Education Review Office
Te Tari Arotake Matauranga

Inclusive practices for students with special needs in schools

March 2015

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Foreword

Inclusive education is not just about getting the child or young person into the classroom, it's about making sure that the student has the opportunity to learn and achieve. It's about sharing information to understand what's working and what's not and to identify the links between inclusive practice and educational achievement.

It is ERO's job to evaluate and report on the education and care of students in schools and early childhood services. This is our fourth national report on inclusive practices in New Zealand schools. The news is good – more schools are being more inclusive. But there's still room for improvement.

We have made some significant progress but we need to keep going. We all need to remember that at the centre of everything we do, is the child or young person. And that it's not just one person's responsibility to give that student the opportunity to achieve. It's a collective effort in which schools, parents, families and communities all work together for and around the learner at the centre.

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Overview

Background

This evaluation examines how well students with special education needs are included in New Zealand schools. The report provides an update on progress towards meeting the Government target that, by the end of 2014, 80 percent of New Zealand schools will be doing a good job and none should be doing a poor job of including and supporting students with disabilities. This target was established in 2010 as a result of ERO's earlier evaluation of the inclusion of students with high needs.

Inclusive schools

This 2014 evaluation included 152 schools reviewed in Term 2, 2014. ERO found that schools were generally successful at providing for the presence and participation of students with special education needs. They welcomed students with special education needs and had systems in place to support their participation. Most schools:

- had enrolled one or more students with special education needs
- had provided professional learning and development (PLD) for staff to improve the way they provided for students with special education needs
- used local funding in addition to the Special Education Grant to support students.

Over three quarters of the schools in the sample (78 percent) were found to be mostly inclusive of students with special education needs, compared with only half in the 2010 evaluation. To some extent, this may reflect the changed focus of the evaluation from *students with high needs* to all *students with special education needs.* This extended focus was used to better reflect the Government focus on inclusion of all students. However, the finding is consistent with ERO's 2013 evaluation of primary schools, which reported that 77 percent of schools were mostly inclusive of students with high needs.

Inclusive attitudes and practices

Almost all schools were positive about including students with special education needs. Their commitment to including these students was underpinned by school values and culture, and demonstrated by leadership, shared responsibility and partnerships with parents and whānau. Schools identified positive ways they included students with special education needs, and were very confident about being a fully inclusive school.

Most schools had good systems and practices to support students with special education needs. Responsibility for these students was usually allocated to a Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO), or head of learning support. Their responsibilities included identifying specific student needs, coordinating support, allocating resources, documenting guidelines for staff and monitoring student

progress and effectiveness. Schools planned how to improve their provisions for students with special education needs and used PLD to build staff capability. Some allocated time for teachers to identify and share effective teaching strategies. Most schools had effective systems for helping the child to successfully transition into, through and out of the school.

Teachers and SENCOs carefully identified and responded to students' needs. Schools involved students with special education needs alongside their peers and placed them with staff who matched their needs and strengths. Effective practices included responding to individual needs with specific support, differentiating the curriculum, modifying activities and providing guidance for teacher's aides. Schools involved parents, teachers, specialist teachers and specialists in developing individual education plans (IEPs) with specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) goals. They regularly reviewed progress towards these goals.

Many of the schools with only some or few inclusive practices needed to increase the use of effective teaching strategies to respond to students with special education needs.

Improving outcomes for students

Since 2010, the understanding of inclusion has deepened to recognise that students with special education needs not only need to be present in the classroom, but also need to make progress and achieve. Schools regularly monitored the progress of individual students with special education needs. However, this monitoring was often informal, with outcomes described in general terms such as "students had progressed".

Progress and achievement data was not always used for self review. Schools were more likely to review how they provided for students with special education needs than how effectively their actions had promoted achievement for these students. Many did not analyse achievement information to identify strategies that were effective for particular groups of students. Reports to the board were also usually about provision of programmes but did not discuss their effectiveness. This means some schools are not well positioned to identify effective practice in teaching or whether resources are being allocated in the most appropriate way.

Wider education system

Schools used a variety of specialist teachers, specialists and resources to support students with special education needs. The Ministry of Education provided PLD, equipment, advice and guidance, and funding for property modifications. Most schools had used the Ministry's published resources on developing IEPs and inclusive schools. Some schools reported there had been challenges in accessing specialist services, and delays in their responses.

Next steps for schools

ERO recommends that school leaders and teachers:

- improve the use of achievement data to focus on outcomes for students by
  - developing detailed goals that allow **progress** to be shown, particularly for students who learn within level 1 of *The New Zealand Curriculum*, and
  - reviewing the effectiveness of teaching strategies and programmes
- build teacher capability in using differentiated teaching strategies through appropriate professional learning and development and sharing good practice among staff
- provide information for boards to help them decide priorities and determine how well their resourcing is improving outcomes for students with special education needs. Useful information includes:
  - how the school provides for students with special education needs
  - progress and achievement and other outcomes for students
  - plans to improve the provisions, including professional development.

Next steps for the Ministry of Education

ERO recommends that the Ministry consider and action a range of approaches to support:

- schools to enhance achievement and improve progress of students who are likely to learn long-term within level 1 of *The New Zealand Curriculum*
- schools to develop their capability to review how well their strategies and initiatives improve outcomes for their students with special education needs
- boards in asking questions about the progress and achievement of students with special education needs, and the effectiveness of their provision.

As part of the review of professional learning and development, the Ministry should also identify opportunities to support PLD providers in building capability in inclusive practices and effective teaching of students with special education needs.

Introduction

This evaluation examines how well students with special education needs are included in New Zealand schools. It focuses on their enrolment, participation, engagement and achievement and includes students with both high and moderate needs.

These students may have a range of educational needs, some short-term and some long-term. They include learning needs as a result of communication, behavioural, social, sensory, physical, neurological, psychiatric or intellectual impairments.

The evaluation focused on the following groups of students[1]:
- Those who need teaching adaptations and/or individual support to access The New Zealand Curriculum or Te Marautanga (the national curriculum for Māori-medium) and achieve at or above the curriculum level for their age. These students are likely to have access to a range of special education services and resources, and may use Braille, New Zealand Sign Language, specialised equipment, and need classroom adaptations.
- Students who are likely to learn within level 1 of The New Zealand Curriculum throughout their time at school and are likely to have access to the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) or a resource teacher of learning and behaviour.

