original intent of the role, ie, to aid a classroom teacher.

Having teachers' aides work with more than one student and support whole-class programmes were two ideas put forward.

Respondents also expressed concern about over-reliance on teachers' aides. Making better use of technology and students' peer relationships were suggested alternatives.

"Pool teachers' aides, this would build their expertise with training of course and once a child leaves school this teacher's aide could be supporting a child with similar needs. To an extent this is happening because Ministry of Education, Special Education staff at times inform schools of experienced teachers' aides looking for a job. As stated before, all services being delivered through Ministry of Education, Special Education, for example. Intensive input in early years often allows for greater independence and thus less support in later years. Giving children a full-time teacher's aide is not the answer as the children often learn to be depende[nt] on that person and often these children do not learn independence [and] self management skills. It is important that there is a good team working together, frequent meetings are often more essential than direct one-to-one therapy with a child. School should be able to relieve their teachers to help develop programmes for the child with supports from specialists. In order for teachers to feel confident with a child with special needs, external support is essential. Too often the teaching is left to the teacher's aide and specialist teacher." [Unknown]

"There needs to be a centralised, regional, cluster system that ensures all schools maximise on teacher's aide hours and resources. Currently some schools are performing well and others are really struggling. Best practice should be sought from successful schools and this system should be applied nationally. Combining teacher's aide hours into clusters could be a positive and efficient use of resources but might be impossible depending on the location [or] distribution of schools in the area. Local solutions to local issues would be the most flexible and efficient system, however, schools should have to be accountable for their use of Ministry funded services [and] resources." [Special education sector representative]

"Perhaps we need to review the teacher's aide component in our children's education; is there an over reliance on the teacher's aide? Young adults who have recently left school often advise that they were so glad to see the back of [the] teacher's aide [and] that by having a teacher's aide allocated they were made to feel different. We say this with respect to the work teachers' aides do, but question the teachers' or schools' approach of their current use." [Non-government organisation]

"Ensuring that services are ongoing for the student on a regular basis. Teacher's aide time is just as important as specialist time as the teachers' aides help ensure programmes are carried out throughout the week not just when the specialist visits. It is all very well having specialists but if there are not enough teachers' aides in the classroom then the specialist programmes become ineffective and the teachers' aides become babysitters. [The] ideal ratio is one teacher's aide to two to three students." [Special education sector representative]

“Teacher’s aide resource should be able to be used more flexibly and not only attached to one student in particular, when others can benefit from input in the same class at the same time.” [Education sector representative]

“I would like to see a change of emphasis from the teacher’s aide being the primary educator for verified students. Frequently teachers’ aides take a disproportionate responsibility for a student and there is a need to refocus on the name teacher’s aide, ie, the teacher has primary responsibility for the education of the student and the teacher’s aide is just that - an aid to the teacher. Maybe if there was a teacher’s aide made available for every class rather than allocated to individual students this would address the problem.” [Special education sector representative]

“Targeted services could be made more efficient by running frequent (termly) free professional development training for teachers’ aides, principals and classroom teachers. Topics would rotate throughout the year and include talks from speech-language therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists, behavioural psychologists, RTLB, resource teachers of literacy etc. The Ministry of Education, Special Education could also get speakers from effective schools in their region to share models and effective strategies that these schools use. Running these regular workshops would ensure that the essential knowledge needed for working with special needs students would be distributed evenly and efficiently. Best practice and effective strategies would become part of the culture of schools. However, for this model to work effectively these groups would need to have some sort of compulsory attendance and funding for the release of teachers’ aides. The SENCO cluster would have management of this service in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Special Education. They would also liaise with the RTLB for delivery of this service. The RTLB would go back to the model where they targeted individual behaviour and some extreme learning difficulties and worked with individual children in a similar way that the RTLit works at the current time.” [Education sector representative]

“There is an assumption that money for teachers’ aides is there, but there is little guidance or training for teachers’ aides, who can be expected to: adapt the curriculum themselves; [be] in isolated jobs; hav[e] morning tea at a different time to the rest of the staff because they are supervising a child with special needs and have huge responsibility. Teachers’ aides need more support.” [Education sector representative]

6. Allocate teachers’ aides more effectively

Teacher’s aide funding was a key concern for a small number of respondents (nearly four per cent) who talked about allocating teachers’ aides more effectively.

They felt the funding schools received did not cover the true cost of employing a teacher’s aide and generally agreed with the discussion document ideas on streamlining the allocation process and gaining efficiencies.

Respondents suggested reviewing a student's need for a teacher's aide less frequently, extending a student's allocated teacher's aide time where their needs could be predicted into the future and using a formula or verification process to allocate teacher's aide time.

"Excessive amounts of resources are put...each year [into] reviewing the teacher's aide hours for ORRS-funded students - systems even within the organisation feel very complex. Trial using set bands of teacher's aide hours to calculate student entitlements." [Unknown]

"The process for allocating teacher's aide time more efficiently would be to reduce the assessment of need to every two years instead of annually. For students with longstanding needs it may be more worthwhile to establish a specific extended review period." [Non-government organisation or community representative]

"Reassess and re-evaluate pupils' needs less often, unless a pupil's needs have altered markedly and require a reassessment. Greater autonomy for the schools in the use of teacher's aide hours thus less need for the paperwork involved in the allocation of these hours." [Education sector representative]

"Streamline process. Make use of information that is already available. Have information, accountability with a central agency and resource. Remove double-handling and duplication of processes. Allow more money to go directly to support [the] student, not to get eaten up in red tape and backroom administrative processes. Extend [the] review period for access to supports like teacher's aide time but allow a review period sooner, if schools and, or parents see a need. Allow teacher's aide time to be clustered so students get [a] more consistent standard of support." [Parent or caregiver]

"Ministry of Education, Special Education has introduced a new process for managing requests for teacher's aide resourcing, which is more objective, equitable and accurate." [Special education sector representative]

"Take [the] teacher's aide allocation away from Ministry of Education, Special Education field staff. It is a major misuse of a professional workforce. Allocate [this] directly to schools as a bundled-up cash resource with the .1 and .2 teacher component. Verification could include a teacher's aide category." [Special education sector representative]

"We do not believe that allocating a standard amount of teacher's aide time for all ORRS-funded students would be fair. [This] could cause friction between schools and families as they compete for the time. Principals and teachers in regular schools are not qualified to say which special needs child requires more teacher's aide time, especially with High and Very High needs children." [Parent or caregiver]

7. Use of specialist services more effectively

Nearly 11 per cent of respondents noted ways to more effectively use the specialist services available.

They talked about using services in an advisory or consultancy capacity to improve teaching and teacher's aide practice. They also suggested using therapeutic services to improve the support available to children and their families.

Many respondents expressed a need for specialists to be clearer about their practice, what they intended to achieve and in what circumstances their practices were best used.

Extending the range of specialist services was suggested, eg, respondents noted the need for more art, music, evidenced-based and technology-based services. Ensuring specialists were also knowledgeable about the curriculum and the education context was noted as necessary for services to be more effective and efficient.

Some respondents said they would use specialist time more efficiently if it were available on a more flexible basis.

"Ministry of Education, Special Education requires that at least 25 per cent of ORRS funding is applied to specialist services, up to 75 per cent on paraprofessional services (eg, teachers' aides) and up to five per cent on administrative services. This blanket rule-setting is inappropriate and does not take into account local situations. The rule has been rigidly enforced and even in situations where the 25 per cent minimum can't be met because of an inability to employ sufficient specialist support, the Ministry has declined to modify the rule. That raises the prospect of not spending all the money available. Surely in that situation it is better to actually use the resource fully. The blanket rule does not account for situations where the Very High health and personal care needs of students demand more paraprofessional support [than] the 75 per cent limit can support. The principle should be that health and safety (of both the student and the staff) is satisfied and local circumstances taken into account so that the current ORRS percentage expenditure requirements become guidelines for fundholders rather than mandatory." [Special education sector representative]

"It is important that schools can access specialist services. Giving schools funding in their Operations Grant will not work as small schools, which most of New Zealand schools are, don't generate enough funding to access the range of specialists that could be needed. Ministry of Education, Special Education is an avenue which needs to be maintained." [Special education sector representative]

"Take away the expert, consultant model where advice is given to the class teacher and replace this with a hands-on model where staff work holistically with the student, school and family. There should be flexibility in the system to meet the child's needs. To achieve this, decisions about resourcing need to be made close to the child." [Special education sector representative]

“Better use of technology. It must be hard to get specialists to isolated areas more than once or twice a year, yet children change quickly and need more input than that for optimum outcomes. Perhaps video consultations [and] phone advice could help to fill some of the gaps.” [Parent or caregiver]

“... [Provide] ongoing professional development and support and guidance programmes, directed by specialist staff, for the classroom teacher and teacher’s aide who work with individual children every teaching day. We will gain the best value for money when the staff who spend the greatest amount of time with individual students are given clear direction about the most effective ways of making learning happen for these students, and in many cases, managing their behaviour effectively.” [Parent and education sector representative]

“Specialist services can be utilised through providing models to teachers and teachers’ aides about how to support the student. As the teachers’ aides and teachers work daily with the students, it makes sense that they learn how to support the student rather than engaging a therapist to do one-on-one work each week. There is a responsibility in this model to provide time or funding for the teacher’s aide teacher to complete this work regularly. One issue is that specialists often engage with the teacher’s aide, but the teacher may be in class so is often not aware of the information being given. The teacher is responsible for planning and needs to be aware of adaptations etc to planning so it is important that all parties are informed by specialists of [any] recommendations.” [Special education sector representative]

“When I was working with an ORRS-funded child in a mainstream setting, we saw an occupational therapist once a year because she had so many children on her books. This was not anywhere near enough. The people she came in to help with suggestions, plans and ideas were so overworked [that] the whole system broke down. In short there are not enough people doing these important jobs.” [Special education sector representative]

8. Better coordinate services

Respondents (around 15 per cent) said better service coordination and more collaboration among the range of people involved in service provision would likely lead to increased efficiency.

They contributed a range of ideas to improve service efficiency - from better information sharing, developing agreed processes, joint planning and monitoring and working in a multidisciplinary or trans-disciplinary way. Involving families and valuing their influence was emphasised by respondents.

“[Have a] fully-funded SENCO to work between schools and with students. They will know what all the circumstances are and how to bring together the agencies. Ensure all those involved in supporting students and teachers have a focus on teaching and learning, an understanding of the principle of inclusion and the ability to support teachers and learners in the context of regular schools. Avoid deficit theorising and instead focus on identifying strengths and

needs and planning collaboratively to address these needs. Look at people as a resource. Employ teachers' aides across a cluster of schools to maximise expertise. Define [the] specific area of difficulty at [the] initial meeting and refine at [the] analysis [and] planning stage. Negotiate success criteria / exist at planning stage. Trans-disciplinary model, ie, [the] key worker is the one contact person for the teacher, student and whānau and liaises with other specialist colleagues regarding programming and interventions. Use technology where possible (eg, Skype for teachers working with students in remote areas) so there is improved access to people with expertise." [Unknown]

"Coordination by one person, ie, a navigator. [Have] more services available, eg, speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, early intervention therapy. [Have] planned, structured intervention in partnership with [the] family." [Unknown]

"One centralised, single assessment eligibility process. Lead agency to lead the intervention and funding where multiple agencies are involved. More flexibility in [the] use and application of services." [Unknown]

"Cluster model for expertise. Multidisciplinary teams available directly to schools for support without a great, big referral process." [Unknown]

"Better communication and coordination between agencies and schools and between agencies. Allow service agreements (Ministry of Education, Special Education) to roll over once signed so that new staff can pick-up families without having to pursue signatures. This can cause significant delay." [Education sector representative]

"By not repeating services across health and education, a significant reduction of costs will be made. Additionally by adding a psychologist to the RTL cluster team, there will be a significant increase in the efficiency of the process." [Unknown]

"Early Intervention providers are very knowledgeable about the children with whom they work and could be more effectively used in planning and providing services for children in schools. Working in a collaborative team around the child-model is effective in early intervention and could be exploited in service provision in schools, rather than the current fragment[ed] approach. This would ensure much better transitions at all levels." [Education sector representative]

"Recording and sharing appropriate information efficiently, to save duplication of effort." [Parent or caregiver]

"Due to the scarcity of specialised therapists and their limited time schedules, the parent ought to have the option of coordinating the specialist services for their child in the school setting. In the end, the parent is the carer and needs that specialised knowledge too. There needs to be one person who collates all the shared knowledge and information for the child. This doesn't work in mainstream schools where the specialists visit the child, chat to staff and

later send a report to the parents. The info[rmation] gets filtered, filed and forgotten in this way and is never holistically maintained and attended to. This piecemeal approach appears to work because everyone ticks off their list, but in reality, the system is very, very inefficient and the child does not benefit very much. ORRS funding. Schools need to be more transparent and parents need to be better informed about this and involved with this to ensure it is efficient and being used for the child it is allocated to.” [Parent or caregiver]

“It would be nice if services were linked and worked a lot more closely so parents didn’t have to repeat information.” [Parent or caregiver]

“Services could be made more efficient by having specialised case managers that can assess. Is genuinely needed.” [Parent or caregiver]

A small number of respondents saw that there could be efficiency in clustering students, while taking care to note that students and families would still need to remain at the forefront of service provision.

“Sharing services can lead to economies, but at the risk of then depending on Very High needs students’ funding to prop-up others. Also [a] risk [of] creating special needs communities in schools (units, satellites, etc) and removing responsibility again from mainstream to provide for students when they could reasonably be included. [There is] still [a] need for special schools and units in some cases but not at [the] cost of relinquishing responsibilities.” [Special education sector representative]

“Specialist units within schools could possibly help to cluster children requiring specialist teacher time in the same location and therefore reduce travelling time and associated costs. The other side of this would mean taking away choice from the parent who wants their child to go to a specific school.” [Non-government organisation]

“We note the consultation document’s stance that there is no extra money. We, therefore, consider that the current framework needs to be more efficient. Particular areas that we consider need to be addressed are: streamlining the assessment process for students to receive special education support, streamlining the many current ad hoc funding areas, improving professional development and providing lead special schools as a resource. The reality is that units, classes and individual students in a regular school will never be matched by the efficiencies of special schools. Special schools can provide greater value for money because of their mass and their ability to centralise specialists, therapies and resources. For this reason, special schools need to remain.” [Special education sector representative]

“Magnet schools. There is always an economy of scale by pursuing the concept of magnet schools or similar. If parents were able to be directed to specific schools [that] may have expertise and resourcing to work with particular students, I believe huge savings could be made and the children, in the end, would get a much better deal. It seems ludicrous that a school should receive

more than \$100,000 to provide special fencing for ONE child, when a neighbouring school may already have appropriate fencing in place!! This is a complete waste of taxpayer money.” [Education sector representative]

“Greater efficiency is gained when the specialists, teachers, teachers’ aides and students are all working from the same complex, ie, schools with special needs units or specialist schools. This saves on vehicles, mileage, office buildings and time for travel. There is also better communication between agencies, ie, occupational therapist, physiotherapist and the speech-language therapist all working together with teachers and teachers’ aides, which creates a unified strategy with students. Snapshot visits by specialists are often misleading as special needs students change from day-to-day depending on medication, seizure levels, emotional and physical issues, etc.” [Special education sector representative]

“There may be efficiency gains in grouping more students together (at the same school or unit), but we would not want this to occur at the expense of parental and student choice of school. We feel it is very important [that] a child can attend school in their local community, along with siblings. There may be ways that schools could be networked in order to achieve group efficiencies while retaining student choice of school.” [Unknown]

9. Improve accountability

Seventeen per cent of respondents commented about the need for accountable use of all special education funding, resources, programmes and services.

They said accountability was about making more information available to students and families about the resources available and what schools and specialists were able to achieve with the resources, ie, the impact on student outcomes. The IEP was suggested as a useful tool to improve accountability.

“Accountability and quality-control of the services provided. Regular consultation with families to assess that services and supports are meeting their requirements.” [Education sector representative]

“Put in a robust accountability process that includes feedback from schools and other agencies as part of appraisal processes for staff.” [Education sector representative]

“Clear expectation at all IEPs of evidence of how the individualised funding is being utilised, along with the present legal requirement of at least two IEPs a year. Far too much resourcing now goes into managing staff and too little is available to schools and for the students. Devolve the management back into school clusters or areas, similar to the RTLB funding, and let them contract the professionals they need in consultation with parents.” [Parent or caregiver]

“Clear guidelines are established, eg, [have] service provision agreements in place [that] establish closure criteria, resourcing etc. Therapists should target

all special needs children, not just those in the special schools. Increase the training of teachers to include the special education services.” [Special education sector representative]

“Funding needs to be used as designated and schools need to be held accountable for how they spend it, perhaps part of an ERO review, or if there are queries regarding how it is spent, the school needs to demonstrate where the money went. Combining the special education advisor and .1 and .2 teacher roles would facilitate a more efficient and better quality service.” [Parent and special education representative]

“Through reporting on what they are doing and what they are achieving in a given time span.” [Unknown]

“A transparent system that sees the best outcomes for a family are viewed as important, provided they are realistic. That will need open and honest robust conversations in some cases and a future planning tool to look past now and into the future maybe.” [Unknown]

“Carers and parents should be properly informed about the range of services available to their children, as well as always having options open to them since the needs are ever-changing. There should be an official and mandatory feedback system for carers. This enables them to voice out positive feedback and not just issues or concerns. This, in turn, will provide information and data which will be reflective of the school’s performance. Again, it would be a wealth of information to all agencies concerned, including the Ministry. I also suggest that qualitative research should be done in this field [to] highlight some key issues and concerns.” [Parent or caregiver]

“Parents need to know what their child is entitled to. Ensure that targets are set for ORRS students. These targets need to be realistic, measurable and schools need to be accountable in the manner in which they feedback results of targets through the audit process.” [Parent or caregiver]

“Make them accountable. IEPs should be a document by which we can measure the advances not only of the student but the workers that support them. Too often these documents hold no mana, there is no accountability, they are not a working document but one that is filed and not referred to [un]till the next IEP rolls around. This document should have agreed, targeted, specific, measurable goals that will be recorded, implemented and then assessed. Learning goals should be built up from a platform of success. Knowing exactly what the student knows and where they need to go next and all this information should be included in the IEP. If we take time to make a full developmental plan then the services required will be outlined specifically, thus avoiding double-ups or wastage of time. Having enough staff to meet needs. Overworked staff and heavy caseloads mean intervention is superficial and can not meet the student’s needs in an ongoing manner. Utilising personnel appropriately, eg, if working with a preschooler, don’t send a professional who does not have the background and experience to work with a young one, just because they are the closest key worker. Match the student’s

needs to the appropriate intervention worker. Early identification and intervention [that's] specific and targeted ... reduces long-term costs. " [Parent or caregiver]

"[Focus on] ACCOUNTABILITY NOT REPORTING. It has been quite clear to us over the years that providing the right ticks are made and the reports [are] filed in time, there is no accountability as to the potential the child should [or] could be reaching (for many reasons)." [Parent or caregiver]

"The key metric that in our experience is missing from the current special needs education sector is outcomes. We see little evidence of an outcome-focused approach in our day-to-day interactions, suggesting that the quality of the outcome is not a key metric. And our experience with some private providers confirms that there is little accountability regarding results." [Parent or caregiver]

"Primarily the IEP or life plan needs to be specific, doable and planned out step-by-step. Next, it has to be implemented. The accountability in this regard is sadly lacking." [Parent and education sector representative]

"Ensure that the team around the child knows their responsibilities and has training in processes, such as developing and implementing IEPs. The team approach of family, school and specialist services ensures a full and fair representation of the needs of the student. Specialist services can act as mediators between the school and the family, supporting both parties to understand their roles and responsibilities." [Unknown]

"Trusting professionals to get on with their jobs independently with clearly defined accountability targets. In this way, a reduction of management positions at resource centres and subsequent administrators, should be facilitated. This could reduce costs and perhaps put more money into chalk-face positions WHERE IT COUNTS!" [Special education sector representative]

"Firstly the family needs to know exactly how much funding they are receiving and that it is being spent on their child. I would suggest that when the Ministry of Education sends their annual letter to parents, instead of saying 'the funding allocated to your child is \$XXXX', it is set like this: 'the funding allocated to your child for 2010 is: teacher's aide \$XXXX, .1 full-time teacher \$XXXX, consumables allowance \$XXXX, TOTAL FUNDING \$XXXX'. This way the family could ask how many hours per week the full-time teacher allocation is for their child. The families could also negotiate (supported by the Ministry of Education, Special Education) with the school on what exactly the consumables will be spent on. There are no educational services or supports available for autistic children." [Parent or caregiver]

"Spot individual student audits by ERO or Ministry of Education, Special Education to ensure that the dollar inputs are targeted and producing the benefits expected. The failures uncovered by recent years ERO audits will be overcome if the targeting process is introduced." [Parent or caregiver]

Funding and resource use (Q5b)

Funding and resources for students

This section looks at the issue of funding and resource allocation. It starts by revisiting the Review of Special Education 2010 discussion document preamble to 5b: Is the current mix of services and support right and does it provide value for money? What changes would you suggest? It summarises the key themes that emerged from the Review of Special Education submission process and features some of the public responses to the question.

What we asked

Overall

Under the subheading *Getting the mix of services and support right and ensuring value for money*, this section of the discussion document referred to the balancing act involved in getting the best from the resources available from teachers' aides to specialist services to the programmes available.

Key question

The discussion document asked:

- Is the current mix of services and support right and does it provide value for money? What changes would you suggest? (5b).

This question received 1,173 responses, the majority were from education sector representatives (693), followed by special education sector representatives (405) and parents (369). This question attracted 192 responses from non-government or community representatives and 143 responses from health or disability sector representatives. Six students contributed their views. Note, respondents could select to be represented in more than one group.

What you said

Key themes

1. Acknowledge what is working well now
2. Acknowledge what is not working well now
3. Build on current programmes
4. Consider different service models.

Overall

Respondents looked at the current mix of programmes, services and supports to see if it was right and provided value for money.

About half commented on the mix of services, with 60 per cent saying they thought it was about right and 40 per cent saying it was not.

Examples of what worked well tended to relate more to special schools, special units and residential special schools, although there were positive comments about regular schools as well.

Examples of what needed to improve, mostly related to regular schools. Feedback highlighted the ongoing challenges associated with special education in regular schools.

1. Acknowledge what is working well now

Nineteen per cent of respondents commented about what was working well in special education.

They cited special schools, special units and residential special schools as examples. These examples were thought to work well because of the expertise, resources and good-quality services they offered. Typically respondents who favoured these settings had not enjoyed success within regular school settings or were unsure if they would.

“The mix of services for children in special schools is working well - the grouping of resources in special schools provides economies of scale and access to specialist knowledge.” [Parent or caregiver]

“Special schools and the ORRS funding process provide good value because they have trained staff on site and there is less time and money wasted on travel and administration. A child who has special needs should have readily available access to resources no matter where they live in New Zealand. If an area doesn't have a special school facility, the schools in those areas should work together to have a resource centre or unit that has specially-trained education teachers available, to work both in the centre itself [and] as an itinerant teacher moving around schools.” [Unknown]

“As far as our grandchild is concerned, the current mix of programmes is working well. To consider integrating him into a mainstream environment would have disastrous consequences.” [Parent or caregiver]

“I believe special schools are working very well, having satellite units attached to host schools gives a good mix with mainstreaming. The reason I chose a special school was because of the expertise and knowledge that they have of special needs students. There are constant therapists who get to know my child and visit the class regularly, they also guide and assist the teacher. I can see that some students in mainstream settings would struggle, mainly due to

lack of support and funding issues. If mainstream schools could somehow link up to the knowledge held in special schools I think this would greatly assist special needs student' outcomes in a mainstream setting. " [Parent or caregiver]

"Mix of special schools, units and mainstream schools works well and retains choice. Some children obviously cope well with mainstream, at least until primary stage and others do not, including my daughter. Our Autistic daughter has been through all options. Mainstreaming was a disaster due to lack of resourcing and [the] teacher [being] unable to cope with a special needs child. She suffered significant psychological damage as a result of that experience. My daughter was effectively forced out of a special needs unit (very few people seem to be able to understand and manage Autistic children especially the severe ones). [A] special needs school was the last resort for us and while [it was] very difficult for everybody [it] was better than the other two options. " [Parent or caregiver]

Respondents reported that many regular early childhood education services, schools and tertiary settings were meeting the needs of students. The elements of success, they said, included well-specified services, team members knowing their roles and well-coordinated services that were linked into schools and families.

"When working collaboratively, with good protocols, YES!" [Education sector representative]

"Client surveys completed by educators and parents acknowledge the wonderful work being done by Ministry of Education, Special Education employees. Outcomes data confirms this service is highly valued in the school community." [Education sector representative]

"For our family, with my son in receipt of ORRS support, in a mainstream school and very happy there, the current system works very well. My son also benefited immeasurably from early years support and clearly early intervention is of enormous help to these youngsters. My heart goes out to those young pupils who just miss out on the ORRS criteria. I would extend the net more widely to support about three per cent, not one per cent of pupils as is currently the case. I would like to see more teachers' aides in classrooms across New Zealand so teachers [don't] have to struggle with very needy pupils to the detriment of the class, the individual and the teacher." [Parent or caregiver]

"I get an excellent service for my boy - if we need extra help I have phoned the psychologist and he has been fantastic." [Parent or caregiver]

"I'm happy with what my son gets now but if more funding and services were available he could learn more skills." [Parent or caregiver]

"Southland has a good variety of services available," [Education sector representative]

“Specialist services being employed by the Ministry of Education, Special Education has distinct advantages. It can provide a wrap-around service and link with other areas within the Ministry providing a broad view of key policies, initiatives and services. It provides specialists with a measure of oversight and the ability to suggest, sometimes strongly, strategies and actions to support students.” [Special education sector representative]

“There is always room for improvement ... If and when improvements are required, I use the processes and mediums already in place such as IEP meetings, any school meeting and consultation meeting, hui and telephone or written (email) communication with staff and board. I think changes come as they are needed and requested. I am unable to preempt, to correct, or change something for which I currently feel there is no wrong.” [Parent or caregiver]

“We don’t know how much it costs. [Our son’s] needs are being met, eg, toilet training, communication and behaviour.” [Parent or caregiver]

“The course [my son] attended at WelTec was value for money and has ongoing value now he has completed that course. The value comes from enhanced life skills, confidence, mentoring, attendance at polytechnic courses and strong friendships.” [Parent or caregiver]

Respondents also noted that, although services were working pretty well, more was needed. They advocated strongly for more services, more consistency, more professional development, more information, more coordination and more acceptance of diversity on the part of staff, managers and leaders of schools and services.

“When it works there is definitely value for money when our centres and kindergartens are able to access adequate support and help. In these cases children are supported in their learning and development and parents are confident their children are gaining the best they can. There simply doesn’t seem to be enough funding for the number of children who require early intervention. Programmes such as Early Years [are] a step in the right direction as a collective response to early intervention.” [Education sector representative]

“The current mix of programmes, services and supports is right. However, these are not optimally coordinated, which negatively impacts on efficiency and efficacy. This doesn’t provide best value for money. It might be more suitable to align all services (RTLB included) into one more streamlined team.” [Unknown]

“It is OK, but too hard to get info[rmation] - all resources would be put to better use if each knew what the others were doing. Pull together.” [Parent or caregiver]

“It’s pretty good. Maybe [need] more teacher’s aide for some children at transition-to-school time.” [Special education sector representative]

“The current mix of services would be fine if all agencies functioned, collaborated and communicated effectively and if funding was equitable and adequate.” [Education sector representative]

“The mix seems to work if the family is extremely outspoken and knowledgeable. The same would apply to the schools. Insecure or inexperienced families or schools would not get the outcome they might deserve. I am supportive of the current system, but that results simply from the fact that I will make sure that my child gets the special education that she has a right to. I am ultimately her sole advocate.” [Parent or caregiver]

“This can be dependent on the school’s attitude and culture towards inclusion and disability. The current mix of programmes gives parents and whānau a good selection to select what is right for their child.” [Non-government organisation]

2. Acknowledge what is not working well now

Nearly a third of respondents outlined the things within the special education system that were not working well. Generally, services to and in regular schools needed improving, they said.