The Ministry of Education (the Ministry) spends approximately $500 million on special education services, and provides specialist support to about 35,000 children and young people with special education needs. This includes:

- ORS funding to 8,000 students

- communications services to 6,500 students

- behaviour services to 3,500 students

- School High Health Needs to 700 students

- Early Intervention services to 13,500 children

- other services to 3,300 students.

Schools have access to approximately 900 Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour and receive additional funding through a Special Education Grant which is allocated to all schools based on decile and roll number.

Background

In June 2010 ERO reported that approximately half of the schools in a 2009 study demonstrated 'mostly inclusive' practice, while 30 percent had 'pockets of inclusive practice' and 20 percent had 'few inclusive practices'. *Including students with high needs* (2010) has provided a benchmark for special education policy and practice.

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[1] The third category of students with special education needs – students with special learning needs because they are achieving below curriculum expectations - were the focus of ERO's evaluation: Raising achievement in primary schools and are not included in this evaluation.

In response to this report, the Government set a target that, by the end of 2014, 80 percent of New Zealand schools will be doing a good job and none should be doing a poor job of including and supporting students with disabilities.

Since then, ERO has published three reports on inclusion (see Appendix 1).

Ministry of Education developments

The *Success for All* policy was launched in October 2010 in response to the Ministry-led review of special education. The policy extended provision for students with special education needs in several ways, including support for additional students through the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme and the Communications Service and additional support for students with sensory needs.

Success for All has three main areas of work:

- The *Success for All* work programme, focused on accountability, system transformation and supporting schools.
- The Inclusive Education Taskforce, focused on strengthening schools' inclusive practices.
- Positive Behaviour for Learning initiatives, which help schools, teachers, parents, and students to address problem behaviour.

The Ministry has produced a range of tools and resources for schools and boards to support inclusion. One example is a tool developed by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research to measure inclusive practice using information from ERO's previous evaluations. Another example is a resource on transition from school to post-school life for students with special education needs.

The Ministry has also provided resources to help boards and principals support students with special education needs and to include these students in strategic and annual planning: *Charters and Analysis of Variance: Guidance for supporting students with special education needs* (October 2013) and *Charters: Guidance for strategic and annual planning in secondary schools* (February 2013). A resource has also been developed to support secondary schools to build inclusive practices.

The Ministry has introduced the Intensive Wraparound Service to support children and young people with highly complex and challenging behaviour, social or education needs in their local school.

Appendix 2 provides additional information about developments to support special education and inclusion in schools.

Methodology

The 2014 evaluation used a similar framework to that used in 2010 to enable schools' inclusive practices in 2014 to be compared with those identified in 2010. There were some adjustments to reflect changes in policy and understanding, and a shift in focus to student outcomes and self review.

What does being inclusive mean?

Inclusive education is about the full participation and achievement of all learners. In fully inclusive schools, children and young people with special education needs have a sense of belonging as they participate as much as possible in all the same activities as their peers.

Identifying students with high needs and students with special education needs

Since 2010, the Ministry has had a priority on developing initiatives to support schools to strengthen their inclusive practices.

The current evaluation has focused on the inclusion of 'students with special education needs', a broader group of students who may need some form of additional support or assistance, including those with moderate (rather than high) need.

The evaluation also gathered examples of successful inclusion of students identified by schools as having high needs. Many of these students have been designated high needs through their funding and support, while others exhibit special educational needs but have not qualified for additional resource from Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, or Accident Compensation Corporation.

Evaluation approach

The main evaluation question was: How inclusive is the school?

Reviewers based their judgements on the Inclusive Schools Matrix developed for the 2013 evaluation to describe characteristics of schools in each of the three rating categories: 'mostly inclusive practice', 'some inclusive practices', or 'few inclusive practices'. In both the 2010 and 2014 evaluations, ERO asked schools to determine which of their students they considered to have high or special education needs.

As in the 2013 evaluation, two additional evaluation questions informed this evaluation:
- How effectively does the school support the presence, participation and engagement of students with special education needs?
- How effectively does the school promote achievement and outcomes of students with special education needs?

Judgements for these questions were based on the evaluation indicators which were developed for the earlier evaluations (see Appendix 3).

The evaluation included 152 schools that were reviewed during Term 2, 2014. Further details about the methodology are included in Appendix 4.

Success stories about students with high needs

The evaluation asked reviewers to select an example of successful inclusion of a student with high needs and describe how the school met the child's needs and the learning and other outcomes. Some of these examples have been included

throughout this report to illustrate particular findings.

The children that were described in the examples of successful inclusion covered a wide range of needs and diagnoses. Around a quarter had multiple diagnoses. The most common were autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and learning disorders. Other diagnoses included global delay, perceptual impairment, physical disability, inappropriate behaviour, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, Down Syndrome and cerebral palsy.

Methodological challenges in this evaluation

Students with special education needs are not a homogenous group, making it difficult to judge a school's overall inclusiveness. It is possible that schools may provide well for children with some types of special education needs and not for others.

Structure of the report

The first section reports the overall findings about inclusion. The next three sections focus on good practice found in three areas:

- whole school culture and approach (positive attitude to including students with special education needs)
- school-wide systems and actions to provide for students with special education needs
- teaching practices and support.

The rest of the report presents information about areas where ERO identified concerns about schools' focus on improving outcomes for students.

Findings

Inclusion of students with special education needs

Key findings:
• ERO found more schools were demonstrating mostly inclusive practices in 2014 than in 2010.
• Ninety percent of schools had enrolled one or more students with high or moderate needs. Half had six or more students with high needs currently enrolled.
• Almost all schools said they had provided professional learning and development (PLD) for staff to improve the way they supported students with special education needs.
• Half the schools used other funding in addition to the Special Education Grant (SEG) grant to support these students.

Overall judgement

Over three quarters of schools in the sample (78 percent) were 'mostly inclusive', an increase from the 50 percent reported in 2010. Only two of the 152 schools were rated as having 'few inclusive practices'.

Judgement	
Mostly inclusive	118
Somewhat inclusive	32
Few inclusive practices	2
Total number of schools	152

The information may not be strictly comparable across the years, as the 2010 rating referred to students with *high needs* while the 2014 rating referred to students with *special education needs.*

Enrolment of students with special education needs

The following figures show that many schools had enrolled students with high needs.

Ninety percent of schools reported the current enrolment of at least one student for whom the school was allocated funding. Below are the percentages of schools with each different type of funding in the sample.

- 73 percent of the schools had Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) verified students
- over 50 percent had students funded through either the severe behaviour initiative or the interim response fund
- 54 percent had students funded under the communication initiative
- 38 percent had students who were deaf or hearing impaired
- 20 percent had students with moderate vision needs
- 20 percent had students with moderate physical needs
- 50 percent of the schools had six or more students with additional funding.

Seventy percent of schools in the sample said they had at least one student who was likely to learn long-term within level 1 of the New Zealand Curriculum.

Although almost all schools reviewed during this evaluation were either mostly inclusive or had some inclusive practices, ERO heard from parents about other schools that had declined to accept students with special education needs. For example, one student had sought to enrol in many schools before their current enrolment.

Caution is needed in judging the extent to which schools are including students as it is difficult to determine which schools may have turned students away.

Most schools had a clear statement in their charter or policies stating their commitment to inclusion. They demonstrated their commitment by accessing related PLD and allocating resources to support the students. Half the schools had used their local funding in addition to the SEG to support students with special education needs. This was often to fund additional hours for teacher's aides or for property modifications or information and communications technology.

Reporting findings on good practice

Considerable overlap was evident in practices between schools that were 'mostly inclusive' and schools that had 'some inclusive practices'. As reported in 2010 and 2013, schools that were 'mostly inclusive' also had gaps in their systems and provisions, and schools that had 'some inclusive practices' also had strengths.

The 'mostly inclusive' schools were more likely to have a coordinated systematic approach, to have accessed PLD and to have reviewed their provisions for students with special education needs.

Almost all schools had some inclusive practices in their:
- whole school culture, attitudes and approach
- school-wide systems and actions to provide for students with special education needs
- teaching practices and support.

Whole school culture, attitudes and approach

Key findings
Almost all schools were positive about including students with special education needs and felt confident about providing a fully inclusive school. This was demonstrated through their school values, leadership and purposeful partnerships with parents and whānau.

Almost all schools had strengths in this area. Schools recognised inclusion as consistent with school values such as being caring, friendly and valuing diversity.

Commitment, leadership and shared understanding

Boards and senior leaders fully demonstrated their commitment to including students with special education needs by:

- developing and using appropriate policies and plans to guide practices and processes
- thoughtful allocation of resources for students with special education needs
- setting high expectations for staff and students
- ensuring staff understand their responsibility to meet student needs.

Barriers to participation and learning are seen as challenges to overcome.

Leaders in most schools reported feeling very confident in providing a fully inclusive school that welcomed students with special education needs. The majority of leaders were also confident that they could provide programmes for these students to achieve.

Commitment to overcoming barriers to participation for a student with muscular dystrophy

The successful inclusion of a boy with muscular dystrophy was a result of the commitment of the school leaders to every child achieving success.

They developed strong relationships with the boy, his family and support people. They worked to build the family's trust in the school's ability to ensure the child's safety and care, and arranged to have a translator at IEP meetings.

The school applied for funding, support and resources (such as a wheelchair, fixed hoist and assistive technology) so that they could better meet the child's needs. As he moved through the school, careful consideration was given to the selection of the best teacher and teacher's aide for the child. PLD was provided for these staff.

The school was relentless in finding ways that the boy could be included in the life of the school. For instance, it supported him to become the school cameraman; arranged for a hoist to be built so that he could swim in the school pool and ensured he was able to participate in the school graduation ceremony.

Careful planning for his transition to intermediate followed by six months of transition visits has meant the boy is thriving at his new school.

(middle-sized contributing primary school)

Partnerships with parents and whānau

Inclusive practices included developing constructive partnerships with parents and whānau by:
- talking with parents about strengths and interests of their child and their aspirations for their child
- working together to improve students' wellbeing and learning
- communicating frequently and responding effectively to any concerns raised.

> **Effective partnership between school and parents**
>
> The school built a strong partnership with a student and her parents. The child, her parents and the school set high expectations for her progress. One aspect contributing to her success was the collaboration between her mother and her teacher to provide strategies and ideas for her mother to use with her at home that helped her as a learner.
>
> (very large secondary school)

Examples of specific practices that supported parents and families included:

- using the HIPPY programme[2] to engage parents and raise their expectations for their child's success
- inviting parents to PLD that the teachers or teachers' aides were attending
- a specialist teacher attending a sexuality workshop to help grandparents bringing up a teenager with special education needs deal with this issue
- working with families to ensure that children could attend school camps
- supporting parents when dealing with outside agencies, hospital visits and respite care arrangements
- providing the school car and driver to take parents to out of town appointments
- making provisions for medical treatment to occur at school so students could remain onsite and not lose any time with their peers
- appointing a person who supported parents as well as students.

School-wide systems and practices

> **Key findings**
>
> Almost all schools had systems, guidelines and key practices to support students with special education needs. For instance, they had relevant strategies in place, had a Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) or head of learning support to coordinate and oversee provisions, took a team approach rather than leaving one or two people to be responsible for the student, had effective transition processes, and had built relevant staff capability.
>
> The 'mostly inclusive' schools were more likely to have a coordinated, systematic approach. They worked strategically to provide for students with special education needs, and ensure they make progress and experience success.
>
> Schools with 'some' or 'few inclusive practices' needed to develop or improve some of their systems or practices.

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[2] Home Interaction Programme for Parents and Youngsters, which supports parents in becoming actively involved in their four- and five-year-old children's learning.

Leading a strategic approach

Leaders in the 'mostly inclusive schools' took a strategic approach to identifying priorities to improve inclusive practices. They then planned steps to build staff capability to meet these priorities. Leaders appointed and supported a SENCO or head of learning support, many of whom had leadership roles in the school. In some cases the leaders established a team to coordinate provisions for students with special education needs and to allocate staff, services and resources.

Almost all schools had a special education needs register to record needs, identify resources and teaching strategies, and to ensure appropriate planning for students as they moved from one teacher to the next. Registers were updated regularly as students progressed and their needs changed.

Role and responsibilities of SENCO

Students were well supported by SENCOs who:

- coordinated support for students
- allocated teacher's aides
- clearly documented roles and responsibilities
- kept comprehensive records of programmes, teaching strategies, progress and achievement.