They were concerned about the lack of specialist services available and believed too much money was spent on administration and management, which compromised the goal of getting good value for money.

Respondents talked about teachers and teachers’ aides needing more specialist input. Without it, students’ programmes and progress were being compromised.

Some suggested using the money spent on specialists to employ more teachers or teachers’ aides, as a way of getting more value. Gaps in services were said to be related to the unavailability of the right specialists and funding.

Respondents expressed concern about the travel time and costs of itinerant staff that could be better spent on support to students and teachers. Others were also concerned about the cost of student transport.

The lack of priority given to early intervention services was a concern for some respondents who wanted early intervention teams to support students until they were eight years old.

“There needs to be much more funding for early intervention services (birth to six years), given the positive impact such services can have at both the individual and societal level. It is now well documented that public resources spent in early childhood [education service] save many times their initial cost in reduced needs for services later in life. The needs triangle on page 12 of the discussion document acknowledges this, but the funding model does not. If all children who need support, from High to moderate to low needs, were supported, every school or school cluster could have the experience and expertise to work with all children, as the predictability chart on page 26

makes clear. Many children with special needs in school need relatively minor adjustments to classroom practice. They do not need to be seen as an added burden on a classroom teacher, but as presenting one way of learning among all those that are evident in any classroom of children.” [Unknown]

“Time wasted in meetings with multiple services. Lack of consistency of intervention from a centrally-administered service creates frustration, lack of follow-through and ineffective programmes. With a Government or centrally-based service reaction to crisis are slow and inefficient, whereas onsite specialists are able to evaluate and resolve crises before they become issues.” [Education sector representative]

“There are gaps in the mix and there is not always value for money. Specialist services such as speech-language therapy and school psychologists are often too difficult to access for those pupils with the greatest needs, giving a patchy service delivery. Not particularly good value for money at times. Research [is] needed on quality indicators to describe value for money in special education and to relate these to desirable student outcomes and professional standards. Not all pupils have access to specialist services, many programmes are delivered by teachers and teachers’ aides with minimal input from specialist services. More investment in assistive technology will lead to greater communication opportunities for pupils and have flow on effects. Different providers for specialist services could lead to a more efficient system. These could be from the private sector or indeed the district health board, depending on different models.” [Education sector representative]

“Currently special education services are developed on an ad hoc basis. [There are] so few professional specialists available that anyone with a qualification is employed without checking [if] the mix is right. Especially in isolated areas, staff shortages are extreme. A component often missed is the experienced, trained teacher with current teaching and curriculum knowledge and experience in teaching children with a range of disabilities - this person is comfortable in schools and special education and often is the key person that influences success.” [Special education sector representative]

“Currently [there is] not enough provision for High needs. More funding [is] required. More acknowledgement [is needed] of [the] huge difficulties parents and families of High needs children face 24-hours, seven-days-a-week.” [Health or disability sector representative]

“I believe the current mix to be a huge cost to the taxpayer. National decisions need to be made with no more variations. It is so disheartening to hear of children and families receiving so much more support just because they live in a different area of the country. Changes [are needed] for sure! Inclusive education would be the best way to go. The cost of a taxi to-and-from school in Auckland must be exorbitant! The cost of maintaining extra properties with extra management must be so expensive. The cost of providing travel all over Auckland for specialists ... must be very high. Caseloads of staff everywhere in every aspect of education are so high! SENCOs having their own class and being a head of department, Ministry of Education, Special Education

staff, classroom teachers. Applications to assistive technology is a nightmare. We have been waiting three years for [a] computer! Our staff are not filling in the form right - what's wrong with this mess? FIX it! Three applications all taking hours and hours of pre-preparation in one year and still no success! Our staff had to eventually meet with the verifier personally. [Our] application for this year still has not gone in. We have now provided our own computer with no confidence that it will be used because no provision is given to upskill staff!" [Parent or caregiver]

"I do not believe that the current mix of programmes, services and support comes anywhere near meeting the real need at the chalk-face. Teachers are busy people who may have 30 or more children for whom they are responsible. They are now under huge pressure to ensure all students in their class meet the National Standards and that they are achieving at the highest possible level. If they then have special needs students in their class they are expected to follow and implement advice and guidance from Ministry of Education, Special Education case workers. Teachers simply haven't got time to do both effectively, and I believe it is unfair to continually request that they attend IEP meetings etc (often in school time). There are more Ministry of Education, Special Education advisors than workers and this is causing tension."
[Education sector representative]

"I do not believe the Government is getting programmes and services right. Teachers' aides are the best value for your money you could get! But without good support of specialist staff or equipment you might as well just pay to have our kids babysat! Our children will learn." [Parent or caregiver]

"The current model penalises regular schools and funds expensive special schools that deliver gold-plated interventions that are usually not based on evidence. Equity is fundamental. This can be done by ensuring that students are no-longer educated in special schools. Research shows that special school attendance reduces the chance of later inclusion in the workforce for people with Cerebral Palsy. Value for money is more than what occurs at schools - later outcomes are important. What practices predict improved outcomes for these children as adults?" [Special education sector representative]

"Broader access to regional assistive technology. [The] road show at recent workshops [was] fantastic. This is the first one ... in 10 years, with quality people who had enthusiasm and knowledge." [Unknown]

3. Build on current programmes

Respondents (35 per cent) contributed a range of views about the programmes currently available within the special education system, making particular mention of the RTLB, SLS, ORRS, SLT, moderate needs, teachers' aides, ASD services and services for Deaf and hearing-impaired.

Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB)

Overall, respondents wanted RTLB to be more involved in training as well as support for classroom teachers and teachers' aides. They saw a lack of consistency in the services provided by RTLB and reflected the need for improved governance and management of the services noted in a recent ERO report.

"I find my response mixed as there are definitely some great services and programmes in operation, for example elements of the RTLB service, while at the same time there are elements of the RTLB network where value for money is not being achieved. Achieving consistency or perhaps giving schools more ability in tailoring the service to their needs." [Education sector representative]

"The current mix of programmes provides value for money. However, what does not provide the Crown with an appropriate return on its Vote Education investment is the current duplication that exists and the leakage of funds coming from replicated services, an unclear environment and inadequate or poor communication between disciplines, service providers and other agencies. Ultimately these issues divert resources away from more effective use to promote and record improved student outcomes. In September 2009 ERO released its report Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour – An Evaluation of Cluster Management. The Crown allocates approximately \$73 million to fund the RTLB service to support students with learning and behaviour difficulties. The ERO report focused on the effectiveness of the current governance and management model. [Reporting that] just over half (22) of the RTLB clusters were found to be not well governed or managed, that self-review was limited or non-existent and clusters were not identifying needs or priorities. The report also concluded that in these instances aspects of referral and intervention practices were inconsistent with RTLB policy and the lack of monitoring systems at management level meant such inconsistencies were not being identified or addressed. The Regional Health Schools believe that the best practice identified within its sub-sector might be transferred and implemented into this situation in order to improve RTLB cluster performance and provide the Crown with a better return on its investment. The Health Schools would welcome the opportunity to assist if it was deemed an appropriate step to take." [Education sector representative]

Supplementary Learning Support (SLS)

Respondents who expressed concern about the SLS service said they had done so because students who met the criteria were not being funded and that the wrong students were being targeted for support.

They also thought SLS should be better tailored to each area of the school system, with primary and intermediate given access to itinerant services, giving secondary schools access to school-based programmes. Respondents also thought SLS funding should travel with students if and when they moved to another part of the country.

"[Have] more of the SLS resource reaching more students with learning disabilities. At present this successful service is only catering for a restricted number of Very High needs students. More ORRS funding would allow for SLS

to work with students who are likely to remain at Level 1 of the curriculum unless they have targeted support in literacy and numeracy. Changes to the moderation process for SLS enabling younger students to gain access to this resource. SLS resource could be finite ceasing at year 10 level where other programmes, eg, ASDAN or life skills programmes can be used.” [Education sector representative]

“The Ministry is investing a huge amount of money into staffing SLS programmes, yet realistically many of the students who currently qualify for SLS support are never going to progress to become independent adults. I believe that funding for these particularly students should be able to be granted for teacher’s aide support and instead utilise these highly-qualified valuable SLS teachers for those students who are not so needy and who will make significant progress with specialist interventions. This is a very un-PC response, however, I believe New Zealand is being fiscally irresponsible by not resourcing those students who would most benefit from specialist SLS intervention.” [Education sector representative]

Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Schemes (ORRS)

Respondents offered a range of comments about ORRS. They felt not enough services were available to students (verified for ORRS) in regular school settings. ORRS services were too variable across the country, good-quality information was patchy and specialists were not being used in the most efficient ways.

Respondents recommended solutions such as improving people’s ability to use ORRS resourcing in different ways - ways that better suited the needs of students, families and schools.

They noted the probable benefits of locating specialists in one agency, ie, improved professional development opportunities, more frequent use of evidence-based practice, cost savings and access to cultural supervision.

Respondents also said students who were verified for ORRS tended to do well in special schools and expressed support for the idea of developing special school resource centres to support students in regular schools.

“Teachers and teachers’ aides are invaluable to the development of our children as they work with them on a daily basis forming very close relationships. Specialist support is beneficial to some families and students but they lack a real understanding of our students as individuals as they work infrequently with them and will sometimes have pre-judgments about their abilities. They are also very expensive and I feel that that money could be allocated elsewhere.” [Parent or caregiver]

“The requirement for at least 25 per cent of the students’ funding being targeted for specialist services is essential. It is deeply concerning to know that some fundholders don’t do this, yet there is no accountability. Specialists have the training and expertise to provide assessments and programmes and advice and guidance. Data confirms that this service is highly valued in the

school community. The Ministry of Education, Special Education has years of data from client surveys showing how highly-valued the specialist input is. Both parents and educators comment positively on the quality of services provided.” [Special education sector representative]

“We strongly support the current system of special schools with satellites in South Auckland and the services they provide ... An ideal world [would be one] where communities were truly inclusive, tolerant and [had] unlimited resources and considered every child as an individual, [where] children with the highest level of need would be embraced at their local school [and with] all their needs met. The reality is that even for children who start their education at their local regular school, or a special unit with ORRS funding, too many don’t have their needs met as they progress through the education system. Some increasingly have the number of hours they spend at school each day reduced and others are stood down or unofficially excluded because their behaviours can’t be managed. Schools, often without adequate resources, understandably can’t cope. We recognise there are magnet schools which are more understanding of children with disability but not all families can access these. Other children come to school without early childhood education (nearly 15 per cent in South Auckland) and have unrecognised significant disabilities (predominantly cognitive or ASD) and spend several and sometimes many years failing before their difficulties are recognised. Special schools in South Auckland provide a welcoming place for all these groups of children - from those who enter at school-entry to those who are accepted late in their education. Finally, for the child and whānau, there is a sense of understanding, acceptance and provision for their needs. Parents and whānau describe a real sense of community and support around these schools. There is a knowledge base and professional skills [are] on-hand alongside their child - not just a resource that visits and advises from time to time. [The] grouping of resources in special schools provides economies of scale and access to specialist knowledge. There is a long-standing relationship between the Kidzfirst Developmental and Disability team and special schools, that is valued and supported. The same applies to schools that have special school satellites or special units that allow a more cost and time-efficient transition between education and health services. There should be some level of Ministry approval to ensure children and young people attending special schools are there for the right reasons. This should apply both at school entry (five to six years) and later. Generally, however, children with significant problems [that were] identified after school entry and who obtained ORRS funding late have had significant input from the Ministry of Education. They have exhausted [the] services available and the decision to obtain a Section 9 is after all the work has been done, ie, there is little evidence most children at special schools shouldn’t be there.” [Health or disability sector representative]

Speech-language therapy

Overall, respondents were most concerned about the lack of access to speech-language therapy. They also suggested the model of practice should include therapy with students, as well as advice and ideas to teachers and parents. There was also

support for speech-language therapists to help teachers develop language and communication programmes for students in their first few years at school.

“Over time it seems there have been problems with the recruitment of specialist speech-language therapists, so often there are long waits before a child can be seen. More high level training [is] needed to fill the gaps.”
[Education sector representative]

“More speech-language therapy time is needed. ([This] could be accessed from some current behaviour service funding due to the co-morbidity of communication and behaviour disorders). Looking at referral patterns is a good indication of the mix of services required by our population. The highest number of referrals for our Ministry of Education, Special Education team across [the] early childhood [education service], as well as the compulsory sector, are in the area of speech-language therapy. There are typically waitlists for assessments and again for programmes and services due to the pressure and caseload numbers currently facing speech-language therapists. Behaviour cases come in and there are either no waitlists or very short waitlists for an assessment and service/programme. Furthermore, some research studies have indicated that students and young people who gain a service in the area of behaviour actually have an underlying communication disorder, impacting on the[ir] educational, social and financial outcomes. Underlying challenging behaviour could be an identifiable communication disorder such as Apraxia, Language Processing Disorder or Phonological Processing Disorder. Speech-language therapy time significantly improve long-term outcomes in cases such as these where an underlying communication disorder could be missed. (See research of communication disorders in prison populations.)” [Unknown]

Moderate needs services

Generally, respondents said students with mild and moderate learning needs should have more support to access the school curriculum. Some believed the SEG was not adequately meeting their needs, partly because of the way the SEG was allocated.

“There is a lack of services for students with minimal or moderate needs. These are the students who, with a bit of targeted assistance, can overcome a hurdle and get on their way to take full advantage of the opportunities learning in school offers them. Assisting these students would reap great rewards as they have the potential to become contributing members of society.” [Unknown]

“There are a greater number of students with severe behavioural and learning needs than the Ministry of Education, Special Education service can adequately meet. Many students whom one would have classified in the past as severe are now seen as moderate because of the high demand on the service and the low level of resourcing to address this.” [Unknown]

“We have long suggested that the SEG should not be bulk-funded to schools (based on roll and decile) as at present, but should be allocated to schools

based on the actual number of children with moderate special education needs which they have enrolled. This would prevent the wasteful allocation of SEG funding to schools, which discourages enrolment of children with special education needs, while providing more resources for schools struggling to meet the needs of special education children when they have a disproportionate number of such children. We have also proposed the Ministry use the same funding model as for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) children whereby the school could be given a sum for each non-ORRS child with special education needs they have enrolled and the Government would fund for that number. A verifier could check to ensure schools are applying the criteria correctly. This approach could be seen as bureaucratic but under the National Education Guidelines each school is already required to identify their children with special education needs.” [Non-government sector representative]

“The current way the SEG is allocated and managed is not transparent enough. It is dependent upon the wishes and whims of the board and principal. Even though the Ministry expressly states the way the SEG is allocated and managed shall be the joint-decision of the interested parties of SENCO, parents etc, this is not always done and money from the SEG is frequently absorbed into general funds or used for other purposes around the school, rather than being spent on the students with moderate needs. The SEG should be tagged for teacher’s aide wages. This way it would not include GST and it would ensure that it is spent to directly benefit small groups of students in mainstream classes.” [Education sector representative]

“There should be more support available for children with the need for lower levels of support. Many of these children currently receive nothing at all because their conditions are not severe enough. The cost of supporting their success wouldn’t actually be that high and would avoid many more costs to society later. Likewise, conditions such as ADHD and Dyslexia do not seem to receive the same attention that other conditions receive, despite international research that shows that prisons are full of people with these undiagnosed conditions. It is important that as little funding as possible is diverted to bureaucracy and administration and is maximised toward activities that will directly benefit the child. Support should be available to ALL children with special needs.” [Unknown]

“There appears to be a gap in effective provision for students with Dyslexia, Dyspraxia [and] sensory integration difficulties. These children rarely qualify for support under the moderate physical contract and they fall between the cracks of responsibility - between health and education. Much more coordination and better identification is needed for these children.” [Unknown]

Teachers’ aides

Respondents considered that teachers’ aides were essential and needed better recognition and support through professional development and better wages.

“Teachers’ aides have been the make-or-break for my child. Where they are motivated and interested the programmes and service fit well and less support is needed. Where teachers’ aides are not motivated or have conflict with the child, programmes, services and support are grossly inadequate. Parents need some way of being informed and addressing [the] inadequacy of teachers’ aides. Teachers’ aides need more training to be effective and make a difference, with higher pay to attract and retain the people with appropriate attributes. Role changes as [a] child goes through school, eg, Deaf children need qualified interpreters not teachers’ aides if New Zealand Sign Language is their first language. Others need excellent note-takers for intermediate and secondary. [It’s] difficult to provide sufficient training because of [the] lowly rate means teachers’ aides are not available outside work hours and need to be in class for work hours. If teachers’ aides were more skilled and better paid, specialist services could be better used, eg, advisers on Deaf children could spend more time providing more school support and resource teacher time could be reduced as teachers’ aides could do more ...” [Special education sector representative]

“More teacher’s aide money, higher wages for teachers’ aides to keep them in the profession. They are the backbone of special schools being successful.” [Unknown]

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) services

ASD services were highlighted by respondents who saw a need to upskill the education workforce on children and young people with ASD and to develop programmes to suit them.

“Autism is largely ignored in programmes, services and supports. The ASD Guidelines provide excellent advice and research to demonstrate how to support these students and their families. Recognise that if services such as RTLB are funding supports over a long period of time, the student requires extra support even though no current funding criteria provides for this.”
[Unknown]

“Special Education as the major fundholder ensures that we have a well-qualified experienced and knowledgeable workforce to work with special needs students. Better coordination with health and education, eg, individual therapy programmes may be appropriate for ORRS students in some cases. At present occupational therapy and physiotherapy from district health boards end when students start school. More services including short-term schooling options for students with ASD, eg, Central Regional Health School with small class numbers and specialist programmes.” [Unknown]

“In my experience students with ASD receive little or no help within the system until their behaviour is so bad there is no option. This is the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff scenario. These students need assistance before their behaviour is out of control and they are suffering terribly. Currently it is parents having to attempt to tell teachers how to best deal with their children. Teachers tend to dismiss parents as over-protective etc and this is not working for our children. It is incredibly frustrating that teachers mostly have no idea what will help or how to help. There needs to be more funding going to lower needs students before they need interventions. We are so good at fixing the problem once it gets so bad that it is far more difficult to fix.”
[Unknown]

“In my view there are significant gaps in recognising the special needs [of] students on the autistic spectrum, particularly those with Asperger’s, who find it difficult to manage in intermediate and secondary school environments. This [is] because of the challenges from the way learning is organised (frequent change) and the rigidity in the thinking and adaptability of these students. I would advocate strongly that consideration should be given to extending ORRS support for this group and further to property modifications so that there is a designated, quiet, withdrawal area in every secondary school. In addition there has been an ongoing (unmet) need in our conurbation for a base unit within a secondary school for the few most needy students. The Review [of Special Education] panel should note that significant numbers of older students on the spectrum are receiving their education through The Correspondence School [(Te Kura)], homeschooling and the Regional Health School because their needs are unmet in mainstream schooling.” [Unknown]

“Schools build capacity to support ASD children quickly and efficiently. They have to, otherwise the learning of all children is compromised. The following is just some of the ways the mix of services and support can be optimised. Autism specialists are essential - not generalists. With regard to assisted communication technology, equipment needs to be leased not bought to keep up-to-date. ASD training is essential for teachers’ aides as well as teachers. Behavioural intervention, which is regular, is essential. This need not be expensive but could be delivered by trained teachers’ aides following a programme. It could also be contracted out to a local approved provider. Only those that work regularly with a child need attend IEPs. It is our understanding [that] much of the Ministry’s specialist support allocated under ORRS is to attend IEPs. In our view this is an unnecessary and wasteful expense. As schools build expertise in supporting ASD children so does their ability to maximise efficiency gains as school cluster groupings could pool resources for a demographic area.” [Unknown]

Deaf and hearing-impaired services

Respondents considered that some parts of education for Deaf and hearing-impaired students were going well but that there was considerable change needed to ensure good outcomes for students.

“ORRS funding needs to be more flexible. For example a profoundly Deaf student working at [an] age-appropriate level, may need a New Zealand Sign Language interpreter to provide access to the curriculum, rather than a specialist teacher of the Deaf. At present the funds for the interpreter would have to come out of the paraprofessional component, which is not sufficient to pay an interpreter’s salary. Again, if the resource centres held the funding for the Deaf students, they would be able to allocate the appropriate resources for each student.” [Unknown]

“Excellent support for students with cochlear implants. This needs to be matched to other children with hearing difficulties.” [Education sector representative]

“Generally, it is felt that the mix is good apart from services to those children for whom New Zealand Sign Language is their first language. It is essential that we develop resource to support these children. The services and resources provided by the two Deaf education centres are not consistent, so while we might have a good range of support, the family may have to move to another region in order to receive their choice of service. A centrally-managed service resourcing all programmes in all areas where practicable would ensure families would receive real choices and be able to make informed decisions without the fear of having to uproot to a different location.” [Non-government organisation or community representative]

“The current mix of services for Deaf students (Deaf education centres and Deaf advisers) is not right and does not provide value for money as there is inefficient use of resources, duplication of services and [it] does not give geographic equitable access. The present model provides an unfair bias to

students living in Auckland, Christchurch and Wellington. More local input and resources is vital if equitable access is to be available to students and their families throughout New Zealand.” [Special education representative]

“Class teachers being given adequate training and knowledge on how to implement and manage an individual programme - both through pre-service training and ongoing professional development. Too often special needs students are seen as a burden to a class teacher who is running a full class. Many specialists (due to caseload management and resourcing stresses) only provide a consultative role for a mainstream student, leaving the implementation to be carried out, without effective support, by the class teacher. Students whose first language is New Zealand Sign Language deserve the right to access the curriculum (that all other students in the class get automatically). There needs to be provision for communicators and interpreters to allow real-time access to the curriculum and allow for student engagement in the classroom with their peers, providing a context for learning. Proficiency in New Zealand Sign Language for all teachers of the Deaf, which requires assessment and ongoing professional development. No student should be working with specialist teachers whose proficiency level is below their own. (We would not accept our hearing students being taught by a teacher who could not communicate in English at a level above the student, yet this is often the case for a Deaf student, particularly as they progress through school). Retaining skilled teachers’ aides. Staff who have developed specialised skills are lost due to remuneration issues. Experienced teachers’ aides are not being paid in accordance with their skill level. Cluster Deaf students together where possible to cut down on the time [resource teachers] spend traveling. (Some currently spend as much time, or longer, in the car travelling from one school to the next.) Don’t overstretch and spread too thin for one student in one part of town and another in the other part as this is not economic. Clustering means more [resource teacher] time for a number of students. However, this needs to be balanced with family choice.” [Special education sector representative]

“Parents must continue to be offered choices about placements in educational settings for their children. The full range of options must continue to be available, ie, special schools, satellites, mainstream with adequate assistance. This is the only way to ensure that, realistically, all needs can be catered for and in the Deaf education context, [also] to ensure that all preferred communication modes for learning can be accommodated. Teachers’ aides provide valued support for many children with special education needs. However, there could be a reduced emphasis on teacher’s aide support, as a special education intervention, where increased specialist teaching was available directly to the students and as additional expertise around regular class teachers. Reduced reliance on teachers’ aides and paraprofessionals would free up some of this resource to allow the increased specialist teacher services to operate (travel) and this would contribute directly to improved student outcomes. The level of service to children with cochlear implants should carry over to all Deaf and hearing-impaired children, including those using conventional hearing aids. There is no justification for treating children wearing hearing aids and those using cochlear implants any differently in

terms of overall resourcing, habilitation and monitoring of progress. Both require highly-specialised assistance and equitable access to services. With regard to this, there is a need for some clarification of the relative skills and roles of advisers on Deaf children, habilitationists and specialists and resource teachers of Deaf children.” [Special education sector representative]

Blind and vision impaired services

The blindness sector also looked at services that were working well and others that were not. The specialist teaching resources allocated to sector organisations was considered to provide value for money and positive outcomes.

“It is proposed that learners who are blind, [who have] low vision and [who are] verified for their vision needs only, have their ORRS packages automatically transferred to [our organisation] as they enter the school system. ORRS, as currently administered, fails to ensure blind and low-vision students [who have been] verified as having High or Very High needs, [get] access to specialist Resource Teacher Vision support as-of-right. The blindness sector believe that there is a serious equity issue with regard to the way in which the system of .1 and .2 specialist teacher time allocation is currently operating. Learners who receive this additional teaching resource meet the criteria for High or Very High needs verification and by definition are those [who] have the greatest need for specialist teacher support from a teacher trained in the education of learners who are blind, deafblind or low vision. This extra teacher resource is, however, allocated directly to the learner’s regular school and it is the decision of that school how it will be used. It is the blindness sector’s contention that under the original Special Education 2000 policy this teaching resource was intended to fund specialist teachers for blind, deafblind and low vision learners, ie, resource teachers vision and the historic decision to allocate the extra teaching resource to schools was an error. This contention is supported by the fact that visual resource centres were originally established and funded to provide educational support to learners in early childhood [education services] and those with moderate needs only. The specialist teacher support to learners with High or Very High needs was to come from the ORRS package and this would provide a mechanism for the Resource Teacher Vision workforce to grow, in line with the number and needs of the learners on [our] caseloads. With the ORRS specialist teacher resource locked up in regular schools and therefore [there is] no way to grow a stable and permanently employed specialist teaching workforce, the Ministry of Education suggested that the way to increase Resource Teacher Vision staffing was to negotiate with schools to transfer these .1 and .2 additional teacher ORRS staffing allocations across to the Visual Resource Centres, who would then use the allocations to employ Resource Teachers Vision. This system had been followed and has created many problems encompassing logistical and equity issues. Some schools have been very reluctant to make the transfer for a range of reasons. The schools usually expect exactly the amount of time transferred every week and this takes away any flexibility in service provision across a Resource Teacher Vision caseload in response to individual need. There is no provision for travel time with ORRS transfers - it is impossible for one resource teacher vision to undertake five

.2s. Every .1 and .2 of teacher time has to be separately negotiated, with an agreement passing from the regular school to [our organisation] and signed off at board level. [Our organisation] currently holds the .1 or .2 teacher allocation for 130 learners who are blind, deafblind or [have] low vision. To administer this constantly changing teacher resource is an enormous task, which requires a huge input of time and resource for all concerned. It has created a two-tiered teaching workforce, some with permanent status and others with temporary. In addition, permanent Resource Teachers Vision receive a salary unit, [whereas] those employed under the ORRS transfer scheme do not. An arbitrary arrangement has been entered into whereby the Ministry of Education fund the operations for up to 15 full-time equivalent ORRS transfers. [We] now ha[ve] 14.54 full-time equivalent ORRS transfers. Once that figure passes 15 there is no mechanism for receiving operational funding for those additional ORRS transfer positions. It seems very obvious to all that the main issue is that the .1 and .2 additional teacher allocation generated by the ORRS packages is sitting in the wrong part of the system and that students are being denied access as-of-right to the blindness education services they need. A sustainable resourcing framework is needed for Resource Teachers Vision, with positions generated by the numbers and needs of the learners. This would be achieved by the ORRS package being automatically transferred to [our organisation] as the learners enter the school system, along with Resource Teacher Vision travel and operations grants.” [Special education sector representative]

4. Consider different service models

Twenty-nine per cent of respondents mentioned a range of changes to special education services, funding and to the overall system.

Modifying the current system

Respondents’ suggestions about modifying the system are listed below in no particular order. Respondents’ comments follow. Please note, the ideas and suggestions listed below are described in more detail in other sections about service models.

- Change funding formula for SEG, eg, population but not decile-based, needs-based
- .1 and .2 ORRS teachers aggregation
- Special schools become resource centres and schools choose them as their fundholder
- Constant supervision of ORRS students
- Turn SLS teachers into school-based positions, eg, SENCO positions
- More speech-language therapy services
- Fewer funding pots and rationalisation of funding schemes
- Better information about funding and services available and received
- Compulsory teacher and school professional development for special needs teaching
- Fund on need, not need having to fit the budget
- Reduce the number of fundholders
- Increase the number of fundholders
- Coordination within special education services

- Better coordination or rationalising of services with Health especially physical therapies
- Increase resource rooms catering for a range of needs in schools
- Increase Incredible Years and other parent programmes
- Comprehensive assessment and planning for all students at school entry
- Attach specialists to schools but continue Ministry of Education employment
- Specialised training for classroom teachers and other school-based teachers
- More research into best practice and sharing of innovation
- Practical support from specialists
- Use Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu, The Correspondence School (Te Kura) more
- Increase funding
- Increase specialist provision
- Improve IEP to ensure measurable goal setting and focus on outcomes
- Upgrade special school property for diverse and changing needs
- Increase use of technology for providers and students
- Speech-language therapist and communication support worker support for not just the highest need students in schools
- Attach psychologists to RTLB teams
- More knowledge, skill and support needed for ASD
- Expand the SEIT model
- Increase therapy options, eg, music therapy
- Training for teachers' aides.