The SENCOs or class teachers developed programmes to meet specific students' needs. They provided guidance and resources for teacher's aides on how they could help the student, including modelling effective practices. SENCOs met regularly with teacher's aides to ensure these programmes were meeting the needs of students.

Some SENCOs developed useful resources to assist teachers and teacher's aides to confidently manage students' education and care. Curriculum guides for planning and monitoring progress provided a range of steps within level 1 of the curriculum, to identify the competencies students had achieved and differentiated learning goals. Personalised workbooks, templates, or induction packs provided a high level of guidance for teacher's aides about useful resources and strategies to use to help the student succeed.

Collaboration leading to successful inclusion of a boy with cerebral palsy:

The collaboration of school staff, the boy's whānau, his ECE support worker and medical specialists has been key in this boy's successful inclusion. The school also worked with an architect to ensure the physical environment suited the boy, as he uses a wheelchair or a walker.

Very soon after the boy entered the school, he was assessed and an IEP meeting was held. This identified his learning strengths and needs, goals, what he was to be taught and how his progress would be monitored. He is expected to succeed academically and socially, and the school has put in place processes to ensure this happens.

The boy is supported by his teacher and teacher's aide and programmes have been designed to support his oral language and reading skills. Close monitoring, and appropriate assessment have enabled the school to show the boy's progress against his goals and guide his next steps. Achievement reports note that he has moved up a level in reading, and state his next learning goal.

The school applied for funding to buy a tricycle for the boy, so he could be more active in the playground. After receiving the tricycle, other students were lent tricycles so they could ride with him. This has been a big step in helping him to engage socially and to be assertive. A teacher commented that the boy asked some students to stop pushing his tricycle and, when they did not listen, a friend came and supported the boy in his request.

 (large contributing primary)

Effective transition – into the school, within the school, to the next school and out of school

Processes for transition to school were effective when they were specific to an individual, started early and involved staff, parents, specialist teachers and specialists with knowledge or understanding of the student's needs. Schools arranged opportunities for parents and children to become familiar with people and places, and gathered specific behaviour and cognitive information to provide the basis for an appropriate transition plan. SENCOs often visited the early childhood centre or previous school to talk to staff and observe the child in their familiar setting. They also developed a detailed transition plan and prepared information for the child's next teacher to help them understand the particular special education needs and how they could best support the child's learning and wellbeing. Students and parents were made to feel welcome.

Effective transition into school

Well planned transitions into a primary school have supported the inclusion and success of a girl with multiple, complex needs. Her transition into the school began two months before she attended full time. The planning involved the staff from her kindergarten, the new entrant teacher and teacher's aides, the principal and SENCO at the new school, specialist teacher, specialists and her parents. The girl's new teacher observed her in the kindergarten environment to help her understand how to adapt the classroom programme and environment to suit the child. Both internal and external PLD was provided to the girl's teacher and teacher's aides, as well as regular support from the special education adviser. The SENCO and school leaders decided that two teacher's aides would work with the girl so they could use their individual strengths to best support her, and reduce the likelihood she would become dependent on any one person.

(large contributing school)

> **Successful transition from home room to mainstream**
>
> A Year 9 student started in a home room, where she was taught core curriculum subjects by one teacher, with tasks modified to suit her abilities and current level of knowledge. After two years in this home room the teacher decided that her ability was at a comparable level to others her age. The girl was encouraged and supported to move into the main school programme, where she has achieved NCEA Levels 1 and 2. The school expects the home room to be used to support students with special education needs to accelerate their progress to a point that they can rejoin the mainstream. Positive relationships and expectations of achievement were key to this girl's success.
>
> (very large secondary school)

Building capability and supporting staff

Professional learning

Almost all schools had completed PLD to support students with special education needs, focusing on specific student needs and outcomes or on developing inclusive practices across the school. Effective PLD was purposeful, relevant to the needs of particular students, focused on improving teachers' knowledge of students and taught useful strategies to respond to student needs.

In the last three years, a large majority of schools used PLD to help:

- SENCOs and heads of learning support to develop inclusive teaching practices, strategies for supporting students working within level 1 of the curriculum, use data to inform teaching, develop behaviour plans, and assess learning and progress
- teachers to increase their knowledge about responding to strengths, interests and assessment information, differentiated teaching, inclusive teaching approaches, supporting inclusion and assessing progress
- teacher's aides to better understand strategies to support the student they were working with, modify activities and to help them make friends with their peers
- principals and leaders to understand requirements for educating students with disabilities, as well as systems and processes needed to create an inclusive environment
- boards to better understand their responsibilities for the progress of all students, use achievement data and create an inclusive environment.

Regular meetings between school staff, specialist teachers and specialists ensured ongoing professional expertise was available and used to best meet the learning and care needs of students with special education needs. Schools allocated time for staff to meet regularly to identify needs, plan programmes collaboratively, monitor progress, share effective practices, discuss successes and challenges, and identify needs for specialist advice.

Reflection, teaching as inquiry, and links with appraisal

SENCOs and teachers in some schools found it useful to reflect on the effect their practices had on student belonging, wellbeing, motivation and successful learning. They then modified their practices to improve outcomes for students. One special education teacher used ERO's reports about special education needs and information from the Ministry of Education to look at how well the school was including its students with special education needs and to review the school's documentation, systems and processes.

Some schools linked their teacher appraisal to an approach based on *Teaching as Inquiry* to accelerate the progress of learners at risk of poor outcomes including those with special education needs. *Teaching as Inquiry* is a teaching approach described in *The New Zealand Curriculum* that aims to improve outcomes for all students. Teachers chose a student with special education needs to support their inquiry into their own practice and linked this to their appraisal goals. This involved researching a range of interventions, practices and strategies, which they trialled with the student and monitored for effectiveness.

Secondary schools

Secondary schools were almost as likely as primary schools to be mostly inclusive. Support for secondary school students included mentoring, career counselling, help preparing CVs, Gateway (a Tertiary Education Commission programme to provide senior students with opportunities to access structured workplace learning). Schools also offered support for assessment, such as NZQA's Special Assessment Conditions and Reader/Writers to help candidates in assessments. Some students with special education needs in secondary schools were provided with programmes to develop life skills, such as budgeting, shopping and cooking, opportunities for work exploration, and targeted transition into the workplace.