"While our members believe that this is working fairly well, it might be worth considering reducing the SEG component and placing some of the SEG pool into the ORRS pool or using the money saved to strengthen access to specialist services in remote areas. Students with moderate needs might be better funded in a more direct or individually targeted way." [Education sector representative]

"We need more information for the parents so we know what's available, how we get it and if there can be training for parents and teachers to aide the services and support systems." [Parent or caregiver]

"We are not seeing value for money - not enough money is getting to the school and the child. Principals have to make terrible choices with limited funding. No Government has ever got special education right because it costs too much and those designing the funding models don't seem to know really what the end result is. We want needs-based models not fiscally-driven models." [Education sector representative]

"Through the use of technology, we may be able to resource rural areas more effectively, eg, [using] video conferencing, lessons and sessions on language development where the specialist teacher models for the parents, the parents have an identical set of equipment to use and are able to put the skills and strategies shown into practice themselves given the guidance and equipment provided. Consider .1 and .2 ORRS teacher hours being clustered and one more full-time teacher becoming specialised." [Special education sector representative]

"There needs to remain a focus on working with families individually in early intervention as this has shown to achieve good results, as indicated by our results"

with the behaviour programme (PCIT) and by the very positive client feedback forms that we get from families. Strong multidisciplinary teams need to be fostered, supported and funded to ensure the best results with professionals sharing their expertise and knowledge around each child. " [Special education sector representative]

"Specialists should spend more time upskilling teachers rather than one-on-one pull out work with students. A general understanding of how to apply the specialist principles to everyday classroom lessons will be far more effective in the long run and benefit a greater amount of students." [Education sector representative]

"It is the inflexibility of the system that makes it difficult to work with. The funding is there but the individual needs and circumstances need to be taken into consideration." [Special education sector representative]

"Reducing transactional costs is a better way of freeing up funds than clawing funds back from schools (eg, reducing SEG). Examples of this have been identified above and include fewer reapplications for verification and funding better use of ENROL. Don't waste money having Ministry staff attend IEPs as this appears to expend hours of salaries and travel and overhead costs for little actual effect. Encouraging collaboration and the development of known expertise across and within schools is likely to be a more cost-effective way of managing and expending resources. At a macro level, consideration could be given to mapping the quality of provision for different types of special education needs throughout a region or nationally. This would give parents and caregivers an ability to identify places and parts of New Zealand where their child may be better supported than others. Whilst this may at first instance appear to be an extraordinary suggestion, we are aware of many families who move home locations in order to seek better support for a special needs child. Additionally, New Zealanders are one of the most mobile populations in the world, so better information may be a very useful tool. Set target efficiency ratios at central agency levels, eg, one per cent of entitlement committed to accountability, leaving 99 per cent for delivery. Allocation models. The diagram on page 25 of the [Review of Special Education] booklet appears to oversimplify allocation models into two options rather than recognising a range or continuum. Mapping the nature and quality of different types of provision for differing special education needs would provide information to stakeholders at a variety of levels. Within the continuum ... of individualised and population-based funding approaches, we believe sit several other approaches, including [i] group-based funding. [This] funding is based on the existence and continuation of a grouped set of needs, similar to what is called bulk-funding of ORRS and what Ashburton College currently has for the special education unit. [ii] Community-based funding [where] funding is based on the ability of a community to provide for the needs of special education students within that community. Each of these allocation models assumes collaborative practices, a shared community approach to provision and being resourced for those elements that the community is unable to provide or otherwise fund. Neither individualised funding nor population-based funding methods will be effective as a rationing measure. The framing of the model and discussion in the [Review of Special Education] booklet appears to suggest that the current funding levels and mix are right. This is not necessarily

the case. We need to continue to provide a range or mix of all of the approaches and methods, which can be different depending on the context and setting. Other aspects. The resources readily available within a community are a significant factor in the overall success of a special education student and the levels of stress placed on their family and whānau. There is also significant variance within different communities and locations as to what is available and to what extent. We need to map the nature (including expertise and availability) of resources and support for special needs students and their families across our communities. This tool would be useful at policy, operational and local levels to aid decision-making and to support schools and families in the nature of programmes, opportunities and assistance available. [Education sector representative]

“Better collaboration and communication between services. Increase effective use of technology. Broader access to regional assistive technology. [Have a] Road show as recent workshops provided clear knowledge and understanding, presented with enthusiasm.” [Special education sector representative]

“I would suggest an increase to 40 per cent of funding to be spent on specialist services. They are currently grossly under-staffed and under-funded. Teacher’s aide funding needs to increase slightly above the current level also.” [Education sector representative]

“Current curriculum framework works well for special education needs students. Could consider respite services for mainstream schools with High need students.” [Education sector representative]

“Families should have choices. Special schools could have an increase of specialist teachers and therapists so that as well as being a base school they are also a resources centre, supporting mainstream school staff and students in their immediate zone. This could meet [the] family’s choice of a mainstream school placement with adequate support [that’s] currently not provided by the Ministry of Education, Special Education.” [Special education sector representative]

“Because we are a specialist service provider having more than 20 ORRS students, we can allocate our resources more efficiently than having to rely on the Ministry of Education, Special Education to decide our allocation. I think more specialist service providers could be established in areas having these numbers of students as it seems an ideal model to me. This is especially so, as all our students are enrolled on the school roll, and all students ... go to the mainstream for form class and at least two mainstream classes, depending on their abilities and interests. Yet students also have access to specialist staff for therapies and if needed, specialist teachers for those working at pre-level 1 and 2. However, I would not like to be part of a cluster of schools where we have to work out specialist teacher and teacher’s aide allocations. This is very time consuming and present funding systems don’t give this leeway and we don’t have the time or training as well.” [Education sector representative]

“A difficult question, a bit like how long is a piece of string? ... I think that the right services depend on individuals and their situation. What works is the engagement of children and young people in learning. This requires the right mix

of knowledgeable skills, an attitude that is accepting, willing to have a go and that promotes effective problem solving and a physical environment that promotes access, reduces any barriers to interaction with others and yet maintains safety. Property modifications provided to schools when students first enrolled should many of these be included in the Ministry of Education, Special Education standards and requirements to schools, so they are included when schools are built or modified, ie, be standard in every school (eg, changing facilities, ramps and access to all buildings, hoists, quiet learning spaces, safety features for students who wander). A suggestion would be to have learning centres in schools that cater for a range of diverse needs, ie, special education students, RTLB, ESOL, gifted and talented, specialist services. In some examples overseas these are situated close to the centre of the school, ie, by admin, staff and common areas, feed out into common student areas and act as resource centres for individual learning and tutoring, small group work and are an integral part of the school, ie, you do not have to be special to go there.” [Special education sector representative]

“Fundamentally there needs to be more individually tailored funding for a wider range of disabled students. If this is not possible, there needs to be greater flexibility on how ORRS funding is used so that it is able to reflect the needs of each individual, rather [than] being defined. We need to set national standards to measure and increase the achievement of young disabled people with National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). This should include having targets for the academic achievement of disabled students in school charters for special and mainstream schools. Improving support for disabled students won’t necessarily improve academic and functional skill outcomes for disabled students if some teachers continue to undervalue and have low expectations of disabled students and there is insufficient support and funding to overcome barriers to learning. We need to find solutions to, for example, the fact that some disabled students spend time away from school and this impacts on their learning, and many disabled students with medium to low support-needs receive insufficient support and funding to overcome barriers to learning. We need to significantly increase the resourcing going directly into schools for classroom and learning support of disabled students with High, medium and low support-needs. Part of this should involve reviewing the role of therapy services within special education to see if savings can be made with these services, so that more of the existing funding can go into classroom services - disabled students do not go to school for therapy, they go to school to learn.” [Unknown]

Some restructuring of the current system

Respondents also suggested restructuring the system in different ways. Their ideas are listed below in no particular order. Respondents’ comments follow. Please note, the ideas and suggestions listed below are described in more detail in other sections about restructuring the current system.

- Close residential schools and support students in their regular settings
- Regional or local centres providing specialist services
- Regional or local centres providing all special education support, ie, specialists, specialist teaching, resource teachers and paraprofessionals.

- Schools funded (adequately) to purchase specialist services
- Schools funded to provide or purchase all special education services
- One specialist provider nationally
- Cluster special education teachers RTLB, ORRS, SLS for professional development and support
- Parents can choose to purchase a specialists' services
- Parents given vouchers to purchase services
- Special schools become resource centres for all ORRS-verified students and also enrol students
- Special schools become resource centres but all students are enrolled in regular schools
- Resource teachers and advisers of the Deaf working for the same organisation
- Cluster all special education provision
- SENCO in every school
- Merge the Ministry of Education, Special Education and RTLB
- Sensory resource centre development - national or regional
- Pool funding into clusters including property and transport
- More special school satellites.

"Release time funding for SENCO based on money spent in the school on special education and special needs register children per pupil in the school. [Have] scholarships or [a] professional development allowance for SENCOs or teachers who need upskilling and professional development." [Special education sector representative]

"Rather than [having a] RTLB service within schools, create [a] Learning Support Service and [a] Behaviour Support Service, utilising the skills of RTLB and special education advisors. Have psychologists as a specialist service who offer support if programmes are not working after this. Create support teams with these professionals and include staff from Child Youth and Family etc so social and educational needs can be met in a collaborative manner." [Education sector representative]

"Mak[e] special schools into resource centres and plac[e] the students into attached units in mainstream schools with dedicated funding and specialist teachers. More pooling of resources at Intermediate level so that resource classes can be established with experienced teachers. All special needs students should be catered for in mainstream schools in various settings. Sensory schools should be looked at very carefully as the expertise contained in these is vital to the students with vision and hearing impairments." [Special education sector representative]

"Currently at least 25 per cent of funding is spent on specialist services by the Ministry of Education for ORRS-funded students. This funding should all be allocated to an individual school or a lead school for a school cluster. Then the school can hire the specialists they want. If parents choose [to], they should be able to take the 25 per cent specialist services money and use it to provide private therapy for their child, or spend it on assistive technology, or spend it all on teachers' aides. These are some of the choices schools and parents

might make if they had access to the 25 per cent of funding spent on specialist services.” [Education sector representative]

“Specialist schools as resource centres would provide a trans-disciplinary service to each verified student, either in the specialist school or in a mainstream setting. Reintroduce work experience units in mainstream settings with social work support - residential schools are extremely expensive, some of these schools are providing a less than satisfactory service. At best they provide respite for the student’s school and family. Put this money into the student’s local community. The long-term outcomes for students who experience enrolment in a residential school are questionable.” [Education sector representative]

“[Our organisation] is strongly opposed to the suggestion in the discussion document (page 33) that we consider ‘what is the balance of investment in students with the greatest potential versus all students with special education needs?’ This statement implies that students with disabilities are of less value and worth a lesser investment than their peers with potential. This approach is clearly inconsistent with Government policy and human rights obligations and should be opposed at every level. What changes would you suggest? Investment in the capacity of the school (teachers, infrastructure, knowledge, attitude) should be of [sufficient] high priority to ensure that New Zealand furthers its responsibilities under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child for inclusive education. The capacity of a school to accept and educate all children to their full potential is an investment in long-term social capital. This investment will continue to pay dividends for future students and future generations. You’re going to live and work with people who have a disability in later life so you may as well start learning about them now. An inclusive school represents an inclusive society. As a community we have to be more accepting and inclusive and starting at school is good (young people). Teachers’ aides should have more training, they are held to higher value depending on the school; when they work well it’s fantastic but there is nothing consistent, no one is accountable and there is no standard. Ensure there is no waste of money, [eg,] assistive technology bought and then no one trained to use it with the child. Increased monitoring of use and outcomes for monies [is] needed in order to increase [the] standards in education for children with special education needs. Quality should be measured by enduring and improved educational and social outcomes. [Have] rationalising/clustering of specialist resources (speech-language therapists and itinerant teachers). Removal of funding and supports when improvement is achieved is counter-productive and does not provide value for money. RTLB service needs to be expanded and more adequately resourced.” [Special education sector representative]

Rethinking the current model

Respondents said there needed to be a move from a resourcing-based system to a practice-based system that would change attitudes and ensure effective teaching. They recommended the development of accessible and inclusive schools and a planned approach to phasing out separate schools for students with special education needs.

“Although a large and complex policy, Special Education 2000 is almost solely concerned with the resourcing of learners with diverse needs rather than describing a model of best practice. While resources are essential for successful service delivery, it is questionable whether meeting the diverse needs of many of our students is primarily dependent on increased allocation. Slee (1996) also warns of the danger of using the resources debate to mask an inability to cope with diversity. In other words, changes in attitude and pedagogy will not necessarily follow; [these] changes ... are necessary if learners with diverse needs are to be successful. In the study by Prochnow and colleagues (2000) teachers most frequently recommended teachers’ aides, special programmes, small class numbers and support from resource teachers as sources of support. Schools that recognise and provide for the support needs of teachers will be more successful in creating inclusive environments. Given that resources will always be finite, support does not necessarily mean more funding, eg, lowering class numbers for those teaching children with Very High needs, and the teachers of children without disabilities picking up the extra students in their classes is one way schools could provide support. Because teachers’ aides are such a frequently cited support resource, the Government should consider the best use of teachers’ aides. Does a teacher’s aide need to always be velcroed to the hip of a learner with diverse needs? No. But perhaps the Government could consider allocating teachers’ aides to teachers rather than to individual learners. This would allow teachers to use teachers’ aides in the most efficient way, (eg, freeing the teacher from administrative duties so they can provide support to the learner) and could also discourage the unhelpful dependencies that can develop between students and their teachers’ aides.” [Government sector representative]

“[Our organisation] is very concerned with the following question that was on page 33 of this discussion document: ‘What is the balance of investment of students with the greatest potential versus all students with special education needs?’ This seems to indicate that disabled students can be considered as less valuable than non-disabled students. It also pits one group of students against another which contradicts the notion that this document is based on the principles and the intent of the New Zealand Disability Strategy and the United Nations Convention on the Right of People with Disabilities. Can the Minister or the Ministry please further explain the intent of this question? In regards to the question that is asked here, and as indicated earlier in this submission, segregation is not supported in the research. It is not an evidence-based approach to teaching and learning. Its continued existence contravenes the objectives of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and the goals of the Disability Strategy. It is also very expensive to operate two systems of education – special and regular, and segregation itself is expensive. It is difficult to locate figures that denote the true cost of segregation. However the following questions should be pursued in any analysis of the fair and equitable distribution of funding, particularly given the poor student outcomes associated with segregation ... What is the cost involved in transporting large numbers of students by taxi to attend special schools and units outside the student’s home zone? How would this compare to spending money on RTLB, educational psychologists, co-teachers and others

who could support and mentor teachers? How much does it cost to continue building and maintaining special buildings for special schools above the required number of regular schools? How much does it cost for students to attend special schools and not learn about the communities in which they hope to work as adults? How much does it cost to maintain the present low student to teacher/adults ratio that is found in special schools/units? How much does it cost in the long run for students to be socially segregated from each other and not learn about diversity in our society? Will segregation lead to having a siloed society in which only some citizens are given the opportunities to work and fully participate as responsible adults in their communities? How much does it cost to have an army of teachers' aides who act as teachers and one-to-one aides instead of well-trained and supported teachers' aides and teachers who are experienced in, and have knowledge about, how to teach a diverse classroom? We note also that on page 34 of the discussion document it is claimed that there is currently little advice that schools can draw on about how to use teachers' aides to produce the best outcomes. We would suggest that the present special education system be dismantled; that teachers can access support and resources for all their students as needed; and that schools and teachers focus in the classroom on delivering productive pedagogies in all of their lessons for all of their students as outlined below. This approach was adopted by Education Queensland as the result of a longitudinal study in 24 schools by the University of Queensland. (Productive Pedagogies, Education Queensland, Queensland Government, 2001). [It included] some suggestions for making progress towards proper inclusion and integration. None of the models offered within the discussion document provides an effective solution to the problems within education. Any changes would require a much more strategic and planned approach. For example, it is clear that to close all special schools in the absence of any other changes or improvements in the education system would not be workable. However, there has for a number of years been a strong call by disabled people internationally to end segregation and this is echoed within the policies and commitments of the New Zealand Government. We would therefore strongly advocate that as a minimum, no steps be taken to expand segregated education. Here are some suggestions for changes that should be made to take New Zealand closer to the goal of a fully integrated education system in the medium to long-term. Improve access to and understanding of alternative communication systems such as New Zealand Sign Language and Braille - make these available to students and teachers, and incorporate them into the curriculum so their use is widely taught and understood. Provide additional support to mainstream schools to promote accessible school environments - this should take the form of an extensive training programme for all school staff, a disability impact assessment of curricula and National Standards, and implementation of ongoing training for teaching staff, beginning with teacher training and extending into ongoing professional development, including reinstating access to postgraduate training. Staff and services currently in segregated school environments should be gradually incorporated into mainstream education using a planned and phased approach which ensures that students continue to have access to specialist supports." [Non-government organisation or community representative]

High-quality services and being accountable (Q6)

High-quality services

This section looks at the issue of service quality and value for money. It starts by revisiting the Review of Special Education 2010 discussion document preamble to question 6: How can the quality of services be improved? It summarises the key themes that emerged from the Review of Special Education submission process and features some of the public responses to the question.

What we asked

Overall

The discussion document began this section by looking at the services currently available and proposing an opportunity to do more and achieve better results. It went on to suggest better sharing of information about effective practice and teacher education as a way to achieve improved results. It concluded with a brief discussion on the importance of ensuring access to high-quality services throughout the country.

Key question

The discussion document asked:

- How can the quality of services be improved? (Q6).

This question received 1,193 responses, the majority were from education sector representatives (696), with responses from special education sector representatives (403) and parents (385) being about equal. This question attracted 196 responses from non-government or community representatives and 149 responses from health or disability sector representatives. Eight students contributed their views. Note, respondents could select to be represented in more than one group.

What you said

Key themes

1. Upskill and support experienced staff
2. Develop a quality framework
3. Improve access to services
4. Change the model for service provision
5. Change processes
6. Collaborate across the sector
7. Value diversity and inclusion.

Overall

Approximately one third of respondents said high-quality services relied on having skilled and experienced staff.

Thirty per cent wanted a better quality framework that set standards, provided opportunity for feedback and established practice guidelines for research or evidence-based practices. The framework would better explain services and be available to monitor quality performance.

Nearly 20 per cent said quality relied on improving access to special education services and involved being clear about what people could expect to receive and what outcomes were likely to occur.

About 18 per cent thought the service delivery model should change, commenting on the comparative pros and cons of specialist advice for teachers and staff versus specialists' direct, hands-on support.

Ten per cent of respondents wanted services that focused on the needs of students and families, rather than services that focused on quality. About nine per cent said better collaboration would save time and costs across the education sector and about seven per cent said more acceptance of difference and inclusion would improve the quality of schooling.

1. Upskill and support experienced staff

Thirty-three per cent of respondents said high-quality services relied on having skilled and experienced staff working within the special education sector.

Respondents said staff, to be skilled and experienced, needed the right initial training, good induction, ongoing professional development, support from good-quality management, supervision and good remuneration. These factors would not only lift the quality of their work, but would also ensure skilled and experienced staff were retained within the sector. This theme was mentioned in response to other questions as well.

High-quality services relied on all staff within the sector having skills and experience, regardless of their role. Staff needed both specific skills and knowledge (particular to their field), as well as cultural and disability awareness.

Tertiary training was highlighted as an area for improvement. Graduate programmes should not be too generic and needed to offer graduates the chance to specialise in areas such as ASD, vision or hearing.

"All children have the right to be the best that they can be. To achieve this we need investment put into ongoing teacher training [and] professional development, creating an inclusive community." [Special education sector representative]

"Upskilling and maintaining special education skills across the teaching workforce, as discussed earlier, is likely to have a positive benefit on outcomes and improve value for money in service delivery. Schools also need

ready access to specialist services and resources in a timely manner. The development of advisory educational specialists at a district level in additional areas such as ASD, literacy, and intellectual disability should be considered. These staff could become local experts and have a consulting and supporting role for district schools. There could also be a role for linking such staff with local developmental and paediatric services to facilitate the coordination of services for students and their families and whānau. This could form an integrated part of service planning along the lines of the recent New Zealand Autism Spectrum Disorder Guidelines. [Health or disability sector representative]

Teacher's aide training needed to be more accessible and become more varied to cover the range of skills and knowledge required from people in the role. Some respondents also felt the role itself needed to feature more flexibility to enable teachers' aides to adapt better to the range of needs required and also to the secondary school setting (for example), where tutoring and coaching skills were valuable.

"Teachers' aides play a crucial role in the education of students with special [education] needs, yet they are frequently untrained. Their low pay and generally uncertain employment status do not encourage them to commit to any training, and schools are reluctant to support training for a person they may not employ for long. We believe quality will improve with well-trained and supported teachers' aides. More funding will be needed to achieve this." [Parent or caregiver]

"Perhaps we need to review the teacher's aide component in our children's education; is there an over reliance on the teacher's aide? Young adults who have recently left school often advise that they were so glad to see the back of their teacher's aide, that by having a teacher's aide allocated, they were made to feel different. We say this with respect to the work teachers' aides do, but question the teachers' or schools' approach of their current use." [Special education sector representative]

"A practice model to support teacher's aide development, which our school has found very successful, has involved regular (weekly moving to fortnightly), on-site, visits by the [Ministry's] behaviour specialist with both the teacher's aide and SENCO. Current issues are discussed and strategies agreed to. This information is shared with the teacher by the SENCO. It is impractical to try and release the teacher for these meetings and before or after school meetings are beyond the funding allocation for teachers' aides. The meetings are held within visual range of the classroom in case support is required and are about 20 minutes long. This is certainly not a common practice model, but it is a high-quality service supporting frontline personnel to implement timely interventions while building capacity within the school." [Special education sector representative]

Respondents saw the need for better initial training for teachers, as well as ongoing professional development. Many noted the success of professional development

involving school clusters such as the Extending High Standards Across Schools initiative and the importance of sharing knowledge among schools, teachers and special schools.

“Training. Support the places that inclusion works and use them as models for other schools. Empower SENCOs and principals. Inspire them to see that it’s worthwhile - show them real examples.” [Special education sector representative]

Supporting specialist and resource teachers (though well trained in their specialist area) to upskill in collaborative consultation, problem solving and facilitating change were ideas noted by respondents.

They also suggested specialists have opportunities to increase their specialist knowledge and skills for an education context. Having people who reflected the country’s cultural diversity was also seen as important

The theme of upskilling staff is explored more in the responses to question 1a.

“By providing professional development. By ensuring staff are culturally aware of the needs of Māori and Pasifika. Employ more Māori and Pasifika staff.” [Parent or caregiver]

“Change the degree in teaching and make students learn about how to teach disabled children. How to teach social skills and life skills - not just academic skills. Allow more flexibility on who can be employed for specialist teaching - it could be kaumatua, it could be someone with an adult person with ASD who wants to teach a young person with ASD. An academic qualification does not mean you can teach or provide learning experiences. I would rather have someone in my girl’s life who UNDERSTANDS her and her disability than have a [person with a] triple master’s degree.” [Parent or caregiver]

“We would like to acknowledge the Ministry of Education, Special Education Canterbury model of having a disability advisor and through discussions with colleagues throughout New Zealand [we think] this initiative would be well received and beneficial for students, families and schools.” [Education sector representative]

2. Develop a quality framework

Development of a quality framework was an idea put forward by 28 per cent of respondents. The framework would improve accountability and become a useful monitoring or measurement tool.

It would set standards, provide opportunities for feedback, establish practice guidelines and encourage widespread use of research or evidenced-based practices. Overall, it would improve the quality of services.

ERO, the Government agency responsible for monitoring schools, was identified as an agency that could use such a framework and take on a stronger monitoring and accountability role within the special education sector.

"[Our organisation] sees an increased role for the ERO in the assessment of quality service provision. This would require ERO to develop some clear performance indicators both at an organisational or school [level] and at an individual level, to ensure good educational outcomes for disabled students - rather than focusing on whether resources are being used effectively. We recommend that the ERO takes an increased role in the assessment of quality service provision." [Special education sector representative]

Respondents expressed interest in the development, adoption and sharing of national, best practice, service delivery models. Keeping up with international best practice standards, research and advances was also seen as important.

Many respondents returned to the role of the IEP, again seeing it as a useful accountability tool. Others thought the IEP needed to be used alongside another tool or process better suited to monitoring the learning and development of more than one student.

"Have an independent monitoring service that speaks to families." [Parent]

"High-quality service will improve when the basic requirements for teaching students with special educational needs are in place under a national code of practice. Create timeframes and deadlines for interventions and responses in education in the same way that the Ministry of Health has for children with Down's syndrome. For example, if a child is not reading at level five by year 3, then special programmes and intervention must be started. The present system of using IEP goals does not provide the schools with enough guidance on achievement. Compare this with National Standards philosophy! [Have] a national formal review of the IEP process to ensure that it is specific to a child's learning. It must be a valid document that teachers and specialists can work from with measurable goals with assessment procedures clear. It is important that consistent goals for learning occur nationally. Could there be a role for an independent facilitator? In Canada, the IEP process is seen as an important document that is taken seriously. Gaining a statement in the United Kingdom is an important long-term commitment for funding and support. The philosophy of the IEP should be changed to the Strengthening Families model and this should be seen in all

publications and professional development statements. The IEP process and policy must be mandated with clearer and more specific ... intentions of learning for the student. The Code of Practice would ensure this. [Special education sector representative]

"Consistent use of IEP, including independent facilitation and monitoring of process and outcomes." [Special education sector representative]

3. Improve access to services

Nearly 20 per cent of respondents believed high-quality services and access to those services should go hand-in-hand, suggesting ways to better access services such as teacher's aide support, specialist advice, special school services and funding.

Respondents said access would be improved when: schools and families knew their entitlements and the options available, when families and schools were asked what they needed and were aware of the expected outcomes, and when there was more flexibility in the use of resources. Reducing waiting times and better use of technology were other suggestions.

Respondents also said people could change their practice to improve access. For example, specialists, resource teachers and SENCOs could be more proactive at sharing information with a student's new teacher at the beginning of a new school year and following up a few weeks into the year. Schools could ensure the relevant resources, eg, teachers' aides and assistive technology were available as and when needed.

Many respondents thought additional funding and staffing would improve access to services.

Some felt students needed more one-on-one, hands-on support, eg, speech-language therapy or physiotherapy instead of specialist advice and ideas for teachers, teachers' aides and parents about how to develop a student's vocabulary or how to ensure a student sits or moves comfortably and safely.

Others favoured the advice model, saying people in regular and close contact with a student, ie, a child's parents and teachers, needed to know from experts how best to support and work with a student. Others simply wanted more support.