Successful experience in a secondary school

One girl with multiple diagnoses moved to a secondary school in Year 10. This girl's success was supported by the transition documents from her previous school, which described strategies and interventions that had been helpful. The school's 'open door' relationship with her parents meant that everyone was on the same page with supporting her to achieve success.

One of her primary needs was to reduce her levels of anxiety and help her develop relationships with others. The school recognised that the normal Year 10 programme would not suit the student, so designed a programme to suit her. This involved carefully choosing which staff and students to place the girl with, teaching her at the appropriate academic level and taking her interests into account. This meant she was placed in Year 11 for some classes. She was able to roll over to the next year any NCEA credits she earned in these classes.

The SENCO was the girl's key support person, and helped her to better understand social cues, which reduced her anxiety in social situations. Her programme was built up slowly so that she was not overwhelmed by too many changes at once. The school helped her develop life skills including being more organised.

To meet her long-term goal to develop positive relationships with her teachers and peers, she signed up to be an after school coach. The school was supportive and ensured the girl was prepared for this appropriately. As a result, she has since gone on to participate in a range of activities, both in and out of school.

Her self esteem and confidence have continued to grow since her enrolment. She has also enjoyed considerable academic success and established good relationships with others.   (middle-sized secondary school)

Teaching practices and support

Key findings

Inclusive schools included students with special education needs in age-appropriate regular classes. The most effective schools used high quality teaching practices, developed high quality IEPs based on evidence, and responded flexibly to individual needs.

ERO identified some schools where teachers needed to improve their knowledge of how to modify the curriculum, develop specific IEP goals and use achievement data to inform their teaching for children with special education needs.

Most schools used some effective teaching and support practices to include students with special education needs in age-appropriate classes. Teachers used high quality teaching practices such as differentiating classroom activities, approaches and curriculum to meet the range of needs in their class. They built on student knowledge and interests, and provided feedback and next steps for learning. Some students were withdrawn for one-to-one or small group support on targeted programmes to develop academic or social skills, and some schools provided both mainstream and support class or withdrawal options.

Responding to strengths and interests

A Year 5 boy with cerebral palsy was confident, articulate, a leader and good with technology. His greatest learning needs were related to motor skills. His school helped him build on his strengths, by nominating him as a 'techno kid' responsible for supporting his class and teachers in technology and running the technology for school assemblies. He is supported to run his own IEP meetings and report on his progress and achievements. The boy has confidently spoken to a large group of professionals about this.   (middle-sized contributing school)

Using evidence and quality Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

SENCOs used a range of assessment and diagnostic tools to identify specific needs and develop appropriate programmes and strategies to meet these needs. Many

schools had developed IEPs that met at least some of the Ministry of Education's guidelines for quality[3]. Features of good IEPs included:

- goals that were based on data and focused on what the student could do, and their strengths and interests
- having well-developed objectives for student learning and development in relation to learning, social, communication, physical, sensory, behaviour and life skills
- using SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals[4], to enable the school to show learning, progress and next steps
- teaching strategies and clear responsibilities for staff
- regular review of the goals in consultation with parents, staff, specialist teachers, specialists, and sometimes students.

Flexible response to the needs of individual students

Inclusive schools responded flexibly to individual student's needs and provided a range of programmes to help students learn and progress. SENCOs carefully placed students with staff who understood how to meet each student's needs and were committed to the student's wellbeing and learning. They focused on meeting the student's social, emotional, communication, behaviour, academic (often literacy or maths/numeracy) and physical needs.

Responding to very high needs

When she first started school, the girl was not yet talking or walking. In the junior classes it became apparent that the reading, writing and numeracy tasks she was working on were not appropriate. The school developed goals for the girl and monitored her progress through IEPs with a focus on life skills and authentic experiences.

When she began presenting challenging behaviour, the school interpreted this as a signal that she was not getting what she needed. This prompted a consultation and adaptation process, which has led to the girl functioning at a much higher level than was expected. She is now able to walk, communicate in short sentences and with gesture, and read with her class. The school has made photo books, which are very meaningful to her.

The girl is supported daily by a teacher's aide, and twice weekly by a specialist teacher from a nearby special school. Her programme is mostly in class, but allows frequent opportunities for breaks. She is given opportunities to make shakes in the school staffroom, go swimming, visit cafes and the junior classroom, where she is most comfortable. The school plans carefully for school camps and trips, and works to minimise anxiety for all concerned.

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[3] Collaboration for Success: Individual Education Plans, Ministry of Education, 2011
[4] Ministry of Education. (2014). *Target or goal setting*. Retrieved from http://assessment.tki.org.nz/Using-evidence-for-learning/Target-setting

This student's progress and inclusion have come about in large part due to the school's ability to reflect on their provision and the girl's response. They noticed when things were not working and adapted the way they did things. The school made sure it involved the right people to get the help it needed and has been flexible in its approach, resulting in the girl exceeding expectations.

Her parents, teachers and specialist teacher have agreed it is best for her that she stays on at her primary school, until a suitable next school is found for her.

(middle-sized contributing school)

Responding to behavioural needs
Practicing and preparing for unexpected situations was part of supporting a Year 4 student to achieve success. The boy was engaged in learning most of the time and making progress in maths and literacy, but he needed to develop strategies to cope with frustrations and disappointments and had to learn to take turns. The school's approach to this was to discuss with the boy how he might feel and react when he lost a game, or it was not his turn. They decided on some ground rules around reactions, and played games where the boy would be 'out', so he could practise reacting in a more appropriate way. The boy was rewarded for doing well at this, although the school noted that developing the key competencies from the *New Zealand Curriculum* is proving a challenge.
(large contributing school)

Teacher's aide support in class

Most students with special education needs were well supported by teacher's aides, either in the class or separately in one-to-one instruction. The teacher usually planned programmes and linked these to regular class work. Some teacher's aides supported students to develop social skills, sometimes by helping them to interact with other students. This also helped to increase their independence and reduce their reliance on the teacher's aides. Some teacher's aides supported students during breaks, on trips and on overnight camps.

Teacher's aides were often experienced, had received PLD appropriate to a particular student, and were described as capable, committed, highly valued and trusted. They knew students well, developed positive relationships with parents, and worked flexibly and effectively to meet student needs.

Peer support/buddy systems

Inclusive schools believed that it was important for all students to develop relationships with peers and that all students benefited from this. Teachers encouraged students to understand and accept diversity. They talked to students about how children's brains work differently and encouraged older children to help particular children with special education needs. ERO spoke with parents of

some students with special education needs who reported that their children were invited to play with their peers out of school.

Teachers actively supported students' social development by providing opportunities for cooperative learning and encouraging them to participate and work alongside their peers in a range of ways – some direct and some indirect. Some schools established a buddy system to help students with special education needs inside and outside the classroom. Other schools established tuakana-teina relationships[5], peer support systems, playground angels or whole-school approaches.

ERO observed students with special education needs participating comfortably in a group or class, being engaged in the whole class programme, being settled, confidently answering questions and waiting their turn.

Examples of peer support:

Students with special education needs have a senior mentor who is usually a Year 6 student. They spend an hour a week taking part in a planned mentor programme alongside other students in their class. A senior student worked with an ORS-funded student who was not getting enough exercise to get him moving, jogging and running. This process was closely aligned with a goal in the student's IEP.

The school has adapted the timetable to give senior students a fifth option line where they are able to work with students with special education needs either in special classes or mainstream classes in various subjects and school-based activities. At the time of the review 35 senior students were doing this and school values of commitment and respect were obvious. Some of the students with special education needs also have opportunities to support younger students in the mainstream. The idea of Ako[6] is alive and well in the school.

*(*large secondary school)

Included outside the classroom

Inclusive schools fully involved students with special education needs in activities outside the classroom. Students participated in regular cultural and sporting activities such as kapa haka, assembly, swimming, sports and camps. Some schools provided activities especially for students with special education needs, such as Riding for the Disabled and Special Olympics.

Schools carefully planned and modified programmes or provided additional support to enable students with special education needs to participate in activities outside the classroom. Risk analyses took account of individual student's

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[5] Ministry of Education. (2014). *Tuakana–teina: The concept of a tuakana–teina relationship.* Retrieved from http://tereomaori.tki.org.nz/Curriculum-guidelines/Teaching-and-learning-te-reo-Maori/Aspects-of-planning/The-concept-of-a-tuakana-teina-relationship
[6] The concept of Ako describes a teaching and learning relationship, where the educator is also learning from the student and where educators' practices are informed by the latest research and are both deliberate and reflective.

needs, and plans and resources were put in place to help ensure the student could participate. Adult responsibilities and school expectations were made clear to all those attending the activity.

Careful planning for successful inclusion in an inter-school event

The school carefully planned a strategy to enable a Year 8 boy diagnosed with autism to attend an out-of-town inter-school event. The boy was anxious in new and unfamiliar situations and this was a big step for him and his mother. The principal and the boy's mother discussed the trip with the boy, and agreed that he and three others would represent the school at the event. No teachers from his school would be attending, and the boy would be in a group with students from other schools. The principal and the student worked out a safety plan. They outlined key people (another student from his school, the teacher from the local area school) to go to if he became anxious, the schedule for the day and what to expect from each activity. The principal also contacted the teacher who was leading the group, and the social worker who would be attending, to let them know about the boy, and the steps taken to prepare him for the event. The outing was a success due to the well-planned scaffolding of the boy's involvement, predicting and discussing the new experiences and being supportive and understanding of both the boy and his mother's emotional responses.

(middle-sized full primary school)

Self review for improvement

Key findings

- Many schools reviewed the procedures and practices provided for students with special education needs

- Many schools did not consider outcomes for students when they reviewed their procedures and practices, and reported to the board

- Schools need to develop capability in reviewing how well their resourcing is improving outcomes for students with special needs

The majority of schools had reviewed some aspects of their provisions for students with special education needs. These included reviewing policies, procedures, practices, systems, IEPs, programmes, actions and the use of specialist teachers and specialists. Learning was usually reported in general terms, such as students being engaged, having progressed, developing social skills or feeling confident. Some schools had reviewed their provisions through their involvement in the Inclusive Education Capability Building Project[7]. A third of SENCOs had undergone PLD on reviewing the effectiveness of their programmes.

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[7] See Appendix 2

Many schools had surveyed students or parents about their satisfaction with the school and whether students felt safe and comfortable there. Some of this review was based on informal conversations with parents of students with special education needs.

Other examples of review ERO identified included:

- using the Ministry of Education's Best Evidence Syntheses[8] as the basis for their review

- surveying staff about their need for PLD on differentiation of teaching

- reviewing how inclusive or caring they were

- determining the effectiveness of PLD.

Previous ERO reports (see Appendix 1), have also highlighted that many schools' self review relies on anecdotal evidence of students being included in class, having relationships with their peers, feeling safe or valued, or having a sense of belonging, rather than outcomes related to their learning.

Outcomes for students

Some schools provided more than anecdotal evidence of outcomes for students with special education needs. Their focus on progress and achievement resulted in useful improvement such as:

- improving tracking of student outcomes so that progress within level 1 of *The New Zealand Curriculum* was more evident

- providing PLD for staff on effective teaching strategies

- ongoing modification of programmes

- providing more release-time for the SENCOs to carry out their roles

- improving IEPs and strengthening goal setting.

Following is an example of progress and successful outcomes for a student with special education needs.

School strategies resulting in improved behaviour for student with autism

The school developed a strategy to ensure a Year 3 child with autism was able to be included. The student would bite, kick or punch both children and adults, and attempt to run away.

Initially, the boy spent most of his time out of class, being managed on a one-to-one basis, to ensure the health and safety of the other students and staff. The staff considered this unsatisfactory, so the SENCO accessed external support to

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[8] The Ministry of Education's best evidence synthesis (BES) iterations draw together, explain and illustrate through vignette and case, bodies of evidence about what works to improve education outcomes, and what can make a bigger difference for the education of all our children and young people. The BESs are intended to be a catalyst for systemic improvement and sustainable development in education. See www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications for more information.

help develop a strategy to support his inclusion in class. This strategy involved giving the child and his whānau the responsibility for making many decisions. The boy was able to make a chart for his toileting, choose when he would work with his teacher's aide and when he was ready to do specific learning tasks.

One year later, the boy is spending most of his time in class and displaying little inappropriate behaviour, and is seen as a contributing member of his class.