"Services such as speech-language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy ... being able to have the time to explain the reasoning for their intervention and what they hope it will achieve. Classroom management and priorities are responsible for some of this, but some professionals are better at imparting knowledge and rationale than others. Could all service providers be requested to give reasoning behind their intervention? When this is understood, it will be better maintained at other times and so improve the intervention - half an hour once a week achieves little, it needs to be maintained and integrated into the child's programme." [Special education sector representative]

"At present the students with the greatest learning and behaviour needs are often supported by teachers' aides, who have the least pre-service training. The ORRS

funding component for teacher's aide support needs to include professional development to provide education regarding effective strategies for students with special [education] needs. If therapists had less of a consultative role and ... more of a problem-solving role with the student, family and professionals, students could be supported more effectively, by people with high levels of expertise in their field. This requires therapists and psychologists to be available for observations, interventions and monitoring, which is only possible with smaller caseloads and by reducing the time in travel. Quality is defined by a service that provides the practical support required by the whānau and school to enable the student to participate and individually succeed in an inclusive way at school." [Special education sector representative]

"The quality of specialist services and therapy can be improved if the right specialist is allowed to work in a way that is appropriate for the young person's needs. At the moment the specialist service is a consultancy, advisory model, which is not appropriate for ORRS students that have a specialist support or coordinator in the school. Therapy must be made available for students on a regular basis, not training or advice for teachers' aides or teachers if it is not required. Too much support is repeated by Ministry of Education, Special Education due to the specific remits and systems they must follow that are not appropriate for individual needs. [They] are not able to be effective due to their systems and lack of time to develop effective relationships. The model of consultancy and advice is not what modern, effective schools require, they require good-quality therapy and flexibility to use teacher's aide funds when required. (Students require more support at different times of the school year if they are in an inclusive school environment.) The moderations scale allocation of teacher's aide time at regional level is inappropriate for effective individual and inclusive support." [Special education sector representative]

"All ... ORRS-funded and SLS students at the same school should have the same case worker from the Ministry of Education, Special Education. This would improve efficiency and save meeting time for SENCOs, as issues arising with any or all students can be dealt with during the same visit, email or phone call." [Education sector representative]

"Acknowledge the work special schools do. For far too long we have been neglected within the system. [Our school] continues to be at the forefront of special education provision and continues to produce high-quality learning for students, with a dwindling resource and very little in the way of Ministry support and acknowledgement. Acknowledge there is a misconception amongst sectors of the community about special school provision. These schools are not the institutions of twenty years ago. Accept that special schools are indeed an important part of the continuum and part of the choice of provision for families and the hotbed of special education passion, pedagogy and professionalism for our communities. Allow us to develop our services along the continuum to offer our families and those who choose our services, an authentic choice and a quality service. Many schools have never been designed for the student populations we now work with. The Ministry needs to look seriously at their responsibility here. No matter where you live there should be no boundaries to receiving a quality service. Students with special [education] needs in rural areas are really

disadvantaged. We acknowledge that we have to continue living in a large city to get the education opportunities offered by special schools and for easier access to health and other services. In rural settings the teachers seem to have even less understanding of the needs of children with special needs and how to teach them. There were no adapted programmes and no access to specialised teachers and therapists. There was also no transport because the other children used the bus. If rural schools could have access to support from special school teachers and therapists, the children would be better off. Special schools could deliver services through satellites in rural communities. SEITs, therapists and possibly other service providers like public health nurses could all work to cover outlying rural areas from these bases. Special schools have the advantage of being able to fit therapists into established school systems and policies, thus cutting down on administrative requirements. Student record systems, data collection, roles and responsibilities, etc, fit within school systems so are shared rather than duplicated. At present SEITs are expected to implement both teacher and therapy programmes in mainstream settings because therapists do not have enough contact with the students. Having therapists and SEITs working from the same base would help ensure more effective service delivery.” [Special education sector representative]

“Less red tape and delays in accessing support. Identifying learning needs as early as possible - so much intervention comes when children’s needs have got to a point that families are less functional and the gaps and frustrations are very difficult to address. Identify children with learning deficits in early childhood [education service] settings or [the] first few years of schooling - proactive rather than a reactive model. Mainstream as many children as possible and have funding available to schools - not through lengthy referral processes with many roadblocks. Work more directly with parents - so-many parents feel they are having to battle the systems. [Have] trained staff in schools who appreciate and value the qualities of all learners - schools that are not welcoming should be held accountable. Principals with negative attitudes to children with [special] needs should be challenged with real consequences.” [Unknown]

“Increased speech-language therapists. Being based in closer proximity to geographic areas covered, eg, based within a school in the area we cover rather than in an office located 30 minutes away from the area in which we work. It would also be useful if the laptops we have been provided with were able to be used away from the office base, eg, if they were enabled to work outside of the office, by satellite connection. This would allow notes to be written on the spot at schools, reports could be worked on between visits rather than having to always return to the office to do this. [Have] reduced paperwork and duplication of information. Reduce the number of meetings therapists are expected to attend as this takes away from core business.” [Special education sector representative]

“It is challenging to deliver services especially in remote areas. However, as a specialist working in rural communities, I can access information through the university and web using electronic libraries. I also find families very proactive at gaining support by travelling to find out more and to engage specialists. I also recognise that for some families it would be better to provide funding to them and to allow them to make choices to meet their family’s needs rather than

funding a local specialist who may appear at their child's IEP once or twice a year, having visited the school in the days before the IEP. They may or may not have seen the student at other times during the year. This is questionable practice when we discuss quality and when it occurs for Very High needs students we (other IEP members) find it difficult to accept that this is as good as it gets."
[Education sector representative]

"We are fortunate to live in a large urban centre with a full range of resources available. We believe the Government and Ministry of Education must continue to ensure there is equitable access to quality services throughout the country."
[Parent or caregiver]

4. Change the model for service provision

Around 18 per cent of respondents talked about changing the model for service provision, taking a range of different approaches. Some suggested restructuring existing services and others favoured more private provision, contestable services, cluster models or local centres. Local centres were discussed in response to other questions as well.

Overall, respondents felt the key to improving service quality involved innovative thinking and a willingness to do things differently.

"We believe that increased contestability would provide an additional incentive for providers to ensure value for money and good-quality, individualised service. The Ministry of Education, Special Education, the main provider of advice and support, is also involved in direct service provision and provision of research services. A key element of contestability needs to be an acknowledgement of a high trust model that allows providers to be free to go beyond the safe and known in special education. In the model we propose, families would work with brokers to explore options for interventions and educational solutions that fit the needs of the child or young person. We are using brokers and brokerage here to mean a coordination role working with young people, families and schools in facilitation and information provision with the possibility of being fundholders across agency and sector (eg, education, social development, Accident Compensation Corporation). Access to information and best quality evidence about what educational decisions may be right for a child, young person or their family are key. Under a contestable model, there would be an emphasis and need for providers to ensure that they are providing good-quality evidence, or market drivers would suggest that families would not continue to use the provider. This accords with the concern outlined in the discussion document that parents and caregivers may find it difficult to access specialist knowledge about their child's needs and may find it difficult and time consuming to employ or contract with service providers. Both these difficulties could be reduced by the strategic use of providers in a brokerage type role. We recommend increased contestability in the provision of special education services, based on a high trust brokerage model."
[Non-government organisation representative]

"I have found that some of the best therapy services are provided by therapists in private practice, eg, speech-language therapists. In urban centres there are plenty

of options for private providers but in remote communities there may not be an option. Therefore, a travel allowance should be allocated to families in remote areas to either travel to a bigger centre or pay a therapist to come to them.”
[Unknown]

“The quality of services can be improved by placing control of funding in the hands of the school the student attends and including parents directly in the process of deciding on the use of those resources. Schools can then decide not to access poor-quality resources. Taking resources for central support removes the ability to question the quality of the service as individual parents cannot assess the quality of the total service as they see only part of it.” [Parent or caregiver]

“[Get] early intervention from psychologists working with all parties that need learning or emotional and behavioural support. A consultation system with schools would allow them to prioritise each term which areas need to be addressed and this could be from individual assessment to system support or training.”
[Education sector representative]

“Have RTLB and the Ministry of Education, Special Education run under the same system so that [services] are more aligned, if not based in the same building. We have seen great success and teamwork from having these professionals work together in the same building. Having the Ministry team in the same building is important (not in school clinics), but mixing up disciplines and professions in seating and desk arrangements is also important so that more teaming occurs between professions.” [Special education sector representative]

“Have specialists work in smaller clusters of schools to facilitate better multi-professional relationships and more responsive services.” [Special education sector representative]

“Use other providers. The Ministry of Education is too limited and not flexible enough. For example, my son needed speech-language therapy - this was difficult to access and stopped when he reached eight. I have a friend who has just had an operation on her mouth and needs speech-language therapy, she is 12-years-old and does not qualify. My son needed something else other than the specialist reading teacher, so we paid for a private course through the DAVIS Correction Method. This worked!!! Let’s make a system which is fluid. If a child hasn’t used any speech-language therapy surely they deserve some when they need it? If the current methods are not working, let’s help pay for something that will work, at least let the parents have some say in a method of choice that may help their children. Parents are not stupid and often know more than the professionals, they often can find help, but can’t pay for it. If you don’t get help through the Ministry then surely you can get it through some other provider. Diagnosis - this needs to be provided through the education sector. It is not at the moment. Both my children have had to be diagnosed through the health sector to be able to get any help!!!” [Parent or caregiver]

5. Change processes

Approximately 10 per cent of respondents talked about the need to change particular processes as a way to improve service quality. Respondents suggested changing ORRS and SLS criteria and application processes, the moderation process for teacher's aide time, the Ministry's referral processes, as well as the processes related to school attendance and subject choice.

Respondents wanted a clear, fairer system where the needs of children and young people and their families were the focus, not administration or the process itself.

Support to make all service and funding eligibility criteria clearer for families and schools was expressed.

Respondents also suggested improving application information and advice to reduce paper work and complaints and to help manage schools' and families' expectations of the resources available.

"There are often too many hoops to jump through to acquire services for students. This needs to improve." [Education sector representative]

"Many services are good. The time and paper work involved is a real barrier. I realise equipment takes time and is expensive but to get a safety harness or buckle to make it safe to transport a difficult child should be automatic." [Special education sector representative]

"According to data provided by the Chief Verifier ... parents have taken 38 Section 10 appeals against the Government since 2004. These appeals are heard by a Ministry-appointed mediator and review the basis of the decisions regarding application for ORRS funding. One of the authors of this submission, Colleen Brown has been the parents' advocate for seven Section 10 appeals and supported parents and other advocates to take a further four appeals. The only party who can appeal the verifiers' decisions are the child's parents. Brown observed that most of the parents taking the appeals did so because their children presented challenges for the school setting without dedicated resources. The parents believed the only way they could signal their intentions to support the school and their child's teacher was to gain those resources. Under the SEDA [Special Education Discretionary Allowance] model these children would have been resourced, had an IEP, and professional support. In Brown's view their parents had every right to feel aggrieved. Data obtained from the Chief Verifier ... indicates that in the period 2004 to 2009 there have been 1,170 unsuccessful applications for ORRS funding. When the data on ORRS applications is analysed it indicates that parents do not appear to have the necessary information or support to undertake a Section 10 appeal. Instead they keep reapplying for ORRS funding apparently in the hope that resourcing will be awarded. Upon review, the data shows a likelihood of there being a 30 per cent chance of success following a prior rejection. Where appeals are undertaken a higher number succeed and are awarded ORRS funding." [Non-government sector representative]

"While the current model is that all students should have the same opportunities to succeed regardless of the schools they attend, [this] is simply not true. The most obvious examples are schools [that] have a variety of subject choice. Not all

schools teach all subjects or provide the same Gateway and STAR options. Schools have a different approach from each other in terms of compulsory curriculum. Some of these compulsory subjects may or may not suit the special needs student, eg, English is compulsory at level 2 in some schools but not in others. It is not a requirement for level 2 NCEA although a minimum of four level 2 reading and four level 2 writing credits are required for University Entrance. Other [schools] make all the arts subjects, and a certain number of language subjects, compulsory in year 9, others do not. Much of the special needs services in schools comes down to the staff involved in the Learning Support Departments and how much funding the school is receiving from the various funding buckets. Some teaching staff are better able to adapt the curriculum than others. We can improve quality of service by allowing the student to attend a school that teaches subject mixes that are best suited to their needs. More flexibility over subject choice overall, eg, as English is not compulsory for level 2 it should not be a compulsory subject at year 12. Many students on the ASD spectrum cannot understand the English curriculum as it is taught, ie, they have a great difficulty understanding how to analyse a novel when often the analysis requires the ability to understand other people's emotions. Someone with ASD cannot do this in real life. Give them a technical manual and they will have no problems analysing [the] requirements. Health and education providers need to work together in providing services. Group specialist teachers and teachers' aides into school districts. They can then be used across schools rather than per school. Group specialist equipment across school districts so that it is available as required, not unused and locked in the cupboard of one school when another needs that piece of equipment and has to take time and money to obtain it. Combine the funding into one pool rather than each separate pool as it is now. Recognise that those with behavioural issues often have an underlying cause which needs recognition and may need specialist intervention, eg, Autism. This intervention may require as little as [an] environmental change." [Parent or caregiver]

6. Collaborate across the sector

Around nine per cent of respondents commented on improving quality through better collaboration. Respondents said that collaboration could improve a student's access to services and could lead to more information sharing and common (and more seamless) referral and assessment processes. Respondents also talked about achieving possible time and cost savings through more collaboration.

"Developing and maintaining a culture that supports excellent service delivery is very important. Providing an environment where schools and those within the schools can share information and learn from experience, both positive and negative, will ensure that there is [a] safe and challenging process of continuous improvement. A key value for [our organisation] is to put the family in the middle of all decision-making - this could well be shared by schools and bureaucracy alike. If the student and the family is core to any decision-making and involved in those decisions then the quality of the services must become more relevant and therefore improved. Sharing information across agencies and across and within schools is also important for improved services. Additionally shared and regular training for all staff is important." [Special education sector representative]

“There is a need for increased collaboration across agencies and providers when working with learners with specific needs. This approach must be better developed; perhaps we need to look at appropriate resourcing to ensure there is time and staff allocated to allow this collaboration to succeed. The collaboration and partnership principles are really fine words, however, we need to deliver and will need to resource it appropriately.” [Special education sector representative]

“Better communication between services would result in a more streamlined service. If younger students were targeted results would be maximised.” [Education sector representative]

“Better linkages between Ministry of Education, Special Education, special schools, and mainstream schools - more access to special school teachers for mainstream teachers who need help with their students.” [Parent or caregiver]

“Clearly defining outcomes at IEPs and following through. Clear interagency and teamwork with designated lead workers. Centralised data and needs-assessments. Links strengthened between transition times.” [Education, health and disability sector representative]

“Joint referral meetings with support agencies could ensure student and school has the most appropriate support. Principals and school leaders need to be familiar with policies and procedures of services offered. Ensure RTLB involvement where stand-downs and exclusions are imminent. The value of RTLB service needs to be promoted across all education sectors.” [Special education sector representative]

“Much better coordination between different Government organisations around needs of the student rather than [the] current fragmented system. We have spent a good part of our lives trying to get assistance from different parts of the system for our Very High needs, autistic daughter. The level of bureaucracy is incredible between social welfare, social development [and the] health and education sectors. Huge waste of resources spent on unnecessary monitoring checks and form filling etc. In the end [we] had to go directly to our MP to get action to meet [our daughter’s] needs.” [Parent or caregiver]

“One support person from each agency to work with all the children from one school to build a relationship with parents, teachers and students involved.” [Education sector representative]

“I personally find the current mix overwhelming. As the mother of a 5-year-old child with ASD, I have had dealings with the district health board (DHB), a private paediatrician, a Ministry of Education, Special Education early intervention teacher, psychologist, speech-language therapist, needs-assessors, Idea family whānau, CCS Disability Action, DHB psychologist and occupational therapist, Altogether, Autism New Zealand, two kindergartens and now a school. [Have] planned structured intervention. I believe that Autism and related disorders affect one in 100 children [and] that there is a need to look at dedicated teams to work in this area and to coordinate this group.” [Parent or caregiver]

7. Value diversity and inclusion

Almost seven per cent of respondents talked about improving the quality of services by focusing on the needs of students with special education needs, valuing them as individuals and having high expectations of them and a belief in their ability to meet their goals.

Respondents talked about having role models available to students with special education needs to enhance their sense of belonging, sense of self and to positively plan for the future. Others suggested giving disabled students more opportunity to learn and participate in society.

Respondents said students and their families and whānau needed to be consulted on a regular basis about how to improve service quality and to learn more about ways to value diversity and be more inclusive. For example, they could be consulted about topics such as making a successful transition from school to tertiary education and work. The voices of students also needed to be heard more frequently around Ministry of Education committee and project tables.

Respondents said schools and ERO needed to look beyond students' special education needs and the services they required. Instead, schools and ERO needed to look at students' academic and life outcomes. Doing so had the potential to improve attitudes overall.

Other ideas put forward by respondents included developing an inclusive education policy (to replace the existing special education policy) and a disability philosophy that particularly emphasised developing academic potential, functional skills and overcoming barriers.

"The development of a nationally-recognised and consistent transition planning process for young disabled people. Transition staff in all schools and Ministry of Social Development [with] funded services receiving consistent transition training. Develop strategies to increase and improve work experience and after school and holiday work for young disabled people. This should include developing guidelines for effective work experience that is used as an assessment tool, is meaningful and leads to skill development and further work opportunities. [Give] appropriate access to information about learning options and career choices for young disabled people and their families and whānau. In mainstream settings, trialling some new ideas for special education, eg, instead of having a special unit in some mainstream high schools with therapy services, pilot the closure of these and instead have a disability support office, which primarily arranges support for disabled students in the classroom. This would potentially free up more resources for classroom support. This model is successfully working in tertiary education and would potentially encourage more integration of disabled students in mainstream school activities and with their non-disabled peers. At the same time the schools should also trial school wide systems that reduce the amount of support that disabled students need. For example, having classroom notes on the intranet, rather than paying for note takers. The Index for Inclusion in the United Kingdom (Booth & Ainslow, 2002, page 3) is a resource that supports inclusive practice and development in schools. It states that the key points associated with inclusion in

schools are: valuing all students and staff equally, increasing the participation of students and reducing their exclusion, reducing barriers to learning and participation for all students, viewing difference as a resource to support learning [rather than] a problem to overcome, acknowledging the right of students to an education in their locality, emphasising the school's role in building community and increasing achievement. There are common structural and intra and interpersonal barriers that impact on disabled students' ability to journey to work. Just focusing on overcoming structural constraints such as adding a ramp to access a classroom will provide only limited gains in increasing participation and achievement of young disabled people. It is intra and interpersonal barriers that need to be dealt with first as they condition the motivation or will to act. These include anxiety, fear of the unknown, uncertainty about the ability to cope, shyness, embarrassment and self consciousness, perhaps, due to physical appearance or the perceptions of what others may think of one's impairment. The undervaluing of disabled students can influence how young disabled people feel about their own ability to achieve socially, academically and economically. Lucas (2008) suggests that disability-related challenges impact on young disabled people as they journey through life. Burchardt (2005) found that 'having a strong belief in your ability is even more important for young disabled people'. The Self-Determination Synthesis Project in the United States of America found that people with self-determination skills have a better quality of life and more positive outcomes. Barriers to self-determination included lack of administrative support, student-related factors, and the resistance of parents and professionals to changing roles. How can we value disabled students more? 'When you reach for the stars, you may not quite get them, but you won't come up with a handful of mud either.' In the United States, a number of researchers recommend that young disabled people have a greater voice in decisions about their schooling and transition planning. Ruef and Turnbull (2002) recommend having natural supports available [that] enables the young person to interact in classroom life more effectively and lessens disruption. They also suggest that if a disabled student is capable of doing something on their own, they need to be encouraged to do it, even if that means the student may not always succeed at first, or that it may take more time. The Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2002) makes special mention of the importance of relationships in the journey to work of young disabled people and echoes the need to provide young people with more opportunities for connections with peers, along with meaningful work and ongoing education." [Non-government organisation or community representative]

"Ministry of Education, Special Education services will be improved when a ubiquitous level of diversity is celebrated within all of our schools. Inclusion and general acceptance must first be a solid foundation in the education of every child, then quality special education will be demanded by everyone in the school community because it helps more than a small, targeted, disabled portion of the community. The multiple intelligences and adaptation models of special education can help every learner." [Education sector representative]

"The greatest service to the child with a disability is a teacher who wants the child in their class and is determined to find ways that the student will learn with the rest of their class. As discussed in the attached paper, this requires training,

community and specialist support and valuation of inclusion as [an] activity. The Ministry spends too much of their specialist dollars on utilising them as bureaucrats.” [Special education sector representative]

High-quality services and being accountable (Q7)

Being accountable

This section looks at the issue of accountability. It starts by revisiting the Review of Special Education 2010 discussion document preamble to the first question within this section, ie, question 7: How can families and schools be better informed? It summarises the key themes that emerged from the Review of Special Education submission process and features some of the public responses to the question.

What we asked

Overall

The discussion document began this section by noting the importance of knowing the special education services and support available, what students are achieving and the impact of such services and support.

It went on to discuss the link between good-quality information and accountability, suggesting when people have access to good information they are more likely to get access to the services they need and make good decisions.

Under the subheadings: *Information for parents and whānau* and *information for schools*, the discussion document reflected on the information currently provided and asked for more suggestions.

Key question

The discussion document asked:

- How can families and schools be better informed? (Q7).

This question received a total of 1,111 responses, the majority were from education sector representatives (644), with responses from special education sector representatives (370) and parents (367) being equal. This question attracted 185 responses from non-government or community representatives and 142 responses from health or disability sector representatives. Ten students contributed their views. Note, respondents could select to be represented in more than one group.

What you said

Key themes

1. Ways to be better informed
2. What to be informed about.

Overall

Respondents expressed several ideas about improving the way families and schools were informed about special education.

Respondents felt most informed about their children's programme at school and, to some degree, their child's progress.

The IEP was highlighted as a useful tool for sharing information. But respondents said there was a lack of information available about services, funding and outcomes. They said there was too little information about the performance of the system as a whole.

Respondents wanted more and better information for parents and schools, contributing a wide range of ideas and emphasising face-to-face contact for individual information and when things went wrong and group and electronic material for service and system-related information.

"As parents we have been very fortunate to have our daughter in a school that is very supportive with excellent communication channels through the teachers, teachers' aides, SENCO, principal and board of trustees. It would, however, be useful to receive more information on how special education is funded and how that ties in directly with the services our daughter is receiving at school. The Ministry of Education could learn from the commercial world, where innovation and its dissemination through an organisation to improve performance is of paramount importance. The Ministry of Education should be able to identify best practice and innovation with special education programmes in particular schools and facilitate their adoption nationally."
[Parent or caregiver]

"IEP meetings are an effective tool for school and whānau engagement. It would be my recommendation that there be more specialist teachers equipped to run and maintain IEP meetings." [Parent or caregiver]

"IEP process works when all involved with the child are committed to attending and contributing to the process." [Health or disability sector representative]

"IEP ... informs families very well and involves teaching professionals, families and pupils, meeting once a term to evaluate progress and discuss goals. Professional development would assist teachers to adopt best practice techniques." [Non-government organisation or community representative]

"I have a son at [a] special needs school and I have ... great communication and support from them. The staff communicate regularly [about] the needs and development of the education needed for my son. The use of IEPs are excellent." [Parent or caregiver]

Respondents who were satisfied with the information they received mentioned other parents and support groups as helpful sources of information about what was available and what was important to know as students progressed through the system.

“One of our greatest resources is communication with other families in our situation.” [Parent or caregiver]

“I am happy with the level of information coming to me through organisations like Parent 2 Parent and updates from the school.” [Parent or caregiver]

1. Ways to be better informed

Nearly two thirds of all respondents gave ideas about the way families and schools could be better informed.

Generally they wanted information about students shared in face-to-face discussions with teachers, SENCOs, key workers and caseworkers (who were considered their best sources of information).

Respondents also made it clear they wanted the family’s input valued as part of any information process and many also voiced a strong interest in having the language needs of families recognised and met.

“Many parents are already incredibly informed about their children’s conditions and requirements. Professionals currently rely heavily on the input, research, education and legwork families provide. Many parents voluntarily take on advocacy roles for the greater good. This input should be valued and formally utilised. Parent advocates and student self-advocates could be a wonderful interface between the system and families.” [Parent or caregiver]

“Why do some parents have little or no involvement? It has no meaning for them, is foreign to their way of doing things. Technical language, written word, is not easily accessible by parents and whānau who do not have English as their first language. Interpreters could be used, processes simplified. [Need] acceptance that the whole family could attend because they have the interests of the disabled student as their focus. There may be no babysitter so all the family attends. Flexibility may be required as to time and where meetings are held. Schools ensure coverage of teaching staff by relievers, during school hours. Parents liaise with their independent service coordinator who is also part of the meeting. Teachers’ aides may also have a part in the meeting, as well as non-special education staff who teach the disabled student. I feel the whole image of having special education providers in schools should step-up and be viewed as an asset. Having a special education unit in a school has been looked at negatively in regard to NCEA formula. When ERO visited there was no mention that the college even operated a special education unit. On the one hand there is a feeling of disabled students being valued and staff appreciated, but beyond the classroom that feeling is veiled.” [Unknown]

“AODCs need to [be] bilingual and bicultural to truly be able to share information.” [Unknown]

Some respondents wanted schools to be the store for all the information they needed. Others wanted information from the Ministry of Education, for example, to come straight to them. Others preferred the idea of their parent support group or a special education website becoming the one-stop-shop for information on the education system and services.

“Tricky. You have to be proactive to be better informed. I’d prefer a great interactive website where my child and I can both interact with the disability community and the services are there for us. Not us there for them.”
[Unknown]

“Maybe open access to the database or blog with all professional’s notes, comments and recommendations that are available to each other and most importantly the parent and school.” [Education sector representative]

Respondents also talked about wanting packs or kits of information that told them information relevant to their child and about the system as they would experience it.

“Information and resources need to be more readily available. What opportunities lie ahead for our children with special needs, ie, education, tertiary and employment?” [Unknown]

“[Provide a] list of the agencies available in our area and a description of each one, showing how they can help the child, school, teacher. [Use] flow charts to follow step-by-step processes of what to do with a child when referring, ie, Autism.” [Education sector representative]

Using other agencies and groups, eg, GPs, parent groups and non-government organisations, to help develop and disseminate information was put forward by respondents.

“[Our organisation], other parent bodies and NGOs would like to work closer with the Ministry of Education to further advance information and parent education,” [Special education sector representative]

Respondents also referred to the need to educate the wider public (as well as the sector) about disability and special education needs through the media.

ERO reports were referred to as useful sources of information to better understand the services and quality of education available from specific schools.

2. What to be informed about

About 25 per cent of all respondents gave feedback on what information they wanted. They wanted information on services, the system, help when things go wrong, student learning and achievement, change in attitudes, outcomes, best practice and resourcing.

Respondents said information on these topics would help parents, schools, service providers, the Government and people within the education sector as a whole make good-quality decisions.

Parents, for example, needed to know what they could realistically expect from a school or service, the nature and detail of the services being provided and what their child was achieving.

People across the sector needed more general information about special education services and the quality and impact of those services for students, families and society.

Information about services

Respondents, particularly school staff and parents, wanted better access to good-quality, consistent information (that would not vary depending on where in the country you were or who you spoke to).

They wanted information about services, funding and what they could expect in the future. Information about services available within the school sector and outside the sector interested them, as did information about courses and qualifications.

Parents particularly wanted access to information that would help them make decisions and build partnerships with service providers.

“Schools and families need to be informed about what resources and services they are entitled to. At the moment it feels like if you ask you might get it but if you don't ask then you will miss out. There needs to [be] easy-to-access information on what services children with special needs are entitled to.”
[Unknown]

“More information to both schools and families would be a huge improvement. If I think about the result of our ORRS application, it was a mere few sentences with no follow up information. There has also been no formal information given to us about how teacher's aide hours are determined, what the pool of support and specialists is available and what are realistic outcomes that we can expect for [our] daughter.” [Unknown]

“The Ministry of Education needs to be user friendly. Take good examples from around the country and use [them] as benchmarks. All parents should be informed of all options.” [Unknown]

“Families should be informed of how the system works and not have to rely on word-of-mouth to hear what services could be available to help their child. Schools should be open with parents as to how their child's funding is being used.” [Unknown]

“When moving schools there needs to be sharing between schools. The Privacy Act, although well meaning, makes life very difficult for families of special needs children and students, especially when the young person reaches 18.”