(large, contributing school)

ERO spoke to students with special education needs who talked about their pride in their progress, loving school, being part of a group or feeling they belonged. Some were able to describe their sense of being a learner by talking about their achievement and progress or explaining their current reading, writing or numeracy achievements.

Reviewing school-wide effectiveness

In the best instances schools also collated information about the progress of all students with special education needs in a way that enabled them to analyse where progress had been accelerated and to identify and share the most successful practices across the school.

In one primary school the SENCO introduced a school-wide review process through reports each term on the nature and impact of each intervention for students with special education needs. By evaluating the effectiveness of interventions, the school was able to maintain, discontinue or change the support being given.

The following is another example of where school-wide self review was used to promote increased student achievement.

Self review leading to student achievement

Self review is integrated into all aspects of the programme. It includes analysing IEPs, teacher surveys (mainstream and special class), reviews of planning and student surveys. As a result changes are constantly made to programmes and timetables. The department was recently reviewed by an independent evaluator. This evaluation was rigorous and targeted mainstreamed students with special education needs and how the department was meeting their needs. The report cited some areas for further development and made recommendations that have been acted on by staff.

Analysis of data for the many ORS funded and other high needs students at this school resulted in an adaptive programme where changes to the timetable and staffing are made to meet the needs of individual students. Many ORS funded students attain level 1 NCEA literacy and numeracy credits and a few have attained level 2 NCEA literacy and numeracy credits.

(large, secondary school)

Reporting to the board about outcomes for students with special education needs

Many boards were not well informed about the impact of their resourcing on progress and achievement of students with special education needs. This is because reports to boards mostly focused on what is provided for the students rather than outcomes for students or the effectiveness of the school's practices.

Without this information it is difficult for boards and leaders to determine priorities, decide on specific targets, identify PLD needs and develop a detailed plan to improve provisions for students with special education needs. Schools could more usefully collate and provide information about the number of IEP goals set for their students with special education needs, how many goals were achieved and what resources are needed to help students achieve the remaining or next learning goals.

The following examples share how reporting to the board about strategic developments informs their resourcing decisions.

Assuring the board about progress towards strategic goals

The SENCO/principal regularly report to the board on progress towards annual strategic goals that include improving progress of students with special education needs. These reports always include review of interventions, programmes and initiatives, as well as next steps towards goals.

(middle-sized, full primary school)

Assuring the board about effectiveness of programmes and informing decisions

The SENCO provides very detailed once-a-term reports to the board that include progress and achievement of students with special education needs, the effectiveness of learning support programmes, PLD for teachers and teacher's aides and future initiatives.

(large contributing school)

Schools that evaluate the effectiveness of their programmes are better placed to decide how to provide effectively for students with special education needs when they know which programme and strategies have worked for their students. Reviewing PLD in terms of improved outcomes for students should lead to informed decisions about future PLD.

Involvement of the wider education system

Key findings
- A large number of specialists and specialist teachers worked with schools to support their inclusion of students with special education needs.
- Some schools reported delays in accessing specialist support, particularly in sharing information and timely modifications to property.

External specialists and agencies

Schools accessed a wide range of specialists, specialist teachers and resources to include students with special education needs. Half the schools were working with more than 10 specialist teachers or specialists. Almost all schools had received support from resource teachers of learning and behaviour, and most had received support from public health nurses, speech-language therapists, psychologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and resource teachers of literacy. Two thirds of schools had received support for students with challenging behaviour through the Interim Response Fund, or the Severe Behaviour Service. Most schools had used the Ministry's published resources on developing IEPs and building inclusive schools and found them useful.

Almost half the schools were also using resources from Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu – The Correspondence School (Te Kura). One example was an eight year old who was not yet able to work independently and was working with a teacher's aide in class on topic work from Te Kura which matched the class topics. Another school found Te Kura resources added to their toolbox of ideas and resources.

Many other specialist teachers and specialists supported schools in various ways, including:

- advisers on deaf children, resource teachers of deaf, deaf education resource centres

- blind and low vision education network, orientation and mobility instructors (low vision)

- the specialist teacher outreach service, specialist itinerant teacher, specialist service provider, the intensive wraparound service, and the moderate physical service.

Challenges identified by schools

Almost all schools identified at least one challenge they had experienced when trying to include students with special education needs. Two thirds of the schools considered an issue related to funding a major challenge.

This included timely access to funding, the level of funding provided and difficulty accessing funding for students they believed needed additional support but did not qualify for any of the additional funding options currently available.

Schools said they could do more for students if they had more funding and support, and many noted they funded additional teacher's aide hours from other funding.

Although many schools talked about funding as a challenge, they usually acknowledged their responsibility to use the resources they had to meet student needs in the best possible way.

Other commonly-mentioned barriers beyond the school included:

- lack of support and timely responses from specialist services and the Ministry of Education

- difficulties with transition, particularly sharing information

- availability of appropriate PLD.

Some schools had identified challenges in their own school and were working to address them. These included:

- staff knowledge of effective strategies and how to differentiate the curriculum
- the physical environment of the school (such as difficult access for children with mobility issues or a lack of quiet spaces for some children to work)
- building constructive relationships with parents, particularly those who may not accept that their child has special learning needs
- meeting the needs of students with complex needs or extreme behaviour
- the time school staff spend on applications for funding and support, and following up specialist requests.

Most schools included a statement of commitment to students with special education needs in their charter but only half also stated a commitment to upskill teaching staff to use more inclusive teaching practices.

Conclusion

Most schools had an inclusive culture, a positive attitude to including students with special education needs and good relationships with parents and whānau. They had developed school-wide systems and practices to put their commitment into action. These included a strategic approach, a Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO), a team to coordinate provisions and resources and effective transition processes. Over three quarters of schools in the sample were mostly inclusive, which is an increase from the half reported in 2010. However, only half of schools were effective in promoting achievement and outcomes for students with special education needs.

ERO identified a need to improve teacher capability, particularly in:

- understanding students with special education needs
- strategies for effective inclusion
- differentiating the curriculum
- and ways of monitoring progress within Level 1 of *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

Some schools need to improve their use of data about progress and achievement to find out which programmes and teaching strategies are most effective. They also need to share this information with other staff. This process may improve outcomes for these students with special education needs and also identify needs for additional professional learning and development for relevant staff.

Most boards did not receive comprehensive information about all their students with special education needs and the effectiveness of the programmes provided for them. This limits a board's ability to understand how effectively the school is including students with special needs and means schools are not able to judge whether they are making the most appropriate decisions about how to support them.