Parents and families of children and young persons with special needs and mental illnesses need to be kept informed and there needs to be transparent communication between state agencies, parents, families and the young people in question.” [Unknown]

“Ensure that transition is very clearly spelt out to parents. They come to school thinking that the service level will remain and are angry and disappointed when the funds just aren't there. Then we have to fire-fight instead of moving on positively.” [Education sector representative]

“Knowing what qualifications are available to these kids. After 18-months at school we have just found out about supported learning unit standards. The long-term system needs to be explained from the beginning. The rules of engagement need to be explained. For example, you can only receive this help, if your child is not intelligent and behaves negatively. If you [have] a moderate needs child, then it is very very difficult to get help. Note must be made that parents with a child with a disability are under huge stress and simply find it extremely difficult to organise and advocate and help. All help towards making the journey simpler, easier to understand and filled with empathy would be greatly appreciated. I think there is needless stress because, as a parent with a moderately disabled child, it is very confusing on how to get tangible help.” [Parent or caregiver]

“There is a real issue with the programming provided at the moderate level of disability. This is the sector that is rife with special programmes that aim to improve functioning. Parents are very vulnerable to the promises of un-researched programmes that offer quick cures. Develop a Ministry of Education website for all parents, with a traffic light coding system for current programmes. Professionals with expertise in the area can look at the available research evidence and grade thus. Red light [equals] no evidence or poor-level evidence only. Orange light [equals] some evidence but not high-level studies. Green light [equals] good, high-level evidence for the efficacy of the programme.” [Unknown]

“Families and whānau of Deaf, blind children usually have little or no prior experience of deafness or blindness. Educational service providers may also have limited knowledge of good practice in the education of Deaf, blind children. Developing New Zealand-specific educational standards and guidelines, similar to those available in the United Kingdom and USA, would help to make education services more accountable to Deaf, blind children and their families/whānau. The Special Education Grant should be reported on fully. Also schools should report to parents about how their additional teacher money is being used. They should be transparent about how much of this money is being clumped together in shared delivery to students.” [Unknown]

“Provision of information, advice and specialist Deaf, blindness services should also better enable children and their families and whānau to determine whether their other educational services are adequately meeting their needs. [Refer to the] quality standards in education [and] support services for children and young people who are Deaf, blind and, or multi-sensory-impaired.

Retrieved from:

<http://www.sense.org.uk/resources/sense/publications/publications%20by%20topic/publications%20for%20professionals/qualitystandard.pdf> [PDF: 128Kb, 23 pages]

And: Riggio, M. & McLetchie, B. (Eds.) (2008). *Deafblindness: Educational Service Guidelines*. Watertown, MA: Perkins School for the Blind." [Unknown]

Information about the system

Respondents were interested in information about the system and what they could expect from it, as well as information that reported on its performance (of particular interest to Government and non-government organisations).

Some found existing information unclear and inaccessible, which they felt led to confusion, conflict, having unrealistic expectations of the system and feelings of powerlessness.

"School charters [should] specify how a school will improve the presence, engagement and achievement of their young disabled people." [Non-Government organisation or community representative]

"Amend the Education Act to make it clear that the right to inclusive education for disabled children means the right to inclusive education in their local school and the Act defines inclusive education. Under sub-section 60A(1) of the Act, the Ministry [should] publish minimum standards in relation to the right to education for disabled students. The Ministry of Education [should also] develop outcome statistics that provide information on the educational participation and achievement of disabled students to the extent of at least those available for non-disabled students." [Government organisation representative]

"[Our organisation] sees an increased role for the ERO in the assessment of quality service provision. This would require ERO to develop some clear performance indicators at an organisational, school and individual level to ensure good educational outcomes for disabled students - rather than focusing on whether resources are being used effectively." [Special education sector representative]

"We would wish to see LAW reforms that make it very clear to a school, board, Ministry of Education and parents that failure to comply with the LAW will result in possible criminal charges etc." [Non-government organisation or community representative]

Information about help when things go wrong

Many respondents wanted information about resolving problems quickly and informally, as well as information about who to contact for formal resolution of issues.

"As a parent I should be informed about who to turn to when things 'turn to custard'. I need to know who to contact both within and [outside] the school." [Parent or caregiver]

"Parents need on-time information. We need to understand the appeal system, who is there to support us? We need to understand how the system works. How can families make more informed choices? The Ministry of Education needs to let parents know of changes that are made in the system, eg, [the role of] special education facilitators. Who are these people and what do they do?" [Unknown]

Information about student learning and achievement

Respondents talked about having reasonable access to information about student learning and achievement, particularly through the IEP process, which they found helpful. They also talked about the need to individualise information about student learning and achievement.

"Compulsory IEP meetings. Parents who insist on annual IEP meetings are often met with resistance from busy staff." [Parent or caregiver]

"IEP [should be] mandated as a measure of special education service and monitored by ERO. The narrative assessment approach is [should be] used with all children with learning difficulties." [Special education sector representative]

"We measure successful (special) education by year-on-year positive change in all children. We do not measure it by setting absolute standards that immediately put [children who face significant challenges] into the failed category." [Education sector representative]

"Schools should continue to convene and run IEPs and Ministry of Education staff who have been working with students should attend when possible. The school should be able to outline the work undertaken and families should be fully informed about outcomes etc." [Unknown]

"Families want their child to reach their full potential and to be happy, included and treated with respect. National standards have little relevance for children with special learning needs who are not expected to achieve at the same level as their peer group. Comparing fragile X children to their classmates is meaningless and depressing for both child and parent. Parents of special needs children often receive inadequate information about their children's successes, as methods of reporting focus on learning outcomes relevant to regular school children. The New Zealand Curriculum states that effective assessment is planned and communicated - outcomes, teaching strategies and assessment criteria are carefully matched. It is important that schools document and communicate to both children and parents, the learning outcomes achieved by children with special learning needs. Learning stories would be very effective for this." [Unknown]

Information about outcomes

Respondents wanted information about a range of outcomes - from system outcomes to service, school-level and individual student outcomes. They suggested assigning the responsibility of reporting on outcomes to education agencies such as the Ministry of Education or the ERO.

"We recommend that the Ministry of Education uses the measurement indicators in the Index for Inclusion and consults with families to ensure their successful implementation." [Non-government organisation or community representative]

"By providing objective information about choices, options and medium-to-long-term outcomes for different options." [Unknown]

"Perhaps a compromise might be a five-yearly census or stocktake of where children attend school, the sorts of supports that schools request and the supports schools receive, satisfaction of parents, families, students and teachers with students' learning, presence, participation and progress. We should also be reporting on where our graduates end up." [Education sector representative]

"ERO is authorised to measure how inclusive schools are and how well disabled children are achieving their learning goals." [Special education sector representative]

"Full support to meet the needs of every child, their family and their school. [Outcomes] measured through successful learning and happy parents, schools and communities." [Education sector representative]

"Accountability that sees providers measured by outcomes pertaining to student success and satisfaction." [Special education sector representative]

"Perhaps collating data at a cluster level, which then, in turn, gets reported back to the Ministry. Sharing of information among schools about successes, so other schools can learn from their experiences. This could be done nationwide if necessary, as not all schools would have successful model schools within a close distance." [Unknown]

"This is not an easy question to answer. Things that are easy to measure (eg, how many hours of service delivery a student has received) often do not give useful answers. More useful outcomes are difficult to measure, eg, changes in attitudes." [Unknown]

"It is the school's responsibility to inform parents. It is the Ministry's responsibility to inform schools directly, to monitor that educational programmes are in keeping with national curriculum guidelines and to monitor student achievement." [Unknown]

Information on best practice

Respondents commented positively on the discussion document suggestion for the Ministry to publish and share information about good practice, as a way to improve practice within the sector.

“Ministry of Education to publish research and data on the effectiveness of their programmes and where possible, highlight areas of good practice - schools that role model best practice.” [Unknown]

“Yes, the Ministry should publish research information on how to best use assistive technology and provide information to schools on what some schools do to be successful.” [Unknown]

“The suggestion about research is good. There could also be more money spent on identifying evidence-based practice and training staff so that the Ministry of Education is at the cutting edge.” [Unknown]

“The discussion document itself identifies major gaps in information on services for students with moderate needs such as mild to moderate hearing loss, the support and progress made by these students and the outcomes they achieve. The document notes gathering such information may come at a cost, but information is power, ie, power to tailor services and to get the best value for money, particularly for those students who are not at the extreme end of the special needs scale.” [Special education sector representative]

High-quality services and being accountable (Q8)

Being accountable

This section looks at the issue of accountability. It starts by revisiting the Review of Special Education 2010 discussion document preamble to question 8: What does successful special education look like and how should we measure it? It summarises the key themes that emerged from the Review of Special Education submission process and features some of the public responses to the question.

What we asked

Overall

Under the subheading *Information on special education as a whole*, the discussion document noted recommendations from the Office of the Auditor-General to improve the provision of information.

Key question

The discussion document asked:

- What does successful special education look like and how should we measure it? (Q8).

This question received 1,209 responses, the majority were from education sector representatives (705), followed by special education sector representatives (418) and parents (391). This question attracted 192 responses from non-government or community representatives and 148 responses from health or disability sector representatives. Eleven students contributed their views. Note, respondents could select to be represented in more than one group.

What you said

Key themes

1. Improve presence at school
2. Improve participation at school
3. Improve learning
4. Improve happiness
5. Options for special education in the school system
6. Measure success.

Overall

Respondents had a range of views on what successful special education would look like and how it would be measured.

About a quarter described the characteristics of a successful school system. Of this group, almost two thirds wanted a system that offered choice with access to regular classes, units and classes within regular schools. Students needed specialist itinerant teachers, special schools, satellite classes within regular school sites and to feel included in all settings.

Respondents noted the benefits of using IEPs as a measurement tool and suggested using ERO to monitor special education through school reviews and special reviews and measuring the post-school achievements of students.

Respondents said success would mean students were present, participating and learning at school. Success would mean schools and society would include children and young people with special education needs more.

Around 23 per cent of respondents went beyond presence, participation and learning and used words like 'happy' or 'happiness' to express what students and their families would like to experience from the school system.

Happiness would be achieved when a child with special education needs had easy access to the education setting of their choice, when he or she was attending regularly and participating in the life of their school and when he or she was learning and feeling supported, not stressed or unhappy.

"We will know we have a successful special education system when all children are present at their local school full-time, when they are able to participate without barriers and when they are engaged in learning alongside their same-age peers. West Coast of the South Island has all ORRS students attending their local school full-time - there aren't short days, no sending children home because teachers' aides are sick ... we make do." [Unknown]

"Successful special education allows children with special needs to attend their local school, develop relationships and friendships in their local school and communities, be involved in real and meaningful choices, be involved in real and meaningful activities and be seen as having a valued social role." [Unknown]

1. Improve presence at school

Eight per cent of respondents emphasised the importance of a student being present at school. They defined presence as students enrolled in a school of their parents' choice and where the length and frequency of that student's attendance at school was determined by his or her parents, not by others.

Most respondents also said a student was more likely to be present at school with the right support. However, they said access to the right level of support - while essential - was not always easy to obtain or obtain for the length of time required.

"A holistic model whereby the child's physical, mental, social and educational needs are all met, in an educational setting where the child has the support on hand to be able to access learning equitably alongside non-disabled students."

This means therapists, teachers, service agencies, health and transport agencies working together on site. See the Endeavour Centre at Mt Roskill Primary for such a model. [Education sector representative]

“Centrally-located schools with well-resourced staff, health professionals and resources that ease learning access for students with special [education] needs.” [Parent or caregiver]

“Children and young people being educated alongside their peers in their own community with support from [a] dynamic team of resource people that can be accessed and utilised as the school requires. Money that may have been spent on sending a taxi to their home to take them to a special school instead being invested in making it a success for that child in a mainstream school. For schools to be accepting of children with special needs as they are of other children.” [Parent or caregiver]

“My child is diagnosed as High needs. Low-needs children have the ability to be mainstreamed, whereas, I believe the special needs sector in schooling is the appropriate forum for my child to learn. Mainstream won’t consolidate on self-care skills and life basics. This would also be detrimental to both High needs and mainstream students due to disparities. Combining High needs students with mainstream would dilute the quality of access to education that my child (and mainstream) would, should and is currently accessing. Special needs students and staff deserve to be accessing more of the funding that seems to be spread out and used unfairly. Dare I say corruptly and unjustly?” [Unknown]

“Where a child with special needs is accepted like any other child by the school, teachers, other pupils and other parents. A school needs to feel supported to achieve this and have access to information and funding.” [Unknown]

“Too many children [are] still not attending full-time due to a lack of support to meet [their] needs. Success would allow all students to be in school.” [Unknown]

“There are children unable to attend full-time in school due to inadequate funding - presence, participation and learning. Outcomes should be measured functionality.” [Unknown]

2. Improve participation at school

Respondents defined participation in terms of students with special education needs being involved in class and school-related activities to the satisfaction of their parents. More respondents (nearly 14 per cent) talked about the importance of participation than presence.

“No child is left out of the chance to participate in every beneficial aspect of school life.” [Unknown]

"A client (child, student or adult) is given appropriate professional support to attend classes where meaningful learning (academic and social) can take place. Teachers' aides are trained. Client has access to peer group support." [Unknown]

"All children are actively engaged in meaningful and quality education, regardless of [the] type of school [and] that [it] is individualised according to students' needs. Students, before leaving school, to be connected to health agencies, work opportunities, recreation and leisure, friends and community. Less bureaucracy. Parents' choices represented in legal options." [Parent or caregiver]

"Children being given all the support needed to be fully included in the class programme - along with help to make friends and learn social skills. Teachers need to become more involved and confident ... to adapt the curriculum to meet their needs." [Unknown]

"The children can learn with their peers with appropriate expectations." [Education sector representative]

"Individualised - focused on the individual's needs and the support and steps needed for them to participate in the classroom and meet the curriculum expectations. Inclusive - active participant and included in classroom activities. Functional - relevant and appropriate to students' level and needs and participation in daily life [in the] classroom." [Special education representative]

"Students are actively engaged and involved in their community (school and local), ie, student centred. Engaged and connected with support network (school, family, health workers, counsellors, etc)." [Education sector representative]

3. Improve learning

More than a quarter of respondents talked about learning and achievement needing to align with a parent's expectations. They said a child needed set learning goals and outcomes. Respondents talked about learning and achievement twice as much as they talked about participation.

"Clear goals stated, achieved and next steps always being worked out. Steps and goals appropriate and realistic to children's needs. Not always just educational needs, ie, some children may have a goal to learn one more letter sound in a week, another may learn five, depending on how fast they are able to absorb information. Someone's goal may be to learn to use crutches as a step to eventually walking. Goodwill from teachers. Supportive parents. Specialist services [specialists] who realise there is more than their child in the room. Behaviour services available as needed, not after months of waiting." [Unknown]

“Successful education (special or otherwise) is children participating fully in the lives of their schools and communities, children’s learning needs being met in all education settings, families feeling supported, empowered and accepted within school communities and schools, families and specialist providers working together respectfully. It is measured through individualised and empowering assessments used by well-resourced and trained professionals.”
[Unknown]

4. Improve happiness

Around 23 per cent of respondents used words such as ‘happy’ or ‘happiness’ to express what students and their families would like to experience from the school system. The terms were used to express something beyond, yet inclusive of, presence, participation and learning.

Happiness relied on children and families not feeling stressed and not having to fight the system. Students were safe, but not closeted, and everyone involved was valued, respected and felt pride in what they were doing. Respondents talked about happiness almost as much as learning and achievement.

“Happy students working toward their individual goals with joy and purpose. Parents working in tandem with schools to achieve this. All students receiving an equitable education (non-special students have the right to sufficient teacher time and resources too).” [Unknown]

“Happy, engaged students participating in inclusive settings, valued for their unique contributions. Schools managing issues independently of specialist support, staff empowered by [their] own expertise. Parents with less stress about school so they can focus on [the] big picture of [their] child’s needs. No stand-downs or expulsion - restorative practices. Staff with positive attitudes towards all students.” [Unknown]

“Successful education looks like a happy confident parent, a child who is successfully achieving their goals and motivated staff.” [Unknown]

“Particularly regarding ASD, there needs to be much more awareness and education at all levels of education - teachers, pupils, specialists. Successful special education is when a student is happy, healthy and learning to the best of their ability in a stimulating and supportive environment. Mainstreamed students are supported in the mainstream environment through teachers’ aides and facilities like down-time rooms and sensory rooms, where students with sensory issues can retreat from class to decompress for a while. Special needs students are encouraged to make choices and speak for themselves to the best of their ability. Successful special education has students who enjoy school and for whom school does not cause them anxiety.” [Unknown]

“Successful special education is a happy child, a happy child learns, a happy child has a happy whānau, a happy whānau are able to address the things in their lives better. When one portion of their life is unwell or unhappy, it affects the WHOLE whānau.” [Unknown]

“Students make discernable progress in a secure and happy positive environment in a variety of development areas - educational, social, personal. That teachers are experienced and competent to enable their students to progress. That the needs of our children are recognised and respected.”
[Unknown]

“Safe from bullying and stress. Provides a supportive safe environment. Helps to achieve self management and independent according to needs and abilities.” [Unknown]

5. Options for special education in the school system

About a quarter of respondents described the characteristics of a successful school system for a student with special education needs.

Some said a successful system would be one that offered a range of schooling options, while others said it was a system where all students attended regular schools.

Range of schooling options

More than half of respondents who commented on this theme said they wanted a schooling system that offered choice.

They said students needed access to regular classes and units within regular schools. They needed to have access to specialist itinerant teachers, special schools, satellite classes within regular school sites and to feel included in all settings. Respondents talked about this topic in response to other questions as well.

A successful system featured a range of specialists, resource teachers and support staff available to support students in whatever school environment they and their parents chose.

Respondents said a successful system would give students access to well-resourced schools that supported all students to achieve and that offered students support to seamlessly transition from school to a range of settings at the end of school.

“The ability of parents to have [an] open choice of school without barriers to enrolment. Successful learning programmes and options for students within mainstream settings.” [Unknown]

“Special education should be at special schools with satellite classes and base school classes. Resources available to parents who CHOOSE to send their children to mainstream school.” [Unknown]

“That the child with special needs receives an education appropriate to those needs, ie, special schools, satellite classes, mainstream with special lessons (SLT, Reading Recovery, SLS, moderate needs, social skills etc). That enough of the resource be available and that it be distributed and administered on a needs basis, eg, SLS in South Auckland where the needs are greater than

supply, meaning students' needs are much more severe before they can access the available resource, despite meeting the criteria." [Unknown]

"Children are educated in the most appropriate environment for this need rather than based on a philosophy about mainstreaming or special needs to include the needs of the child, the family, the physical area they live in etc. If mainstreaming is the preferred option it needs to be resourced correctly." [Unknown]

"Successful special education is inclusion of people with special needs in society and the recognition of their worth. Inclusion in the school setting is either through mainstreaming in the local school or enrolment in a special unit, which is part of the community of a mainstream school. Successful special education provides the support for all people with disabilities to enable them to achieve to their maximum potential regardless of their educational environment. Successful special education takes place in an environment that enables the wider community to develop empathy, understanding and acceptance of all people with disabilities as useful and productive members of our society." [Unknown]

"Many special needs children benefit from being mainstreamed as they develop social skills with their peer group and can have insights into many aspects of life which are not academic and which can only be learned by interaction. However, a really big concern is that for some children mainstream schooling can be a frightening and frustrating experience as it can not offer the breadth of practical activities, which would enhance their lives and their learning, eg, cooking, swimming, music/art therapy etc. We have experience of children who, as they grow older, become more aware that they cannot be part of the learning in a mainstream class, even with an adapted curriculum. Whilst teacher's aide support can do this, funding does not allow a full-time teacher's aide for each of these children. We have had experiences in the past when transfers to special class have been achieved, parents have come to us to express their relief at the difference in attitude their special needs child has undergone with the change of schooling. We have been horrified at the shrinking of opportunities for some special needs children by the closure of facilities. What has been needed is a more educated selection process so that there are real choices meeting the varied needs of special needs children. Not just the blanket PC approach of ALL special needs children needing to be mainstreamed." [Unknown]

"Successful special education looks like: students having access to the New Zealand curriculum at whatever level they are working at; families feeling supported in the knowledge that the educational needs of their child are being met by the mainstream school, satellite unit or special school they have selected to meet their child's need; teachers feeling informed and empowered to deliver the curriculum and meet the needs of these students in their class; principals and boards welcoming parents and students into their school as they know that they have the resources to meet the needs of these students in a well-organised and resourced environment (not ad-hoc)." [Unknown]

"It involves New Zealand students growing up with the prospect of becoming useful citizens of the country. It involves early and ongoing intervention from a service that is trusted to ensure the best of education for each and everyone, regardless of disability. It would have a variety of opportunities for students to be mainstreamed in well-resourced schools or to spend time in schools equipped to cope with their needs. There would be a range of specialists available to be used when required. All the agencies would cooperate with the families for the best possible education for each student. There would be funding targeted at an early age to meet the needs of students and there would be greater accountability for each school to meet those needs, given that the funding would be directed at the student through the school without masses of form filling and administrivia. We do not see this being provided by a service such as the special education service, which has not meet needs for many years." [Unknown]

"Parent choices represented in real options. Less bureaucracy. Open access to special schools with flexible pathways to and from mainstream and the community. Students two years before graduation actively connected to health services, tertiary and work opportunities, family and whānau belonging, participating in recreation and leisure, friends and community." [Unknown]

All children and young people attend regular schools

About a quarter of respondents, who described the characteristics of a successful school system, said it would involve all students in regular education, with all references to 'special' dropped. Staff in schools would be well trained and supported to provide appropriately for all students, recognising that full inclusion benefited everyone.

"When it is no longer seen as special but seen in the context of equity and social justice. When discourses in education stop compartmentalising and labelling children and young persons." [Unknown]

"Special education is not special - it is good-quality education for all students in their local schools. Some students would just attract a bit more funding to enable the schools to meet their needs. No child cannot be educated in a regular school - it is just that we haven't taught or resourced regular schools so they can do it. Look at the aims of the New Zealand Disability Strategy - that should be our measure of success." [Unknown]

"An inclusive approach to teaching at the classroom level, appropriate supports and accommodation for all children with need, appropriate outcomes for each child should be decided in collaboration with all concerned with the child, (parents, external agencies) and achievement of them should be measured." [Unknown]

"Supporting schools to become a completely inclusive environment." [Unknown]

“Normalisation of people with disabilities happens with mainstreaming, this is a reciprocal process. Teachers often comment about how their regular children are accepting of their peers with disabilities who work in their midst. They are compassionate and helpful. The main barrier seems to be not having genuine relationships with non-disabled peers. Friendships with older people appear to be more successful especially where a person with a disability has had the opportunity to socialise and be a useful, contributing member of any organisation. [Unknown]

“When you cannot see it and measure it - in other words when the kinds of provision we currently label as special is just a normal part of how we meet individual needs. To achieve this we have to dismantle what we have now by removing guarantees of funding and encouraging a whole new range of creative options built around a truly inclusive approach.” [Unknown]

“It’s not called ‘special’. Called inclusive or just education. No one stigmatised because of difference. Teachers, staff, parents, kids and the community happy. Board and principal encourages an ongoing learning environment for all. An assumption that all kids go on school camp. Probably teaching New Zealand Sign Language to all kids from new entrants. The best special schools are those that no longer exist as bricks and mortar but have become experts and [are] resourcing for those students’ inclusion in their local schools.” [Unknown]

Respondents contributed a range of other ideas about a successful school system. For example, many talked about having a system that allocated special education support according to need, not budgets.

Respondents thought a successful system would have well-trained and supported teachers and support staff. It would offer easy access to support services and identify and meet a student’s needs early in life.

Respondents talked about the importance of sharing stories of success and good practice as a way to make success more widespread. Several respondents pointed to personal examples of successful schools attended by their children where staff were making a difference.

A successful system would give students access to specialists, specialist teachers and other support staff through a range of means, ie, some preferred the idea of accessing all supports from one agency, while others suggested school clusters or schools themselves should purchase and deliver services.

6. Measure success

About a third of respondents identified ways to measure success. Some concentrated on measures relating to individual students, others talked about measures that would look at the success of the whole system. Respondents noted that measuring success was not simple and warned about measuring the wrong things.

“Successful special education means that the student leaves school able to lead a happy, meaningful life and the family have felt supported through every step of the student’s journey. This is not measurable by Government standards, but means the world to the families of these students.” [Unknown]

Behaviour and attitudes

Respondents were interested in measurement tools that could trace student wellbeing, as well as academic and functioning ability. Respondents suggested using surveys and regular communication for this purpose.

“Happy safe achieving special children (level of achievement relative to the individual child) and schools with adequate funding resources and skilled and supervised staff to achieve this. School life enhancing family life rather than causing extra pressures (time, emotional, financial).” [Parent or caregiver]

“Students’ successes and achievements are often immeasurable especially in special needs children but families and caregivers recognise contentment and achievement in their children also attitudes [of] positivity.” [Parent or caregiver]

“Success should be measured by how satisfied parents are with their child’s learning and relationship with the school.” [Special education sector representative]

“This is when families and children feel included and valued. Ask them if this is the case once a year.” [Unknown]

“Successful special education is family and whānau-driven and encompasses [high] quality services that are relevant to the needs of the family and whānau. It should not be budget driven. Meetings or hui should be held between the interested parties, including family and whānau and used as a measuring tool. Meeting the needs of individual situations for whānau. Communication with those involved [is the] only way to measure it.” [Unknown]

“Choice of interventions for children and their families. Measured by happy children who are thriving and learning to their potential.” [Unknown]

“Happy students, contented parents, satisfied staff. When teams of families, school and the Ministry [of Education], Special Education can all work well together, where everyone’s input is considered and valued. Currently it is often measured by talk within the community - so schools where it is working well attract more students.” [Special education representative]

Education system tools

Respondents suggested a range of tools already in use that could help measure student outcomes. Curriculum achievement levels were one, exemplars and narrative assessment were others.

“Outcomes for students with regard to the key competencies in the new curriculum is appropriate for special education ... links to local curriculum need to be included - in the areas of literacy, communication, Deaf culture. Aspects such as students taking responsibility for their own learning is also an important measure.” [Unknown]

“Happy healthy students who are making education gains, who are engaging in classroom activities and participating in the life of the school community. Measure student independence. Do we want to look at milestone testing instead of standards? For example [participation] levels in special education curriculum books. We are actually doing this ourselves but [not] reporting [it]. [This] would add another administration layer but [it] would give increased accountability and [a] measure of value for money.” [Unknown]

“Could part of NEMP [the National Education Monitoring Project] target randomly-sampled ORRS students from two consecutive years to determine average progress? This repeated periodically - all curriculum subjects and areas measured. Much excellent work has been carried out in the Ministry of Education Action Plan - Better Outcomes for Children. This remains very valid work and I would not like to see this all reinvented. There is a good deal of work in special education districts around recording outcomes of presence, participation and learning. We now need systems to measure these outcomes more widely - rather than in individual student's special education files ...” [Unknown]

“Narrative assessment should be rolled out to all schools. This is a positive means of assessing the students who make very small gains in progress. Parents are delighted with it.” [Unknown]

“Narrative assessment can show progress across key competencies as well as academic areas. Realistic goals based on next steps for individual students, not a national standard.” [Unknown]

“A transparent system where professionals in education work collaboratively with teams. Measured by using current tools such as [the] SEIT evaluation tool.” [Special Education sector representative]

“Use of exemplars in literacy and numeracy, such as those developed by the central region special schools and Massey University - through which student progress can be monitored and by which individual success can be demonstrated.” [Education sector representative]

“At [our school] successful education is how we operate at the moment. We have developed strong structures in all areas of special education, very clear operating procedures and well defined assessment and accountability procedures. Most importantly we have very collaborative relationships with parents, Ministry of Education, Special Education staff involved with the students and our teachers and teachers' aides. All viewpoints are listened to and respected and the focus is always first and foremost on the students. We

are a community striving towards creating a warm and supportive environment where everyone, regardless of need can learn and fulfill their potential, academically and socially. We measure success in special education in the same way we measure all students. All students ... will show improvement academically and socially through measurement against clearly defined, individualised learning goals. All interventions must show a defined level of improvement and there must be regular assessment through learning portfolios and IEPs if the student is receiving extra educational support through SEG, ESOL, ORRS or any other scheme.” [Education sector representative]

“Criticisms of the Enhanced Programme Funding have [focused on] the lack of rigor, accountability and clear outcomes. Ministry psychologists with their knowledge and understanding of research methods are an ideal resource to support schools with research, developing practice-based evidence in the New Zealand setting. Currently there is little opportunity for Ministry of Education, Special Education staff to be involved in action research in partnership with schools. Students with special [education] needs feel welcome and included at school. This is demonstrated with high attendance rates and IEPs demonstrating individual progress over time based on concrete short, medium and long-term goals. Referral rates demonstrate access to services. Parental surveys measure satisfaction with service.” [Special education sector representative]

Education Review Office (ERO) reporting

Using ERO to monitor special education through school reviews and special reviews was suggested by respondents. Some thought ERO could also measure what students went on to achieve after leaving school.

“Using ERO to monitor and report on schools’ use of funding and use of teaching and teacher’s aide staffing, monitoring ongoing professional development and training for teachers and teachers’ aides, focusing on the achievement and provision for students with special [education] needs. Through existing accountability processes using ERO, perhaps with more emphasis on special education. ERO is authorised to measure how inclusive schools are and how disabled children are achieving their learning goals. Special Education already has a system of measure and review. It is responsive and in our experience of it, it works. ERO does a great job of measuring the quality of the service. The school does a great job of measuring each student’s progress.” [Unknown]

“Inclusion, positive ‘can do’ attitude, wrap around services. Highly professional leadership and teaching staff in schools. Measure it by getting ERO to specifically review the special needs sector of schools. There has been a tremendous push to concentrate on raising literacy and numeracy levels. There now needs to be a real focus on enhancing special needs, systems and provision within schools. The ERO evaluation report, Schools Provision for Students at Risk of Not Achieving, under findings has 11 [summaries of] what is important. These 11 summaries provide a realistic vision of good practice.

Each summary could be column four in a rubric and used as a school's (and, or cluster of schools) measurement tool. But under Tomorrow's Schools, as it's currently organised, any tool would be difficult [to] use by a cluster [or] community of schools." [Unknown]

General education and social indicators

Respondents felt people within the education sector needed to have high expectations for the education and social outcomes of students with special education needs (as they did for other students). These outcomes needed to be identified and measured as part of a successful approach to schooling.

"Successful education for children with additional needs would present as: schools being all encompassing of the children and each teacher competent in being aware and meeting the needs of the child. A team approach where schools and agencies are able to work together in giving the best support possible to enable the child to meet their full potential. Choices and options to best fit the needs of the child and family. Resourc[ing] and funding being sufficient [for] agencies to best support the child and family. Happy healthy children who are well supported and progressing to meet their goals. Children attaining a secure surety to continue to move forward, for a better future for themselves, community and country. Indicators of success:

- *Children leaving school with an education to enable them to sustain a meaningful life*
- *Children seeking further education*
- *Children leaving school and entering the workforce*
- *Children leaving school and being able to contribute to the community in a meaningful way*
- *Children remaining in the education sector and not leaving school at an early age with no qualifications*
- *Children staying engaged in learning, remaining in the school environment and not being sent home, stood down or excluded when schools are unable to cope*
- *A decrease in youth suicide and crime*
- *A decrease in the access to social services*
- *A decrease in referrals to [the] health sector*
- *Less need for crisis intervention." [Parent or caregiver]*

"Having friends - this is the only school we have ever had friends in. Feeling safe and not being bullied. Feeling a part of the community. Feeling you belong. Feeling part of a big family. Teachers that WANT to teach us. Friendly approachable teachers and staff. Having the opportunity to know other people. Work set to our needs - not too hard. Being given the chance to achieve and succeed. Successful special education [at my school] looks like - we are very proud of our school. ERO visited us and said we are a great school. Success should be measured by what we learn and get out of our environment, and we learn heaps it [is] in our results, the programmes and what we learn. Success is measured by the enjoyment and the fun we have and what we get out of our learning. In the past many of us did not achieve or learn much

because when at mainstream school things were too hard and did not meet our needs, people didn't want to teach us." [Student]

"We believe that the definition of success for Deaf students begins by accepting that each Deaf student has a right to community. Accepting the right to community implies that the Deaf child will have access to a community with whom they can communicate freely, (that includes people 'just like them') and [the community] has a shared vision of independent, well adjusted Deaf adults making a sustained contribution to New Zealand society once they leave school. We can measure this definition of success academically through key measures of literacy, numeracy and school exit qualification achievement. For example [we] can show the levels of NCEA achievement of its students and discuss how these results are both achieved and sustained. We can measure social and emotional health by the activities a student participates in and the quality of the relationships they can build and sustain. We can measure contribution to society in longer terms such as employment rates [and] declined representation in negative social statistics, such as mental health referrals and criminal convictions. Most importantly we can measure the ultimate success of our education system when all Deaf children achieve at rates that compare favorably with other children of the same age and social circumstance throughout the country." [Special education sector representative]

"Looks the same as successful education for all looks - measure it the same." [Unknown]

"This question is meaningless. Special education is diverse and varied. Success should not be measured in terms of special education as an entity but in terms of the education system as a whole in providing a high quality ... educational experience that allows all children to grow, learn and develop and have access to a broad and varied curriculum. Children want to go to school." [Unknown]

"How welcome the school is. Successful special education in a mainstream setting could be best measured by determining the level to which students with significant learning needs and their families are welcomed within the school. Where these students and their families feel at home and well supported within a school, then the setting is right for positive learning outcomes for these students. Positive benefits also accrue to the regular students and their families in creating a positive and accepting environment." [Unknown]

Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

Respondents who talked about IEPs favoured the continued use of IEPs to set goals and measure a student's learning achievements. Respondents felt it was a good tool for tracking academic, social and emotional attainment, as well as a student's growing independence.

Respondents said it could be used for setting clear goals, objectives and outcomes - and for developing success criteria, setting high expectations for students and recording roles and outcomes for team members.

Families and whānau were typically very involved in IEPs, which was another strength. Families and whānau contributed to setting goals and developing programme ideas and were involved in the monitoring and reporting process as well.

"ORRS-funded and SLS students' success in education is on a very different measure to those in mainstream education, it is well documented through the IEP process, but is hard to report on because it is very personalised to one child. Other students who receive other interventions from SLT etc, can be measured through the normal school tracking of achievement. Schools report on this regularly." [Unknown]

"A return to the practice of investing in partnership and IEPs for most students with special education needs." [Non-government organisation or community representative]

"A more appropriate curriculum suitable to children with Very High needs would make assessment possible against a set of appropriate criteria. Could children's IEPs form the basis of achievement data? These are done regularly and at each IEP meeting the previous goal is reviewed and removed if achieved, or modified if necessary. Perhaps this could form the basis of cluster data reporting." [Unknown]

"Successful special education needs to focus on the needs of individual students and offer a range of services and facilities to meet their needs, eg, special schools, satellite classes, specialist and itinerant teachers. All these students would have their education goals set from their IEPs. Data gathered and shared would help set these goals and track progress." [Unknown]

"Successful special education is evident in the special schools. It is measured in the IEPs and by the obvious progress that the children make, even in toileting, speech, reading and counting. Successful special education is most important in the safety of the children, this cannot be measured other than when things go wrong." [Unknown]

"One where the student's IEP is being achieved at each and every six-month review. If that is happening, then the student is progressing and is being extended and developed. If it continues along with successive IEPs, the student will reach his or her full potential and will grow into the best possible adult [they] could be. It is a collaborative team effort by both the parents and the

school (with the Ministry's help) to bring out the best in the special student. Many of them are so gifted in unexpected ways and this needs to be encouraged. However, it's not just IEP success that should be measured. It is also the sense of enjoyment, achievement and self-worth of the student. This is not as easily measured but it can still be gauged. This is an area of great importance and one area [, which] I believe would be very seriously undermined if special schools were ever closed down or changed in some drastic way. It is intangible in a sense, but nevertheless still very, very real in the smiles on our special children's faces when they receive a certificate from their school or reach a milestone with their teacher's help or learn a new skill (which may be taken for granted by other regular kids). This is how I would measure successful special education and it cannot fail to show up in the students' IEP and end of year reports." [Unknown]

"It must be acknowledged here that the achievements for special needs students [are] extremely variable and for some, accomplishments are small and not measurable with traditional standards. The IEP process is meant to quantify this process, but often teachers are left reporting on feelings and hunches rather than actual achievements. Again, I would like to refer to student-led IEPs and having other reporting means available to teachers such as digital portfolios." [Unknown]

"Individualised programmes that meet all the needs of the child, carried out wherever possible within the framework of mainstream schools, in a timely manner. We need the IEP process to be open and honest; all parties to work together in the child's best interest, setting SMART goals that can be videotaped six-monthly to show gains." [Unknown]

"Children included in typical classrooms with teachers and peers that understand their needs, their abilities and their goals. It is families helping families, teachers helping teachers, schools helping schools. It is people sharing the knowledge they have and others picking it up and running with it. It is teachers knowing how to adapt the curriculum. It is people learning to live with ALL other people and this can only be done through integrated schooling. Attitude is very hard to measure, however, with the right attitude and the knowledge and willingness to adapt any level of curriculum to meet the needs of the children in the class, progress is made. Regular IEPs are a great yardstick and an awesome opportunity to celebrate successes. This is a school driven process and doesn't have to involve Ministry of Education, Special Education staff, (although most of us care enough about the kids and their education, that we make sure we're there!)" [Education sector representative]

High-quality services and being accountable (Q9)

Being accountable

This section looks at the issue of accountability. It starts by revisiting the Review of Special Education 2010 discussion document preamble to question 9: When things do not go well, what arrangements should be in place to resolve issues? It summarises the key themes that emerged from the Review of Special Education submission process and features some of the public responses to the question.

What we asked

Overall

Under the subheading *When things do not go well*, the discussion document reflected particularly on the importance of having a system in place to respond to complaints and concerns from parents. It suggested introducing a formal process, comprising advice, advocacy, investigation, mediation and resolution and independent review.

Key question

The discussion document asked:

- When things do not go well, what arrangements should be in place to resolve issues? (Q9).

This question received 1,105 responses, the majority were from education sector representatives (632), with responses from special education sector representatives (366) and parents (374) being about equal. This question attracted 180 responses from non-government or community representatives and 136 responses from health or disability sector representatives. Ten students contributed their views. Note, respondents could select to be represented in more than one group.

What you said

Key themes

1. Systems to prevent and minimise problems
2. Clear complaints process
3. Early, internal resolution
4. Third party advice
5. Advocacy
6. Mediation
7. Independent review and arbitration.

Overall

Approximately half of respondents emphasised the importance of resolving problems early and using low-level solutions to sort out issues as and when they arose.

They wanted clear policies, procedures and effective communication, as well as access to good information and someone to clarify issues with. Setting up a clear complaints process was raised in the discussion document and this received support. Thirteen per cent of respondents agreed with such a process.

There was specific support for separate advocacy and mediation services when concerns could not be resolved through problem solving. About 22 per cent commented on advocacy and an equal number on mediation.

Respondents felt these services needed to be independent and easy to access. They needed to be available to families most of all, but schools also need such services. Advocates were needed on both a short-term and long-term basis, depending on the situation.

Nearly 15 per cent wanted an independent review and arbitration process. Respondents wanted a process that would deliver a final result or decision and avoid situations of no resolution.

“The key to all disputes is to have an early intervention and a straight-line, restorative practice system in place.” [Parent or caregiver]

“Current arrangements suffice, eg, schools have clearly identified complaints procedures. Special education facilitators are in place. Appeal procedures exist for verification schemes. ERO reviews research, [also] parent and student views. Parents are entitled to request advocacy and legal advice through community services such as local community law offices and organisations such as Supporting Families and CCS Disability Action (CCS).” [Education sector representative]

“I am happy with the current process. I am lucky to have a special school with strong and supportive advocates. I think it is the Ministry that needs to ensure that all schools are aware of the processes, what to do and who to go to. I do not agree that there are limitations as we have the right to express our concerns through to the highest levels.” [Parent or caregiver]

“System already available seems to work. Parent, teacher, principal, - if unresolved parents can get someone independent to advocate between school and parents. Maybe [have an] independent place [that] can tell you what you are entitled to without being too involved.” [Parent or caregiver]

“When things go wrong, families contact our organisation as they feel unsupported and are frustrated as the current framework does not hold schools accountable. Parents look to [the] Ministry of Education, Special Education to support them and are frustrated that they are not in a position to assist. The complaint by IHC advocacy outlines the issues being faced and parents are calling for a process that will hold the schools accountable and enable them to address the violation of their [children’s] rights. To address

the current issues it is necessary to provide good support for families, which includes: improvement of available information on the rights of students and their families, access to an inclusive education facilitator, independent education advocacy service for families, a national complaint process, which is well published and which will ensure that all parties are held accountable, resources, websites and brochures outlining the channels to follow for complaints and independent reviews by mediators.” [Special education sector representative]

“[Our organisation] believes that there should be a mediation mechanism within the education system to reduce the need for families to go to the Human Rights Commission, [which is] a time consuming process for families. The 2009 report, Disabled Children’s Right to Education, presented a disturbing picture of the lack of confidence that families have in the present special education system. The paper was written in response to two major complaints about access to educational services (lead by IHC Advocacy and Deaf Aotearoa New Zealand) and what the Commission saw as a worrying upward trend in complaints being received on disabled children’s access to education.” [Special education sector representative]

“We recommend reinstating the role of the Parent Advocacy Council, provided for in the Education Act 1989 before disestablishment in 1991. The Council’s main functions would be to: provide a formal process for parents to bring their concerns about the education system to the attention of Government, allow parents to share their experiences of the education system with other parents, review the ‘contact register’ recently established by the Ministry of Education, Special Education and to make recommendations for action on an annual basis. This mechanism would provide value for money because it would reduce the number of formal complaints, provide a clearinghouse for concerns and complaints and enable policymakers to gain a clear understanding of issues and trends. We recommend the reinstatement of the Parent Advocacy Council.” [Special education sector representative]

1. Systems to prevent and minimise problems

Approximately half of respondents noted the importance of having better systems in place to prevent problems or to resolve them early.

“If everything was written down and followed nationally and available for everyone to see- so many issues would be resolved. The United Kingdom has a code of practice - adopt this. Advocacy service. In Auckland, the Ministry of Education advocates are so lovely, but they can only make suggestions to schools. Their position is just laughed at by principals. They must be so frustrated at the lack of professionalism in the education sector. This new service has to have teeth and consequences. Boards of trustees and schools and families must have access to this service. It must be a nationalised service with nationalised practice and process. Leadership must come from the Ministry for all schools.” [Parent or caregiver]

Respondents said skilled, well-resourced professionals trained in problem solving were needed.

“Honest communication that is not personalised. Not defending the expert’s position but looking at what is best for the student. Listen to families. Being honest is saying what can and what can’t be done.” [Education sector representative]

“We have a communication book in place between [us and] the school and we get notified if there is anything that is not going well. This is very well managed, we liaise with the teachers and get things sorted in no time. The teachers at [my child’s school] are great. They do their work with passion.” [Parent or caregiver]

When that failed to work, respondents suggested having access to resolution processes that involved people at a higher level within an organisation or the sector. Having access to third-party advice within the education system was a frequent ‘higher-level’ suggestion.

Respondents suggested getting advice through a range of channels, including the Ministry of Education, Special Education’s 0800 number, Ministry of Education staff and local support groups.

“Immediate support from appropriate agencies. Ministry of Education, Special Education field staff need to be readily available to schools and parents and to have the appropriate knowledge available to be passed on. Systems and protocols need to be clear, easy to access quickly and well publicised.” [Special education sector representative]

“Amend Section 14 of the Education Act to remove the principal’s sole discretion over behaviour in imposing stand-down, suspension etc of a special needs student, particularly those with an intellectual disability. In such cases a psychological assessment of the behaviour, in terms of any incident, should be mandatory as should consultation with parents and consideration of all the circumstances leading to the particular behaviour.” [Parent or caregiver]

Respondents also emphasised the importance of listening to families and students as part of any good-quality resolution process. They stressed the need to discuss issues instead of communicating in writing (ie, by letter or email).

“A service provider should provide families with clear expectations of service provision. These expectations should be accounted for through the students’ IEP process and additional specialist provision. A specialist teacher or key worker would assist families with any initial issues. Most organisations and schools have complaint procedures well established, which should help [to] resolve most issues. It may also be appropriate for families to have access to some independent advocacy and support if necessary. The ability of schools to work flexibly, collaboratively and innovatively with one another and families on issues will help solve most concerns. It may also be useful to have an

appointment of an independent ombudsman for unresolved issues. " [Special education sector representative]

2. Clear complaints process

Setting up a clear complaints process was raised in the discussion document and received substantial support, with 13 per cent of respondents expressing agreement for such a process.

"Clearly outlined processes to go through - that everyone understands. Also, all parties being entitled to an equal voice. Also, time being allowed to work things through and to communicate." [Education sector representative]

"There should be a proper procedure to step through any issues with all parties involved, to ensure a good resolution that everyone has input into for a good result." [Education Sector representative]

"The chain of complaint should be in place with the ability to go right to the top if the need arises." [Parent and Education sector representative]

3. Early, internal resolution

Respondents were generally supportive of resolving issues early and within an organisation through discussion, with nearly seven per cent raising this as a key theme. However, respondents also said it was not always easy.

Respondents suggested boards of trustees needed to have a support person available to parents and students when disputes arose. They also recommended having someone similar available in education organisations.

"A member of staff who is knowledgeable about special needs, perhaps a special needs coordinator, would be a good first step to resolving issues and looking at ways of stopping things going badly again." [Parent]

"A collaborative meeting based on a refocus of goals and how team members can best facilitate progress towards these goals." [Education sector representative]

"Parent and school advocacy through planned meetings and discussions. Local Ministry personnel (school and student support officers) could assist with conflicts and unresolved issues." [Education sector representative]

"Trustee available from every school board who has responsibility for special education needs and is available to work with parents." [Unknown]

4. Third party advice

Seven per cent of respondents wanted to know that advice would be available from a third party when they needed it. They wanted advice on their rights and choices, as

well as the services available. Possible third parties noted were the Ministry of Education, Special Education, the church, Members of Parliament, the ERO and the Human Rights Commission.

"The role of the Special Ed[ucation] Facilitator is crucial." [Parent or caregiver]

"Someone to phone who is neutral would be good." [Unknown]

"Mainstreamed schools need expert assistance and advice. We require independent advice from experts when there are issues or disagreements between schools and the parents of special needs children." [Education sector representative]

5. Advocacy

Approximately 20 per cent of respondents expressed interest in having an independent advocate; this idea was raised in the discussion document. They favoured someone who would be available to support a family, individual or group involved in a dispute. In some cases, respondents suggested schools should have access to such an advocate too.

Respondents said that, in some situations, an advocate should be available for short-term help with a particular situation. In other situations, longer term help with ongoing issues was required. Respondents wanted an advocate who was independent and free to use.

"There should be an independent authority, ie, an Independent Education Advocacy Service [similar to the] Health and Disability Commission advocacy model." [Student]

"There should be an impartial advocacy service, similar to the health and disability advocates, but for special education, or else special education should fall under the jurisdiction of the [Health and Disability Commission] HDC. The current arrangement with special education facilitators is not sufficient. The special education facilitators are employed by the Ministry of Education, so they cannot be impartial and they are there to facilitate [resolving] problems between family and school, leaving the Ministry (which is often at the root of the problem) out of the loop. Other options for families such as Section 10 arbitration or the Office of the Ombudsman are not well known to families. The Section 10 process is too difficult for most families to get through without assistance from an advocate of some sort and there is a question whether arbitrators can be truly impartial when they are employed or paid by the Ministry of Education. There needs to be a process that is quick, accessible, not intimidating, transparent and impartial. This does not exist at present." [Education sector representative,]

"Review process at all levels (eg, school, verification, Ministry of Education) should be publicly available and easily accessible. Parents should be able to access independent advocates to support them through the process. Schools

should also be able to request advocacy on a student's behalf. Schools should also be able to request increased support and a review of process for problem students. " [Education sector representative]

"Appointment of an advocate for parents is a great idea - some parents (if not most) will be worn down by coping with a special needs child and having to battle for everything against bureaucrats." [Parent or caregiver]

6. Mediation

Approximately 23 per cent of respondents favoured having the assistance of someone to help people resolve issues when they were in dispute (ie, through mediation).

"There needs to be a central person [or] group who can help mediate a successful outcome with all sides interests covered. Not just the special needs side or just the school side, a balanced outcome." [Special education sector representative]

"Independent mediators who are experienced in special needs and education law should be called in as teachers band together and it becomes a them-and-us mentality. We ring so many different agencies at present and they end up telling you the same thing; you still have no rights because schools have the upper hand in what they can do. [Schools] need to be accountable for why they are standing- down kids and the law needs to be clear when it is to do with a child being excluded because of it being because of [his or her] disability. Continual disobedience can mean anything and gets used for that purpose. Schools should not be able to get rid of [a] special needs [student] so easily and cast them out and then another school then gets to try and undo the previous school's shortfalls, then you end up on a merry go round." [Parent or caregiver]

"The agency that the problem is with should not be the one [that] reviews the issue. Independent agencies need to be included to guarantee integrity and also an outcome that is objective and fair." [Parent or caregiver]

"Currently the only choice people have is to move schools ... this is extremely unsettling and difficult. Again, the mainstream system is not set up to be able to deal with difficulties related to children with special needs. I believe that [if] staff with experience with children with special needs are able to consult with mainstream schools, they would be in a position to mediate." [Parent or caregiver]

"The Ministry needs to advocate for all students but especially students with special [education] needs, therefore, a service in the form of a special education mediator or ombudsman, could support students, their schools and families to ensure they are receiving the service they need and have the right to [receive]. Regular case management by specialist services could prevent things [from] going wrong." [Education sector representative]

“The current arrangements appear to be both piecemeal and not necessarily well trusted. The nature of processes and lobby agency voices means that parents and caregivers may feel isolated or distrusting of education overall. An essential component is both a fundamental honesty and moral courage at the centre, especially at the verification and allocation decision-making point. [For example], most schools are extremely confident that should a Very High needs ORRS student be injured or worse (choke etc) during the school day when they are mainstreamed without dedicated support (eg, sometime after lunchtime on Wednesday) that the Ministry of Education or Accident Compensation Corporation would have no hesitation in publicly hanging the school out to dry. The expectation being that both organisations’ public relations machines would kick-in within moments, claiming that ‘... all the necessary support was in place and that there was no reason or excuse for the school having failed ...’ etc. All whilst the school is trying to work with the alarmed and grieving family, staff and other students. This level of mistrust may well be unfounded, but it reflects the experience of many schools when faced with lower-level interactions or incidents. This lack of partnership puts principals, teachers and boards of trustees in an invidious position and one where they see the Government agencies as fair-weather friends. A specific strategy needs to be developed and implemented to remove the politics from special education and move to a ring-fenced (eg, clear protocols to maintain this relationship regardless of other debates etc) partnership between the Crown agencies and sector in the first instance. Establishing a Special Needs Child Advocate or Ombudsman within the Office of the Health and Disabilities Commissioner would also be a positive step. This would provide an independent but knowledgeable authority that could facilitate solutions in conflict situations.” [Education sector representative]

“I think that it would be useful to have an ombudsman-type person that parents or schools could go to when there is a dispute. This person would be able to assist [the] resolution of these conflicts and would also get a national picture of things that are not working well. It would also be useful to have more training in mediation and conflict resolution at a local level - school management, specialist Ministry of Education staff etc. All parents of special needs children have experienced problems of some sort. There does need to be an independent person or body that parents can turn to for assistance. It is important that that body is independent of the Ministry of Education as they are so involved in both policy and service delivery and are not independent.” [Education sector representative]

7. Independent review and arbitration

Fourteen per cent of respondents said it was important to have an independent process that resulted in a final decision, similar to the arbitration process for ORRS verification (carried out under Section 10 of the Education Act), led by an organisation other than the Ministry of Education.

Other respondents expressed disappointment at the system’s inability to facilitate solutions or decisions that were timely and binding. The lack of clarity about what was reasonable to expect was said to be a major cause of dispute.

“On serious matters, a fast acting, INDEPENDENT arbitrator with the teeth to enforce parties to resolve matters. Quango agencies that advise, suggest [or] prompt boards of trustees are a waste of time and taxpayers’ dollars. As parents of an ORRS student we have had occasions where major issues have taken place - refusal to medicate with insulin in a critical situation. Assault by [a] staff member on our child (this was witnessed). We followed guidelines provided by the board. The board took legal advice and went to the bottom of the ocean (no more communication or investigation). If the board had admitted liability they could be litigated against. There was a total failure by the board in question to resolve this.” [Parent or caregiver]

“An external panel could be contacted to hear and resolve issues. This group would need to be outside the Ministry of Education to be impartial. A panel of several members [from the] Human Rights Commission, Health and Disability Commission and an independent body such as Standards and Monitoring could be utilised.” [Parent or caregiver]

“It’s my firm belief that parents need access to an independent appeals authority in respect of more major decisions such as disciplinary action. This is provided for in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. The existing options in New Zealand (through the Ombudsman and judicial review) are totally inadequate and fall far short of the Government’s obligations under the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act to provide for the right to justice. In my experience the Ombudsman’s office has a very poor grasp of the issues in special education. As well, its process is not conducive to sound decision-making because it involves an exchange of letters and not a hearing, [which] leads to misunderstandings. There are frequently very prolonged delays in obtaining a decision. The Ombudsman can only make recommendations, not binding rulings. Judicial review results in sound decisions but the expense is prohibitive and the court’s jurisdiction is limited to procedural matters rather than substance.” [Parent or caregiver]

Single most important change (Q10)

This section looks at the last topic posed by the Review of Special Education 2010 discussion document preamble to question 10: What is the most important change that would improve outcomes for children and young people with special education needs? It summarises the public responses to the question and outlines the key themes that emerged from the Review of Special Education submission process.

What we asked

Overall

This was the last topic covered in the Review of Special Education 2010 discussion document. It reflected on the Government's vision for special education, ie, that the education system offer children the choice to be included in whatever education setting their family preferred and that the education system provide the opportunity for all children to succeed.

Key question

The discussion document asked:

- What is the most important change that would improve outcomes for children and young people with special education needs? (Q10).

This question received more feedback than any other question (a total of 1,657 responses). The majority of respondents to this question were education sector representatives (832), with 479 responses from special education representatives and 650 from parents. This question attracted 340 responses from non-government or community representatives and 175 responses from health or disability sector representatives. Nineteen students contributed their views. Note, respondents could select to be represented in more than one group.

What you said

Key themes

1. Maintain a range of schooling options
2. Increase funding and services
3. Increase professional development and learning for schools
4. Change attitudes and promote inclusion.

Overall

Respondents contributed a range of 'most important changes'.

Forty per cent talked about the need to retain the range of settings currently available within the school sector, expressing support for special schools as part of the range of options.

Nearly a third said the one thing that needed changing was the level of funding and services available, particularly the funding and services available in regular schools.

Twenty-two per cent said the professional development and learning of teachers and other school-based staff was the top priority.

Fifteen per cent said attitudes towards students with special education needs had to change and wanted inclusion promoted.

1. Maintain a range of schooling options

Nearly 40 per cent of all respondents talked about the need to retain the range of settings currently available within the school sector - a topic raised in response to other questions as well.

Many respondents said retaining special schools was the single most important change, voicing strong support for retaining this option, believing that special schools should always have a place.

Others wanted continued access to satellite classes and units within regular schools. Some wanted their child to be properly supported in their local school or kura and to have access to distance learning and private schools. Others wanted the same level or greater access to special schools, residential special schools and regional health schools.

Some believed the current range of options needed to remain in place until all regular schools were able to guarantee the presence, participation and learning of all students.

Overall, respondents wanted the ability to choose the setting that best suited them and their children. They agreed the schooling system needed to offer a range of options to cater to the range of needs and wants within the special education sector.

"I am writing in regard to the Ministry of Education currently conducting a Review of Special Education. I have a daughter who is five years old. She has severe Autism and currently [attends] a special needs school. My biggest concern with the Review of Special Education is the possibility of closure of her school. For years we have waited patiently for a facility that is able to accommodate our daughter's special needs (there is nothing available to preschoolers). Finally, in February this year, she began attending school. It is a

wonderful school with passionate, dedicated and trained teachers. Now we are faced with the prospect of this being taken away and we are deeply worried. We only learned that the Review [of Special Education] was even happening because the school let us know. The Ministry has not contacted parents directly to inform them so we feel at a disadvantage from the outset. The Ministry has invited submissions from parents on the Review [of Special Education] but I believe they have failed to provide the information necessary to do this within their timeframe of 19 March. The discussion document that our submissions should be based on is 60 pages long and has not been provided in the form of a hard copy. There are four options given for special education in the Review [of Special Education] and one of these options is to close all special needs schools in New Zealand. It sounds outrageous but believe it or not many people are in support of this. If you ask your average person on the street: 'Should a child with a disability be included in mainstream schools?' The answer is inevitably: 'Of course'. That sounds wonderful in an ideal world. But for us and many parents like us our world is less than ideal. I would love for my child to attend a mainstream school but I do not believe this is in her best interest at this stage of her life. I don't believe mainstream schools are equipped to deal with our children. For example, would they erect a six-foot [high] fence around her school as we have had to do at home? Her safety is of primary concern. My child has a mental disability but physically she is very capable and she will run fast. She has no awareness of danger to herself. She is not toilet trained. She will mouth any object in sight. There are many things I could say, but, in essence, until my daughter learns some life skills such as sitting at a desk for five minutes she cannot learn. Her special school provides her with the best opportunity for READINESS to learn. I think people need to be aware that this Review [of Special Education] is happening and even though it sounds politically correct and good to have all children mainstreamed it is not [in] the best interests for ALL children with special needs. The parents must have the right to choose. Autism is a very complex disorder that is on the increase. Special schools have the teachers, the equipment and the facilities to cater for these children. One of my biggest worries is that when I spoke with the early intervention teacher from the Ministry of Education, Special Education last year regarding schooling and attending a special school, she said very quietly: 'We're not supposed to mention special school as an option'. I didn't really think about what she had said until now. What is the Ministry's stance on this? Has the writing been on the wall for some time? Parents of children with special needs are somewhat invisible. We are a minority and we don't want public light. However, our voice must be heard for the sake of our children. We are proud of what our daughter has achieved so far at school and we very much want this to continue." [Parent or caregiver]

"I am a mother of nine-year-old triplets and one of my children has Cerebral Palsy. Our son has been classified as Very High needs under the ORRS scheme. When we moved to Auckland in 2008, our son joined [a] school in one of their satellite classes based at [a] primary school. We chose [the] school because they offer specialised and very focused support for children with cerebral palsy. Also, having satellite classes right in the centre of [the] primary school offers our son the best of both worlds: continuous interaction with mainstream children, yet education and intensive therapy tailored to the

child's own needs. In 2005, when our son was five-year-old and we were still living in Wellington, we enrolled him at the local mainstream school along with his siblings. Even though the school and teachers were most supportive, this was not the right environment for our son. Developmentally he was far behind his peers, unable to speak and understand what was taught in group sessions, unable to keep up with the class timetable and behaviourally it was a challenge having him in class. We recruited a (privately-funded) specialist teacher to work one-on-one with our son and he did make slight progress in terms of word and number recognition. However, what worried us as parents the most was the lack of therapist support in mainstream school. Monthly visits by Ministry of Education, Special Education physiotherapists, etc. are not sufficient for a child with severe cerebral palsy. Our son needs daily exercises and stretches and regular (weekly) input by specialist therapists just to keep his body healthy, let alone make physical gains. [The school in Auckland] has been wonderful for our son and we are delighted with the progress he has made over the past year and a half. [He] has a team of specialist staff who work with him on a very regular basis and have a good understanding of his special needs. They have set up special programmes to enable our son (with the help of teachers' aides) to continue making progress towards the goals we agreed upon during our IEP meetings. Our son has responded really well to the special literacy and numeracy programme set up for him, the speech-language therapist is working on a special programme to resolve communication issues, the school has been very proactive dealing with behaviour issues, mobility issues, physical challenges, self help skills, etc. I have seen our son grow into a much happier and more confident person, capable [of] adjust[ing] to the many changes that every day life brings with it and with a real potential to learn valuable skills that will give him a degree of independence in the future. Our wish is that our son will be able to continue to access the specialist resources and support that [the school] has to offer during intermediate school and possibly even beyond, so that he can fulfill his potential and become the best he can be." [Parent or caregiver]

"I am a former student of [a residential college]. I was there for two years from 2007 to 2008. During my time there I was in a class of eight boys, which helped me in my learning. Over 12-months I stepped up my school work by two-and-a-half years. In the villas the staff helped me gain skills in living with others and cleaning and cooking, which I now enjoy doing at home. The staff are really good to you and helpful. Outside the villa the staff let us have independent skills like learning to catch buses to malls to have a bit of freedom outside the school. When I left [my residential college] I went to a mainstream school, which had 17 kids in my class. It was really hard for me because I just came from a class of eight and I couldn't work because of the distraction. I had a hard year last year and I couldn't cope and got asked to leave. Now I'm looking for a job with no National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) subjects and it's very hard. [Residential schools] should stay open and help boys like me. Thank you." [Former student]

"A recognition that for Deaf and hearing-impaired students, the first hurdle in education is communication and recognition that hearing disabilities do not sit neatly into the existing criteria for special education. For these students the

answer is special services targeted specifically at their needs.” [Special education sector representative]

“[Our school] is a full primary, decile eight multicultural, inner city school. It has 224 students (at the time of writing), 12 teaching staff, two part-time teachers, seven teachers’ aides, two office staff, a cleaner and caretaker. We believe in inclusive education and understand implicitly the legislation to support such education; staff and board of trustees also recognise its tensions, [eg.] 1. Successful mainstream education for special needs students benefits the special needs student while enriching, educating and benefiting all students. 2. For some special needs students, inclusion in a regular classroom is excessively stressful and challenging and other options and support are needed. 3. Special needs students are individuals with specific individual needs and often a higher level of expertise is required in order to meet those needs.” [Education sector representative]

“There is no one simple solution. We feel the following would go a long way to enable schools to cater for [their] students better. Develop units in areas of need, staff them adequately and ensure funding is available to support the students. Fund support staff adequately to cover the needs of students as assessed by the professionals working with them - cover holiday pay, allowances and levies in addition to the 40 weeks of teaching time. Provide sufficient well-trained, professional staff to cater for the needs of schools (psychologists, therapists, support workers etc).” [Education sector representative]

2. Increase funding and services

Nearly a third of respondents said the one thing that needed changing was the level of funding and service available to students with special education needs, particularly in regular schools.

It was the most important change, they said, because it was the thing that would improve outcomes for students with special education needs.

Respondents were urged in the discussion document to consider: ‘How we can do better with what we have, rather than expecting more money’. However, respondents still expressed a general feeling that special education funding was too limited.

They talked about the need for more funding to better meet student’s needs. They also talked about opening up ORRS funding to more students, providing more support to students with mild and moderate needs, giving more support to classroom teachers, increasing teacher’s aide time and providing more sign language services.

A few respondents said reducing the number of agencies and employers involved in special education, the bureaucracy and the fragmentation of the funding system could be ways to save money.

Others suggested redirecting money for school property and transport into special education services. Giving students better access to equipment and technology in place of one-on-one support was suggested as another possible way to save money.

“Allocating funding so that the very neediest students in mainstream settings can be better supported - the students who need someone with them all day for safety reasons. The money currently allocated is not sufficient for this so these children become very expensive for schools and I think that this expense is often behind school’s reluctance to take on these very needy children. Some of the money currently spent on transport could be reallocated perhaps? The Ministry of Education should be helping with transport only to the nearest suitable school (mainstream or special school) and transport costs beyond that should be the responsibility of the parents. Too many children go past several suitable schools.” [Education sector representative]

“Some of the most important changes would be MORE FUNDING. More training for staff. Provide more staff and more services and therapies and better buildings and facilities. Include some funding for students who are not ORRS funded. Needs to be reconsideration of what role ... the Ministry of Education, Special Education would hold, as there needs to be a fallback for parents of mainstreamed students. Maintaining choice for families, both special schools and mainstream. In closing, if the system is not broken why fix it?” [Special education sector representative]

“Adequate and appropriate funding targeted for children in their early years, which in the long-term, would genuinely reduce long-term serious social problems.” [Education sector representative]

“Prioritising funding based on the actual learning needs of students” [Education sector representative]

“Reducing the number of funding pockets. Combining ORRS, ORRS extension, Interim Response Fund etc into one pool of available financial resources ... and reducing the number of providers, eg, disestablish RTLB and put the funding into Ministry of Education, Special Education as a one-stop-shop, which is national with local offices and so ensures consistency and preservation of skill and professional shared knowledge. Remove the transport allowance as it should be ‘the’ parent’s responsibility to get a child to school and put it into doubling the early intervention service, as this would result in children with less significant needs going to school and [in the] long-term less financial cost to the Government in terms of prison costs and later support - as shown in numerous international studies.” [Unknown]

3. Increase professional development and learning for schools

Twenty-two per cent of respondents noted the professional development and learning of teachers and other school-based staff as the top priority for the education system.

Respondents wanted boards, principals, SENCOs, classroom teachers and teachers’ aides to upskill, a strong theme for other questions as well.

Respondents wanted people training to become teachers to learn more about special education as part of their initial teacher training programme and throughout their careers as part of their professional development.

“Classroom teacher education and ownership of students. Not seeing special needs student as [the] responsibility of teacher’s aide. Special needs students should be another member of the class they are in. Specialist teachers walking-the-talk in schools, working with teachers and students all day every day. Whatever changes it has to be at the coal face.” [Education sector representative]

“The Government needs to recognise that providing education and learning for students with special needs can happen in many environments, including full mainstreaming, special needs units with partial and full mainstreaming support, special schools, satellite classes, residential schools. Students with special [education] needs are becoming more common and professional development for all teachers is necessary to keep up with the ongoing demands and learning needs of these students.” [Education sector representative]

“An agency [that] can help parents to show pathways through the special education system. Changes in the high school curriculum for children to be engaged at their own level, ie, students who are working at lower levels to be engaged in a meaningful curriculum that may be life-skills or work-based. Professional development for teachers on adapting curriculum so that students are working at a meaningful level.” [Education sector representative]

“We have listed four changes we believe would improve outcomes. All teachers and teachers’ aides understanding what inclusive education is and having the strategies and support, within their school and from external services, to implement inclusive classroom practices such that children and young people with special needs are able to participate and achieve to their potential in their local mainstream schools. Relevant and effective training opportunities exist for all teachers and teachers’ aides. Specialist services are able to respond to a wide range of needs, eg, don’t focus specialist behaviour services solely on one to two programmes. Find and use local models of effective practice ... which are improving outcomes for children and young people with special needs. If it’s not broken, don’t fix it.” [Education sector representative]

“The employment of well-trained, skilled practitioners, particularly those who have had to pass rigorous training and study in special education to qualify for specialist positions such as: RTLB, resource teachers of vision, teachers of the Deaf, speech-language therapists. Principals need to look at the calibre of the people they employ - better to wait for the right person than to employ the one and only applicant if they are not competent, skilled, knowledgeable and experienced in special education.” [Education sector representative]

“First of all we support the New Zealand philosophy of inclusive education. International statistics clearly show better academic results for children immersed in mainstream education. However, to be successful, mainstream schools need to be fully supported. If that is the case, there is no more need for special schools. For that we need specialist training for teachers and teachers’ aides. Pre-service training and a forum of ongoing professional development. Funding for specialist services spent on therapy not bureaucracy. Hands-on instead of hands-off approach. Creating a centre with specialist resources and information tailor-made for assisting children with special needs. Instilling values of tolerance, empathy and acceptance for children with disabilities within schools across New Zealand.” [Special education sector representative]

4. Change attitudes and promote inclusion

Fifteen per cent of respondents wanted societal attitudes toward children and young people with special education needs to improve. They specifically wanted a change in attitude among schools, services and communities.

It was time, they said, for children with special education needs to be seen as valued members of their communities. It was time to see their strengths, understand their goals and believe in their ability to achieve and contribute. It was time to ensure there were no barriers to the inclusion of all children into the regular education system.

“A change in the way we view and, therefore, respond to disability and difference in our education system and society from a deficit, special education paradigm to a human rights one-of-us, inclusive-based view. This could be supported by the Government making a commitment to inclusive education, including developing an inclusive education policy for New Zealand early childhood, school [and] tertiary sectors. Desisting from using the language of special versus regular in education, with an overemphasis on need to the detriment of learning and participation. Providing whole-school and responsive professional support and guidance to help schools develop and deliver inclusive education. Ensuring that schools are accountable for: being welcoming to and enrolling all students, providing ... inclusive education based on the New Zealand Curriculum and the New Zealand Disability Strategy, [also] for making and maintaining improvements when these have been required.” [Education sector representative]

“The most significant change would be to raise public awareness and acceptance around the area of diversity and special education needs beyond a superficial level. The largest challenge may well be in providing a way for individuals to overcome any fears and prejudice and informing people about the significant difference between equity and equality. We focus on the outcomes being achieved for disabled students in terms of the development of academic potential and functional skills, rather than just support systems. This will help to improve the attitude towards disabled students in some schools and create a better foundation for disabled students to leave school.” [Special education sector representative]

“For special education kids to feel part of the school, to feel school is a happy place, to be able to leave school at 18 and attend further education or a get a job. To know they have a future in society.” [Special education sector representative]

“That the attitude of society as a whole toward people with special needs would change in such a way that people with special needs would be really included in the society. If that would be the case many difficulties people with special needs, their parents, caregivers and teachers now have would not even exist. People in general are not tuned into the needs of people with disabilities, hence, the fact that students with special [education] needs are not included at all at regular schools. They are there, but most of them, especially at intermediate and secondary level, are very, very lonely and not surrounded by their peers. Most schools do not want to force a kind of buddy system on the able students, or simply forget to inform them [of] how to socialise with the special needs students. Just have a look at any intermediate or secondary school and one will find special needs students on their own during break times. Some schools at primary level are doing their best. But, if the students are not informed and urged to socialise with the special needs students, how on earth can one expect society to become not only more disability friendly but an inclusive one to the extent that thinking about other people’s needs becomes natural and a way of living all together. Like having included in the building regulations that there must be access for disabled people too and wide enough doors, in not only public buildings, but also every to-be-built private house! Instead of forcing parents to buy expensive portable ramps (which are not funded by the Government because only for certain things at home and school there is funding. Again an example of no inclusion because the Government thinks that for wheelchair-bound people there is only a world, ie, at home and at school; not in between where one would like to socialise with relatives and friends and do things). Like mainstream science teachers automatically realising to at least ask parents whether it would be possible to take their kid with special needs on a school daytrip to Te Papa or the zoo instead of assuming that he would stay in the special unit! I can go on endlessly. People who are not used to dealing with people with special needs have not been taught to think automatically [of] how to include people with special needs into what ever they are doing or wanting to do. There is no awareness, so how can one expect that the quality of life, including education, of people with special needs can be optimal. No, first one needs to educate the able people how to socialise with people with special needs and to always keep their needs in mind no matter what one does. Where best to start? At all schools! From preschools to universities! So, [make] courses [in] how to include people with special needs in school and every day life compulsory for all school and university teaching staff, from teachers’ aides to principals to lecturers, with the expectation that they will pass that on to all people around them, to students, parents, relatives, everybody!!!!!!!!. Inclusion has been the focus for 10 years since the Special Education 2000 policy was introduced, however, some schools are still resistant to inclusion. Changing attitudes and beliefs around inclusive practice would improve outcomes for students.” [Non-government organisation or community representative]

5. Other key themes

Some respondents believed the following themes and topics were the most important.

Accountability

About six per cent of respondents thought improving accountability was most important. Some noted accountability for funding, while others thought the system needed to be more accountable for the outcomes that resulted from funding.

“Money moved out to schools as long as there are robust management structures in place to ensure that it is used well.” [Unknown]

“More accountability and coordination of staffing and funding to measure where resources are going and what impact that is having.” [Unknown]

“Accountable systems that are regularly monitored to ensure that service is delivered to those who need it. Professional development for specialist personnel. Education for the families. We recommend that Option A - the current system is retained.” [Unknown]

“A rigorous effective and accountable specialist service that is focused on making a difference for students, not on allocating funds.” [Education sector representative]

“Improved teacher training at university and in the workplace. Whilst every disability cannot be covered in training, those which are common and on the increase must be covered, eg, ADHD, Autism, Asperger’s. Funding and assistance systems are faceless - this must change to include face-to-face assessments. Transparency in funding and reporting systems allows parents and schools to see where funding is being spent and if their child is receiving their full entitlement.” [Health or disability sector representative]

“More emphasis needs to be made on a quality system that is measurable and has defined outcomes. Within the review document is a clear directive that no additional funding is available. Therefore, more needs to be done for the same cost. The only way to effect this change is to have a quality culture that expects quality outcomes from established and defined systems. This review excludes behaviour and early intervention, however, it would seem these are interwoven into the entire special education model so it seems short-sighted to not include such vital parts of the programme or worse to review them separate to each other. Within this group of respondents, parents were keen on more accountability from schools. They wanted schools to be accountable for their child’s progress against the national standards and his or her IEP goals. They wanted schools to be more accountable for adhering to Government policy, education law, as well as the Government’s direction or vision for special education. We suggest that, parallel with addressing funding and resourcing problems, you should increase the accountability of schools so that all schools are held to account for the reception that they give to families

who seek to enrol their children with special needs and for the education they provide to these children.” [Unknown]

“That the Minister and the Ministry work together to ensure that what we know to be best practice for education and for preparing children for adulthood, work and grown-up life becomes accepted practice in New Zealand schools. At least that every family who wants an inclusive education for their children is supported actively and the Ministry of Education commits to making sure that this choice is realised. This task would be easier if it was a strong policy and explicit in the [National Education Guidelines] and [National Administration Goals] for all to hold schools to account for their performance in this area as in others. No more students being put into forced segregation because the education authorities will not protect their rights to be included with their siblings and neighbours.” [Unknown]

“IEP is mandated as a measure of special education service and monitored by ERO.” [Special education sector representative]

“Accountability at all levels for how supports are used. Strengthening Ministry of Education policy and direction for RTLB so that it is consistently practiced. Currently RTLB are reviewed nationally with a nationwide follow-up report. Individual cluster reports with specific feedback would provide information to improve the service in a cluster. ERO reports and audits for the Ministry of Education, Special Education.” [Unknown]

“Clear vision of better outcomes for the children and accountability to that vision.” [Unknown]

“Accountability is key to ensuring good decision-making, whatever the context. The worst possible outcome for special needs children is exclusion (or expulsion) from school. At present, the most serious failing of the New Zealand special education system is the very high rate of exclusion of disabled children. There is no adequate recourse for the parents of children in this situation. That being the case, there is no real disincentive for schools to exclude, and no possibility for lessons to be learned as a result of the feedback, which could be provided by an independent review system. The most important change to improve outcomes for children and young people with special education needs is access to an independent review authority [that] would empower them and protect their rights when things go wrong.” [Unknown]

Local provision

Six per cent of respondents talked about the need for local services, contributing a range of ideas about how to provide local services.

Some wanted local management of all funding and services, including paraprofessionals, specialists from special schools, fundholder schools and the Ministry of Education, Special Education, as well as resource teachers and specialist teachers.

To others, local provision was about local teams of specialist teams supporting a cluster of schools, with all other resources managed by schools. Others thought funding for RTLB, specialist teachers and teachers' aides should be managed in local clusters.

Another idea was to leave the funding and management of services and specialists intact but to merge all referral and assessment processes so there were no gaps in support.

Others recommended setting up one national agency supported by a series of local one-stop-shops, or allocating all funding to schools for schools to provide or buy services for themselves or a cluster.

"A system I observed last year in the United Kingdom involved multidisciplinary teams allocated to groups of schools. They would consist of a psychologist, an RTLB equivalent, a nurse and three to four support staff. They would work as a team, planning and assisting in the implementation of student support. The closest concept we have would be a medical practice."
[Special education sector representative]

"The most important change is to develop district network or hub specialist centres, staffed by skilled Ministry of Education, Special Education specialists, teachers and therapists that provide and oversee specialist services for local schools for the delivery of student support. All participants will be responsible and accountable for ensuring that specialist resources are attached to the hub, are accessible and equitable for all, improving both achievement and outcomes. The consortium model we are proposing would provide the best possible solution and would not need any extra investment. What the consortium model might look like?

- *five to eight schools (although this would have to be explored further)*
- *geographically close, urban clusters and rural clusters*
- *might include a range of decile schools*
- *might include primary, secondary, early intervention, childhood education and specialist schools*
- *specialist schools within the consortium would become a hub for specialist teaching, provid[ing] ... professional development to mainstream schools and other stakeholders*
- *pool current professional and paraprofessional expertise across [the] consortium and extend this expertise through the ability to better target funding as a result of less bureaucracy, travel time etc*
- *across school opportunities to develop specialist programmes and services to meet specific needs (ie, five students with similar speech delay have group therapy session rather than five separate sessions. Benefits are they have it more frequently, make better progress and the positives of the social aspects of group work)*
- *lead professional identified for each disabled student (ORRS and non ORRS), could be a teacher, therapist etc*
- *benefits of this system would be available to students on the margins of accessing specialist support*

- *by pooling ORRS .1 and .2s across the consortium you would not have the issue that mainstream schools have now in identifying appropriately trained part-time staff. This would mean a shift of staffing and resources from the Ministry of Education, Special Education into the consortiums. The consortium would be their own fundholder for their group of students. More efficient use, transparency and accountability for SEG. This approach would provide more flexible pathways for movement by students across the schools. A more collaborative approach within the consortium that recognises each schools' expertise to best meet individual student needs rather than competing against each other. A consortium governance group with representation from across the schools and reflecting a range of expertise would be responsible for allocating the funding. The consortium would be able to respond and meet the specific demands of their own community rather than meet[ing] national directives." [Education sector representative]*

"Greater availability of specialist teachers for moderate and High-level needs students who are mainstreamed. Specialist teachers grouped together and working with a cluster of schools. Teachers' aides who are accountable to specialist teachers. Teachers' aides provided with professional development suited to the specific students they work with." [Special education sector representative]

"In order to ensure that every student with special education needs has his [or] her right to an appropriate education upheld, we offer the following model of service delivery. This model builds on the proven model of the attached unit within mainstream school settings as a model of best practice, which is supported historically by student and parent satisfaction. We recognise the uniqueness of our campus, which is dedicated to providing for the needs of students who are challenged physically, intellectually, socially and emotionally and would reiterate that this means we can offer a coordinated and relatively stable education to these students. We believe it is a model that could be employed in other areas. While our primary strength (and the rationale for our inception, including the development of our facilities) lies in the area of delivering services to students with physical disabilities, our expertise over the three schools in our campus in other areas is extensive. Our concern around the loss of levels of expertise that units currently provide is considerable. Attached units in mainstream schools offer the closest approximation to an inclusive education for students who need significant support in order to access education. The cluster approach to special education delivery we are proposing is based specifically on a geographic area cluster and would utilise the strengths held in centres like ours to support a greater number of students (in a wider range of settings) in a more fiscally prudent way. This could also strengthen the local community. Within the cluster there would be a number of attached units servicing ORRS-funded students. These units could act as centres of support for schools that do not have many ORRS-funded students and have, under current practices, had limited and intermittent access to services from other service providers. The schools within the cluster would be able to

access the expertise, services and facilities housed at the attached units. However, the funding stream for these centres would have to be strengthened and stabilised, much in line with current funding levels for special schools. This could come from a downsizing and changing focus for Ministry of Education, Special Education. They could provide advice, professional development and support for the cluster schools. The cluster would employ its own staff rather than contracting, thereby reducing costs. Teaching and therapy staff could become resource staff for schools within the cluster. There would be a flow to and from the attached units from schools in the cluster. The most important change that would improve outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs in terms of physical disability would be for more equitable funding for these students. These students need physiotherapy, plus occupational therapy plus speech-language therapy [, which all] need to be resourced at a higher rate. Special Education 2000 always recognised that these students fell into the overs category of 'overs and unders'. In an aggregated funding system they should not be dependent upon taking from other students to make ends meet, nor should they be deprived of funding because of insufficient financial resource. The Wylie Report recognised this and addressed the issue in a temporary manner. Current funding is addressing the issue as if it didn't exist, but the reality remains that these students, who could contribute to society in a very real way and have done so in the past, are now being denied the therapy support that will prolong their lives and enable them to contribute to society in a meaningful way. They need sufficient resourcing to provide for their therapies to meet their needs. The administration of the cluster would ideally be at the local level (cluster members) [through the] management team or committee."
[Education sector representative]

Early intervention

Nearly four per cent of respondents talked about the importance of having services and support accessible to families as early as possible. Some families felt services and support were needed at the birth of their child. Others felt they were needed to help students achieve their developmental goals.

Respondents said intervening early had the advantage of positively assisting a child's development and reducing the possibility of problems occurring in the future. In that way, early intervention was considered to be both cost effective and supportive.

"This review provides a welcomed opportunity to place people with a disability within the context of all Government policies. The well-being of disabled people includes social, health, economic and the environment in which they live; these outcomes should be enmeshed into all Government policies. Whilst responses are made to some of the questions provided, the issues are not solely about educational outcomes. They start with how the news is broken to parents of disabled babies. This sets the tone and context for the future. Much has been written about the benefits accruing from early counselling, therefore, it is axiomatic that this [is] where investment should commence. Unless services are in place from birth that meet the needs of

parents, families and the disabled person, there is a real danger that they will become dislocated from society. They become forced by the way services are organised, to enter sidings. For example, where are children with a disability when it comes to early childhood education, they are rarely seen in such facilities. The early years of all children's lives sets the tone for much of their futures. The way services are provided contributes to shaping the reactions to disability from parents, families and society. " [Unknown]

"Focus on what happens BEFORE children get to school - ensure that special needs are identified early and that early intervention is put into place immediately. At present there are long waiting lists for early intervention and some children are coming to us at a later than desirable stage. Costs of special education in the school sector can be lowered when intervention occurs early and is in place for ALL children, not just those with the highest needs. Some of those with moderate needs may not need help at all at school, but only if we are able to intervene early. Schools where children are enrolled should visit the early intervention centre to become familiar with the child's needs, the family and so on to ensure a more successful transition and transmission of information. " [Education and health and disability sector representative]

"Quickly and readily available early intervention. Enough education support worker hours available to ensure that all children with special needs can participate fully in early childhood education [services]. All child development researchers agree that early intervention is vital for the best outcome for children with special needs. Yet there is only enough support for the 'worst one per cent' (I am quoting a Ministry of Education, Special Education early intervention teacher here). I wholeheartedly support the policy of inclusion BUT when children with special needs are not adequately supported with support worker hours in the classroom, this puts undue pressure on teachers and children. " [Education sector representative]

"Greater investment in early intervention services that are providing high-quality services to children in the preschool years. Emphasis on 'early, early, early' and the ability for these services to carry out a supported and well-coordinated transition into early childhood education services and school. " [Education and health and disability sector representative]

"I would like to see a greater recognition in terms of training, funding and prioritisation for early intervention services and programmes. I work as a psychologist with under 5s. The children I see are on a significantly negative pathway towards severe behaviour problems - almost always when I work with the parents this pathway can be changed as they develop relationships, boundary setting and problem solving skills, etc. It looks moderate level where these children are going, but they are leading towards severe behaviour outcomes. " [Education and health and disability sector representative]

Relationships and collaboration with families

Three-and-a-half per cent of respondents emphasised the importance of building strong relationships and collaborating with a student's family. Respondents said

partnering with the people closest to a student, ie, his or her family and listening to their ideas and experience would lead to improved outcomes.

“That people who work with special needs children, may they be teachers, parents, therapists, specialists, instructors, doctors etc, must learn to know the child’s language and culture, his family, as well as an in-depth understanding of the nature of the child’s special needs and how to respond effectively to him or her.” [Unknown]

“Listen to their families. All the policies and documents in place promote partnership. In practice this is determined by professionals (including myself) working with the families. How much we listen and value families and their knowledge is reflected in how we succeed or fail in teaching all students to value diversity and take responsibility for each other. In 1997 the Family Advocacy Charitable Trust (FACT) commissioned Brown and Browning to undertake a study [of] students with special needs - the case for advocacy (1998) on the need for advocacy in the Auckland region. Their findings indicated that parents needed support in the early years especially and during transition times, regardless of whether their child was in a mainstream setting or in a segregated one. Parents wanted information in a timely fashion and in a face-to-face setting. It is interesting that only two questions specifically mention families. Families are deeply affected by special education policies. In all the parent and community meetings that [this organisation] has attended, the anguish of the parents has been palpable. It is parents who are required by the Act to take a Section 10 appeal against the Government. It is parents who need to front up to schools for IEPs or specialist appointments and who also have to learn how to effectively advocate on behalf of their disabled family member. And it is parents who ultimately make the decision as to where to send their children for schooling. None of these decisions and educational involvements is easy, yet there is negligible support for parents. Parents do not have an advocacy service as-of-right. They often discover help by accident or word-of-mouth.” [Unknown]

“Listen to their families. All the policies and documents in place promote partnership. In practice this is determined by professionals (including myself) working with the families. How much we listen and value families and their knowledge is reflected in how we succeed or fail in teaching all students to value diversity and take responsibility for each other.” [Unknown]

Interagency collaboration

Around two-and-a-half per cent of respondents highlighted interagency collaboration as a key theme. Respondents said improved interagency collaboration had the potential to streamline the system, improve the quality of services and ensure the system worked better for families.

“A Strengthening Families type meeting would establish holistic family needs and difficulties, which impacts on children with special needs. There needs to be a family focus, not an individual focus, as this is not how the world works.” [Unknown]

“Multi-agency teams that are more able to deal with the needs that schools have within them. A common assessment referral form that will streamline the way agencies share and work together and reduce the amount of form filling that goes on within special education. Families often have to find their way among a plethora of professionals and funding providers. Outcomes would be improved if health, education and funding could be timely in their response and coordinated in their approach. Education facilities would have less apprehension about accepting the child with complex needs if the support system was transparent and easily accessed.” [Unknown]

“Having an umbrella organisation - social, education, and health services - providing a collaborative, seamless approach.” [Education sector representative]

“Less fragmentation of service delivery. Better collaboration between health and education. Reduce duplication (health and education-based therapists providing services to the same student). Family-centred practice. Better provision for students with moderate needs that are ongoing.” [Health or disability sector representative]

Appendices

Notes on the summary document

Structure

The structure of the summary document reflects the key themes and questions featured in the *Review of Special Education, 2010 - Discussion Document*. Each section starts by revisiting a discussion document question, before going on to summarise the key themes that emerged from the public responses and to feature a representative sample of excerpts of the public responses themselves.

Language and terms

Several terms used throughout the summary have been explained in the glossary. For example, 'respondent' refers to a single response but may represent the ideas of an individual or group, depending on the approach respondents took to developing their submission. The glossary provides a list of well-used, technical terms used throughout the summary document (and within the special education sector) such as 'ORRS' - the Government initiative called the Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Schemes.

Editing and presentation approach

Review of Special Education, 2010 - Public Response Summary (including all public submission excerpts) has been edited according to Ministry of Education, Special Education style, removing all personal and identifying information.

Excerpts from public responses were selected to represent the range of views collected throughout the Review of Special Education and to highlight the main themes raised by respondents. They were also selected to avoid emphasising one perspective over another and to reflect the differing ideas related to a single theme.

Public responses appear as excerpts only, yet - read together - aim to provide a snapshot of some of the pressing issues and themes within special education in New Zealand at a specific point in time. They also aim to convey something of the lives affected by special education policy, funding and services, expressed through personal opinion and experience. Finally, excerpts of public responses have been used to illustrate much of the good practice occurring across the sector.

Respondent information

The Ministry provided an open invitation to the public to provide feedback on the Review of Special Education discussion document (ie, it was a not compulsory exercise) and, as such, has defined respondents as a self-selected group with sufficient interest in special education to take the time to respond.

Overall, however, from the demographic data collected, respondents were found to be broadly representative of the New Zealand school sector (albeit with a low level of

student representation), with many respondents choosing to identify with one or more of the following groups in their public submission.

- Parent or caregiver
- Student
- Health or disability sector
- Community or non-government sector
- Education sector
- Special education sector.

Respondents who chose not to identify with one or more of the groups above and whose submission excerpts appear in the summary document are noted as 'unknown'.

Table A: Respondent demographics per question

Representative group	Q1a	Q1b	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5a	Q5b	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
Parents or caregivers	457	402	406	376	388	345	369	385	367	391	374	650
Students	13	10	11	6	7	6	6	8	10	11	10	19
Education sector	798	733	747	682	704	646	693	696	644	705	632	832
Special education sector	459	422	442	396	408	385	405	403	370	418	366	479
Health or disability sector	159	144	152	147	146	141	143	149	142	148	136	175
Community or non-government agency	216	199	206	174	199	184	192	196	185	192	180	340
Parent or caregivers <i>and</i> education sector	97	91	89	83	86	72	83	84	82	85	78	98
Parent or caregiver <i>and</i> special education sector	33	33	32	28	30	27	28	30	28	32	30	35
Parent or caregiver <i>and</i> health or disability sector	58	53	52	56	54	49	51	54	53	56	54	60
Parent or caregiver <i>and</i> community or non-government agency	62	32	33	35	32	30	33	33	33	32	32	139

Note, respondents could select to be represented in more than one group.

Respondent feedback

Public responses were received in a range of formats, eg, in writing, by email, through the Ministry's website and on CD-ROM.

Respondents contributed a range of perspectives and used a variety of approaches when organising and presenting their feedback.

Most answered discussion document questions directly, while others contributed more general ideas. Many drew on personal experience to make a point. Respondents referred to research, legislation, legal principles and other evidence to build their case for change.

Feedback ranged from a single comment by an individual (to a specific question) to the shared ideas and recommendations made by groups. Some respondents contributed as both group members and individuals.

In some cases, respondents specified the number of people involved in a submission, eg, six members of staff and 12 parents of a particular school. However, more commonly the number of people who contributed to a response was not specified.

The number of responses to each question varied greatly, with question 10 receiving the most response. The introductions to each section identify how many respondents contributed feedback to each question and the trends and issues most important to respondents.

Method of analysis

A five-person team within the Ministry of Education, Special Education's Operational Policy Team at national office had overall responsibility for analysing and summarising the public responses, with support from the Ministry's Research Division and an external quality control advisor.

In summarising the feedback, the Ministry of Education, Special Education analysis team sought to identify the significant trends and issues within the feedback and to understand the nature and range of perspectives on the discussion document questions.

Their approach aimed to follow the direction set by the discussion document's broad, open-ended questions, ie, 'What is needed ...?', 'How could ...?' and 'What arrangements should we have ...?'.

While the team did not seek to present the exact number of people in favour or in opposition to a particular issue when drafting this summary, the team did aim to determine and present the overall balance of opinion related to a specific theme or idea.

They did this by expressing the number of responses in favour or in support of an idea as a percentage of the total number of responses to a question. Typically, respondents commented on more than one question theme.

As such, this document is not intended to be an all-encompassing discussion of all the points made. Rather it has been structured to provide insight into the wide range of issues of most importance to discussion-document respondents.

It presents the issues that people considered important by way of a representative selection of submission excerpts and personal stories. The wealth of detailed information that sits behind the excerpts, including the relative levels of support for a particular idea, has been used by the Ministry to develop special education policy and programmes.

For example, all responses about Individual Education Plans (IEPs) have already been used by the Ministry group revising IEPs. All responses about Deaf education have been incorporated into the Ministry's work on improving specialist services for Deaf and hearing-impaired children and young people.

Respondents were asked to specify if they were parents or caregivers, students, education or special education sector representatives or representatives from the health, disability, community and non-government sectors.

Responses were received from individuals, groups and organisations and there was no requirement for respondents to identify themselves or the number of people they represented.

As such, responses (ie, individual and group responses) were given the same level of consideration (or weighting), with each response considered against key themes.

More information

To find out more about the Review of Special Education and for background documents, as well as the latest announcements, visit the Ministry's website. Go to: www.minedu.govt.nz/theministry/consultation/reviewofspecialeducation.aspx

Review overview

Principles

The Review of Special Education was guided by the following principles.

- Every child and young person can reach their potential.
- Education must be accessible and available to every child and young person.
- Access to additional resources and services for students with special education needs should be fair and consistent.
- Education must provide value for money and deliver the best outcomes for every child and young person.
- Every child and young person has the right to expect high-quality education and professional services.
- Families and whānau should have choices and be actively involved in decisions that take into account their child's best interests and cultural context.
- All involved have a shared responsibility to work effectively and collaboratively to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people with special education needs.
- There would be no new money in special education.

Information gathering

The Review of Special Education involved considering information about special education from a range of sources and making a set of recommendations for Cabinet.

Recommendations to Cabinet were based on public feedback presented in this summary, documents such as the Office of the Auditor General's performance audit,¹ ERO reports, a New Zealand Institute of Economic Research report, sector and reference group meetings and Ministry of Education policy advice.

¹ Office of the Auditor General. *Ministry of Education: Managing Support for Students with High Special Educational Needs*. (2009). <http://www.oag.govt.nz/2009/special-education/>

The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*² and the *New Zealand Disability Strategy*³ set the high-level framework for the Review of Special Education.

Discussion document feedback process

The public had until 19 March 2010 to provide the Ministry with feedback on the *Review of Special Education, 2010 - Discussion Document*.

The discussion document asked the public to consider a series of questions grouped into the following key themes:

- Schooling (Q1a, Q1b)
- Transitions and agencies working together (Q2, Q3)
- Funding and resource use (Q4, Q5a, Q5b)
- High-quality services and being accountable (Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9)
- Single most important change (Q10).

The public were invited to provide feedback through:

- a Ministerial letter to all school boards of trustees and principals, with a specific request to disseminate the discussion document among staff, students and parents
- Government agency briefings
- letters to national organisations
- national meetings in Wellington
- other forums such as a rural women’s meeting and CCS Disability Action meetings for Māori and young people
- press release and Ministerial speeches
- the Ministry’s website.

Oral presentations

Some members of the public presented the key points of their submissions at meetings in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch in March and April, as the discussion document submission process concluded. The oral presentations were attended by the Associate Minister of Education, Heather Roy, public service officials and other members of the public.

Presenters included:

- special education sector group representatives
- students
- parents or caregivers
- community or non-government organisation representatives
- education and health group representatives.

Table B: Oral presentation schedule

Date	Location	Venue	Minister or representative
22 March	Wellington	Brentwood Hotel	Associate Minister, Heather Roy

² <http://www.odi.govt.nz/what-we-do/un-convention/index.html>

³ <http://www.odi.govt.nz/nzds/index.html>

12 April	Christchurch	Copthorne Central Hotel	Associate Minister, Heather Roy
13 April	Christchurch	Copthorne Central Hotel	Nicky Wagner (National List MP)
16 April	Auckland	Jet Park Hotel, Mangere	Associate Minister, Heather Roy
16 April	Auckland	The Spencer on Byron Hotel, Takapuna	Associate Minister, Heather Roy
19 April	Auckland	Holiday Inn, Mangere	Dr Jackie Blue, (National List MP)

Number of presenters

- Auckland: 54
- Wellington: 24
- Christchurch: 31

Presenters (by type)

- Students: 1
- Parents or caregivers: 29
- Community or non-government organisation representatives: 26
- Education sector representatives: 50
- Health sector representatives: 3
- Total number of presenters: 109.

Table C: Oral presenters by name, sector group, location and date

Name	Sector groups	Location	Date
	Student	Wellington	22 March
	Student	Christchurch	12 April
	Family and siblings	Auckland	16 April
Simon Buckland	Parent/caregiver	Wellington	22 March
Janet Dixon	Parent/caregiver	Wellington	22 March
Mary Trounson	Parent/caregiver	Wellington	22 March
	Parent/caregiver	Wellington	22 March
	Parent/caregiver	Wellington	22 March
Stuart McLaren	Parent/caregiver	Christchurch	12 April
	Parent/caregiver	Christchurch	12 April
Don Murray	Grandparent/caregiver	Christchurch	12 April
Emma Goodall	Parent/caregiver	Christchurch	13 April
Glenn Wilkinson	Parent/caregiver	Christchurch	13 April
	Parent/caregiver	Christchurch	13 April
	Parent/caregiver	Christchurch	13 April
	Parent/caregiver	Christchurch	13 April
Gerald Williams	Parent/caregiver	Auckland	16 April
Mary Henderson	Parent/caregiver	Auckland	16 April
	Parent/caregiver	Auckland	16 April
	Parent/caregiver	Auckland	16 April
	Parent/caregiver	Auckland	16 April

	Parent/caregiver	Auckland	16 April
	Parent/caregiver	Auckland	16 April
Jennifer Pearson	Parent/caregiver	Auckland	19 April
	Grandparent/caregiver	Auckland	19 April
	Parent/caregiver	Auckland	19 April
	Parent/caregiver	Auckland	19 April
	Parent/caregiver	Auckland	19 April
	Parent/caregiver	Auckland	19 April
	Parent/caregiver	Auckland	19 April
Oliver Ferguson	Advocate, New Zealand Sign Language	Wellington	22 March
Ally Atwell	CEO and Founder, Voice Through Your Hands	Wellington	22 March
Frances E. Steinberg	Director, Solutions Un-Limited	Wellington	22 March
Daphne Rickson	President, Music Therapy New Zealand	Wellington	22 March
Trish Grant	Director, Advocacy IHC	Wellington	22 March
Noeline Holt	Executive Officer, Rural Women New Zealand	Wellington	22 March
Ian Armstrong	Inclusive Education Action Group	Wellington	22 March
Paul Manning	Parents of Visually Impaired Children	Wellington	22 March
Wendi Wick	National Policy Researcher, Disabled Persons' Assembly	Wellington	22 March
Chris Hollis	Chairperson, Fragile X Trust New Zealand	Christchurch	12 April
Commissioner Robyn Hunt	Commissioner, Human Rights Commission	Christchurch	12 April
Matt Frost	Policy and Information Researcher, CCS Disability Action	Christchurch	12 April
Coen Lammers	President, Canterbury Down's Syndrome Association	Christchurch	13 April
Rachel Nobel	Chief Executive, Deaf Association of New Zealand (Inc)	Auckland	16 April
Alison Molloy	Chief Executive, Autism New Zealand Inc	Auckland	16 April
Harvey Brunt	General Manager, Cerebral Palsy Society	Auckland	16 April
Graham McKinstry	Lawyer, Inclusive Practice Legislation and Policy	Auckland	16 April
Rodney Barber	President, SPELD (Specific Learning Disabilities New Zealand)	Auckland	16 April
John Hancock	Senior Solicitor, Youth Law	Auckland	16 April

Rose Wilkinson	Executive Officer, Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand	Auckland	16 April
Jane Wells	Principal, Blind Low Vision Education Network New Zealand (BLENNZ)	Auckland	16 April
Louise Carroll	General Manager, National Foundation for the Deaf Inc	Auckland	19 April
Dr Huhana Hickey	Solicitor, Auckland Disability Law, Mangere community Law Centre	Auckland	19 April
Maree Kirk	Doctoral Student, Bay of Plenty Down's Syndrome Association Inc	Auckland	19 April
Margi Leech	Education Officer, Auckland Down's Syndrome Association Inc	Auckland	19 April
Anne Bailey	Director, Raukauri Music Therapy Centre	Auckland	19 April
John Taylor-Smith	Principal, Miramar Central School	Wellington	22 March
Kerry Budge	Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO), Nayland College	Wellington	22 March
Mandy Serci	SENCO Francis de Sale School	Wellington	22 March
Cathy Wylie	Chief Researcher NZCER	Wellington	22 March
Sandra Arathimos	Chair, Hohepa School Parents' Advisory Group	Wellington	22 March
Julie Hennessy	Tertiary Vocational Programme (WELTEC)	Wellington	22 March
Wayne Facer	Principal, Oceanview School	Wellington	22 March
Jenny Tebbutt	Teacher, SPELD	Wellington	22 March
David McKee	Professor, Deaf Studies, University of Victoria	Wellington	22 March
Kate Gainsford	President, New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association	Wellington	22 March
Barbara Perry	Principal, Our Lady of Victories School	Christchurch	12 April
Missy Morton	Principal Lecturer, School of Educational Studies and Human Development, University of Canterbury	Christchurch	12 April
Erin Cairns	President, Special Educational Principals' Association of New Zealand	Christchurch	12 April
Polly Thomas	Teacher, SHINE team, working with ORRS students	Christchurch	12 April
Gail Gillon	Dean of Education, College of Education, University of	Christchurch	12 April

	Canterbury		
Dr Susan Foster-Cohen	Director, Champion Centre	Christchurch	12 April
David Ching	President, New Zealand Foundation for Conductive Education	Christchurch	12 April
Barry Newcombe	Principal, Van Asch Deaf Education Centre	Christchurch	13 April
Christopher Parsons	Principal, Southern Regional Health School	Christchurch	13 April
Philip J. Harding	Principal, Paparoa Street School	Christchurch	13 April
Garry Hornby	Professor, School of Science and Physical Education, College of Education, University of Canterbury	Christchurch	13 April
Toni Jones	Head of Learning Support, Christchurch Girls High School	Christchurch	13 April
Sue and Kevin	Transition Workers with School Leavers	Christchurch	13 April
Meegan Fraser	Teacher	Christchurch	13 April
Kevin McSweeney	Principal, Blue Mountain College	Christchurch	13 April
David Mitchell	Adjunct Professor, Health Sciences Centre, College of Education, University of Canterbury	Christchurch	13 April
Rod Wills	Senior Lecturer, Parent and Family Resource Centre, University of Auckland	Auckland	16 April
David Foster	Principal, Kelston Deaf Education Centre (KDEC)	Auckland	16 April
Leisa Munro	Deputy Principal, Lynfield College and Mt Roskill Cluster Representative	Auckland	16 April
Karen Whibley	New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI)	Auckland	16 April
Mary Wilson	Principal, Baverstock School	Auckland	16 April
Barrie Wickens	Principal, Kaka Street Special School Board of Trustees and Parents	Auckland	16 April
Paul Drummond	New Zealand Principals' Federation	Auckland	16 April
James Le Marquand	Lead Contact, Auckland Special Schools Principals' Association	Auckland	16 April
Paul Deverell	Chairperson, Special Schools Parents' Association	Auckland	16 April
Faye Crowskey	Board Representative, Wilson School	Auckland	16 April
Jacqui Patuawa	Former Chair, Salisbury School	Auckland	16 April

	Board and Parent		
Judith Nel	Principal, Parkside School	Auckland	16 April
Louise Sorensen	Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) and Education Psychologist, Edendale School	Auckland	19 April
Deirdre Alderson	Principal, Willowbank School	Auckland	19 April
Sue Harlock	Head of Department, Student Support, Orewa School	Auckland	19 April
Arthur Rendle	Chair, Board of Trustees, Sommerville Special School	Auckland	19 April
Meredydd Barr	Special Needs Teacher	Auckland	19 April
Lesley Tait	Principal, Redbeach School, Hibiscus Coast Principals' Association Cluster	Auckland	19 April
Margie Hatrick-Smith	Occupational Therapist, Selwyn College	Auckland	19 April
Simon Lamb	Principal, Takapuna Grammar School	Auckland	19 April
Kay Hey	Our Lady of the Sea School	Auckland	19 April
Arnie Harrison	RTLB East Papakura RTLB cluster, Mansell Senior School	Auckland	19 April
Janice Whitaker-Hall	Manager, McLean Centre, Mt Roskill Grammar School	Auckland	19 April
Paula West	Team Leader, McLean Centre, Mt Roskill Grammar School	Auckland	19 April
Bill Watkins	Clinical Head, Child and Family at Princess Margaret Hospital	Christchurch	12 April
Tessa Robin	Māori Health Provider	Christchurch	13 April
Penny Jorgensen	CEO, Allergy New Zealand	Auckland	19 April

Table D: Number of oral presenters by category

<i>Location</i>	<i>Number of requests</i>	<i>Number selected</i>	<i>Number unable to attend or who withdrew</i>	<i>Number not selected or offered an alternative meeting etc</i>
Auckland	127	54	9	64 (three were offered alternative meetings, one was represented by another presenter, three were special education staff and were unable to attend).
Wellington	33	27 (24 in Wellington and three in Christchurch).	4	2 (one of the two was represented by another presenter).
Christchurch	43	28	6	9 (seven were not selected, one was offered an alternative meeting, one was represented by another

				presenter).
	Total: 203	Total: 109	Total: 19	Total: 75 (eight were represented by other presentations, four were offered alternative meetings).

Table E: Presenters who met the Minister on a date outside of the oral presentation dates

Sector Group	Presenter/s	Who/location	Date
New Zealand Council of Educational Research (NZCER), Chief Researcher	Cathy Wylie	To Minister's Advisory Panel, Wellington	30 April
Auckland Primary Principals' Association (APPA)	Iain Taylor	To Minister, Auckland	11 May
	Kathy Dooley	To Minister, Auckland	11 May
	Owen Alexander	To Minister, Auckland	11 May
	Linda Munkowiz	To Minister, Auckland	11 May
Auckland Secondary School Principals' Association (ASSPA)	Kate Shevland	To Minister, Auckland	11 May
	Deirdre Shea	To Minister, Auckland	11 May
	John Heyes	To Minister, Auckland	11 May
	Stephen Bovaird	To Minister, Auckland	11 May

Table F: Other meeting held

Group	Location	Date
Maungakiekie Electorate	Public meeting with Minister	3 May

Glossary

Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC)	Government agency that aims to prevent injuries and that provides assistance to people who are injured.
Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD or AD/HD or ADD)	Neurobehavioral, developmental disorder.
An Evaluation of the Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Schemes, 2005	Report by the Education Review Office (ERO).
Apraxia	Motor-planning disorder.
Assistive technology (also called assistive equipment)	Technology and equipment such as assistive, adaptive and rehabilitative devices for people with special education needs.
Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)	Range (or spectrum) of psychological conditions characterised by problems with social interaction and communication, as well as severely restricted interests and highly repetitive behaviour.
B4 School	Ministry of Health programme offering a free health and development check for four year olds.
Behaviour Initiative	Ministry of Education initiative involving specialists who work with children and young people with severe and challenging behaviour needs.
Better Information to Address Barriers to Learning	Ministry of Education information initiative.
Board of trustees	People elected by the community to govern a school.
Cerebral Palsy	Motor condition disorder.
Choice	The choice involved selecting the education setting that best suits a child with special education needs, ie, his or her local school or special school.
Clusters	Group of schools that have joined together to provide services to students with special education needs. Comprises a lead and fundholder school.
Communication Initiative	Ministry of Education initiative, where speech-language therapists work with students with severe communication needs.
Down's syndrome	Chromosomal disorder.
Dyslexia	Learning disability that impairs reading.
Early childhood education (ECE) service	Educational setting for children prior to primary school.
Early intervention	Specialists and support for children with moderate and severe special education needs from birth through to enrolment in school.
Ecological assessment	Assessment that includes a study of the student's physical environment and their interactions with the people in close contact with them.
Education Act (1989)	Key legislation governing the education sector.
Education Review Office (ERO)	Government agency responsible for looking at and reporting on public schools.
ENROL	Online, central register of student enrolments.
Extending High Standards Across Schools	Education programme that finished in 2009.
Fundholders	Organisation holding the funds provided by Government on behalf of individual students, eg, the Ministry of Education, Special

	Education and accredited fundholder schools.
Gateway	Programme offering work-based learning opportunities to students. Administered by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC).
Guidelines for Fundholder Accreditation and Standards of Practice, 2000	Document published by the Ministry of Education and provided to fundholders seeking accreditation. It outlines expected standards of practice.
Human Rights Act, 1993	Legislation governing human rights.
Inclusion	A principle, an attitude and a set of processes which affirm the right of every student to learn in accordance with the principles and values of the National Education Goals and The New Zealand Curriculum Framework.
Incredible Years	A series of programmes for teachers and parents that are intended to reduce challenging behaviours in children and to increase their social and self-control skills.
Māori-medium setting	Kura kaupapa Māori, kura a iwi and kōhanga reo.
Ministry of Education: Managing Support for Students with High Special Education Needs, 2009	Report on special education by the Office of the Auditor General.
Ministry of Education, Special Education	Group within the Ministry of Education responsible for special education.
Ministry of Health (MOH)	Government agency responsible for the health sector and some disability support services.
Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs	Government agency responsible for the policy and initiatives relating to Pacific Island people.
Ministry of Social Development (MSD)	Government agency responsible for a range of services, including some disability services. Includes the Office of Disability Issues and Work and Income.
Moderate needs or moderate special education needs	Policy term describing the level (ie, moderate) of special education support and services a student might need.
National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA)	New Zealand's main national qualification for secondary school students and part of the National Qualifications Framework.
National Standards	Standards that clear expectations that students need to meet in reading, writing and mathematics in the first eight years at school.
Needs Assessment Service Coordination Association (NASC)	The organisation the Ministry of Health Disability Services contracts to work with people with a lifelong impairment to determine their eligibility and need for Ministry of Health-funded disability support services.
New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa	Documents that set the direction for student learning and provide guidance for schools to design and review the curriculum.
New Zealand Disability Strategy, 2001	Long-term plan for changing New Zealand from a disabling to an inclusive society.
New Zealand Institute of Economic Research (NZIER)	Independent economic consulting and forecasting organisation. Author of Special Education Resourcing Framework, 2009.
New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA)	Government agency that provides national and international leadership in assessment and qualifications.
Office of the Auditor-General	Office responsible for providing parliament with independent assurance that public sector organisations are operating and accounting for their performance, in keeping with parliament's intentions. Author of Ministry of Education: Managing Support for

	Students with High Special Education Needs.
Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Schemes (ORRS)	Ministry of Education schemes that provide resources for a very small group of school students throughout New Zealand who have the highest need for special education support and services.
ORRS teacher time allocation, also referred to as 0.1 and 0.2 teacher time	Extra teaching time for students who are verified to receive support from ORRS.
Paraprofessional	Employed by schools to work with children with special education needs (and their teachers) to help children learn, carry out personal care needs and remain safe. Also called teacher's aide or kaiawhina.
Post-school settings	Refers to life after school, ie, tertiary education and employment.
Private providers	Education providers that are not schools or the Ministry of Education.
Regular school	Schools that are not special schools.
Regional Health School	Schools that provide a teaching service for students with high health needs.
Residential special school	Special schools that provide housing (ie, a residence) to their students.
Resource centre	Special schools that may not enrol students but that employ staff to travel schools and work with their students.
Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour: An Evaluation of Cluster Management, 2009	Report on the Ministry of Education RTLB service by the Education Review Office.
Satellite class	Regular school classes where students enrolled in a special school are taught.
SE 2000	Policy known as Special Education 2000 introduced in 1996, which aimed to 'achieve, over the next decade, a world class inclusive education system that provides learning opportunities of equal quality to all students.'
Section 8(1) of the Education Act, 1989	Legislation that states that people who have special educational needs (whether because of disability or otherwise) have the same rights to enrol and receive education at state schools as people who do not.
Section 9 of the Education Act, 1989	Legislation that relates to enrolment in special schools and special education services.
Section 10 of the Education Act, 1989	Legislation that relates to parent access to a formal arbitration process.
Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC)	Government agency to increase sporting activity of New Zealanders.
Special Education Discretionary Allowance (SEDA)	Fund provided to schools for students with special education needs. Replaced by SE 2000 funding in 2000.
Special Education Grant (SEG)	Grant paid to every school to assist children with moderate special education needs.
Special education needs	Term used in education to describe a child's behavioural, sensory, cognitive and physical needs.
Specialist Service Standards, 2006	Standards for the provision of specialist services in special education.
Special school	Schools providing services, support and education to children and young people with special education needs.
Special unit	Units in a regular school, providing services and support to

	students with special education needs.
Secondary Tertiary Alignment Resource (STAR)	Additional funding for secondary schools for courses that provide greater opportunities for senior students.
Strengthening Families	A community-based initiative that helps families, whānau get access to the services they need.
Supplementary Learning Support programme (SLS)	Programme that provides 1,500 students with additional teaching time.
Tamariki	Children.
Transition	Process of moving from one education setting or service to another, ie, from early childhood education to school and school to employment.
United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	International convention adopted by New Zealand in 2008 to promote access, inclusion, empowerment, equality and the right to education.
Value for money	Term used by Government agencies to describe the efficient, cost effective provision of public services.
Verification	Process run by the Ministry of Education to determine a child's eligibility for the ORRS.
Whānau	Family.
Whānau Ora	Programme that provides practical, community-based support to whānau so they can be self-managing and determine their own economic, cultural and social development.
Whole-of-school programmes	Education programmes implemented across an entire school.