ERO has recommended next steps for the Ministry, school leaders, teachers and boards to help ensure all students with special education needs are included and making progress.

Appendix 1: ERO's recent reports on students with special education needs

Including students with high needs (2010)

The 2010 evaluation focused on students with significant physical, sensory, neurological, psychiatric, behavioural or intellectual impairments. These students with high needs make up approximately three percent of the student population. The evaluation defined inclusion as students with high needs successfully enrolling, participating and achieving in the academic, extracurricular and social life of their school.

The evaluation found that approximately half of the 229 schools reviewed demonstrated mostly inclusive practices in responding to students with high needs.

The most inclusive schools operated under three key principles:
- Having ethical standards and leadership that built the culture of an inclusive school.
- Having well-organised systems, effective teamwork and constructive relationships that identified students with high needs and supported their inclusion.
- Using innovative and flexible practices to manage the complex and unique challenges related to including students with high needs.

A further 30 percent of schools had some inclusive practices. While these schools had 'pockets of inclusiveness', their systems, teaching, attitudes or approaches meant that students with high needs were not fully included in the academic, extracurricular or social life of the school. The remaining 20 percent of schools were found to have few inclusive practices.

Primary schools were a little more likely than secondary schools to demonstrate mostly inclusive practices – 53 percent compared with 47 percent of secondary schools. They were less likely to have few inclusive practices – 14 percent compared with 30 percent of secondary schools.

Including students with special needs: School questionnaire responses 2012

In 2011, ERO surveyed schools about their inclusion of students with special needs, including their assessment of whether they had 'mostly inclusive' or 'some inclusive' practices. Broadening the definition to students with special education needs, rather than students with high needs, resulted in some schools including their provisions for many students such as gifted, English language learners, and boys. This probably led to 88 percent of schools reporting that they had mostly inclusive practices. Only 12 percent reported that they had some or a few inclusive practices. Approximately 90 percent of schools had at least some students with special needs and/or requiring an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Schools outlined a wide range of initiatives to support the inclusion and learning of students with special needs. These included:

- clear roles and responsibilities for SENCOs, teachers and teacher's aides

- processes to identify the specific needs of students and IEPs

- prioritising students with the greatest needs

- providing professional learning and development and staff sharing effective strategies

- transition processes

- processes reviewing the effectiveness of programmes to support students with special needs.

The main challenges schools identified were funding, access to specialist advice and support, students with behavioural needs, students with high needs and employing appropriate staff.

Analysis of reports to boards found that most schools did not report on the actual gains made by students with special needs. Instead, they reported general progress or improved attitudes, or described the contribution they had made to including students with special needs. Only 15 percent of schools provided their boards with any achievement information regarding students with special needs. The lack of achievement information limits a board's ability to understand how effectively the school includes students with special needs.

Including students with high needs (2013)

This evaluation found that 77 percent of primary schools were mostly inclusive. Sixteen percent of schools had some inclusive practices and seven percent had few inclusive practices. Schools had made some school-level changes to support inclusion, such as PLD and reviewing a school's collaborative approaches and teacher's aide strategies for high needs students.

Areas for development

Across all four reports, ERO identified the need to improve assessment, monitoring of progress and analysis of achievement information to identify effective practices. Schools also need to improve their reporting to the board about provisions and outcomes for students with special education needs.

Appendix 2: Ministry of Education developments in special education since 2010

Success for all – every school, every child

In 2010 the Ministry of Education led a review of special education. More than 2000 people made submissions about the qualities required for inclusive schools, effective transition processes, funding, resources, professional learning and development and system-wide accountability and responsiveness. ERO's 2010 report, *Including Students with High Needs*, was one of the documents that informed the review's overall findings.

Some significant initiatives were set out in the 2010 *Success for All* policy, or have been introduced subsequently. These include:

- A performance target that by the end of 2014, 80 percent of schools would be doing a good job of including students with disabilities.

- Giving 1000 more students access to the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS).

- Extending the Communications Service to 1,000 more students aged between five and eight who have complex and significant communication needs and don't qualify for ORS.

- Publishing and distributing best practice guidelines to schools to help students move from school to post-school life. (The guidelines include 10 best practice principles based on New Zealand and international literature.)

- Additional support for students with sensory needs. From 2012, students with a sensory impairment (hearing or vision) who receive ORS support have had the teaching component of ORS paid to one of three sensory schools – the Blind and Low Vision Network New Zealand (BLENNZ) or one of two Deaf Education Centres (Van Asch in Christchurch and Kelston in Auckland).

- The Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour service combined with Supplementary Learning Support.

- Strengthening complaints and disputes resolution systems within the Ministry of Education (the Ministry).

- Additional training for boards of trustees – the Ministry has developed and included content in existing board training programmes.

Supported inclusive education practices

Since 2010, the Ministry has strengthened the capability of schools' to be fully inclusive of children and young people with special education needs in various ways. For instance:

- Providing resources and messages about what inclusive education looks like.

- Giving principals and boards clear guidelines about planning their charters and setting targets.

- Helping principals, teachers and boards of trustees improve their practice by developing targeted resources and tools, such as the *New Zealand Council for*

Educational Research (NZCER) Inclusive Practices Tools and the *Inclusive Education Guides for Schools* which went live in February 2015 (http://inclusive.tki.org.nz).

- Providing in-depth support for some schools to set improvement targets for their inclusive practices. This involves working with certain schools to strengthen inclusive practices and ensure integration with other initiatives in place

- Creating a team of 20 school leaders, specialist teachers and professional learning and development providers to develop resources for schools. This is part of the Inclusive Education Capability Building project.

- Initiating projects focused on building our knowledge of inclusive practices in Māori-medium settings and identifying systems, processes and leadership practices in secondary schools that support inclusive practices.

- Continuing to implement Positive Behaviour for Learning programmes and initiatives to help parents, teachers and schools address problem behaviour, improve children's wellbeing and increase educational achievement. More than 500 schools are participating.

- Introducing the Intensive Wraparound Service to provide wraparound support in their local school and community for children and young people in Years 3 to 10 with highly complex and challenging behaviour or social or educational needs, including those associated with an intellectual impairment. In 2012, 114 students received this service, in 2013 there were 220 students, and in 2014 there are 285 students.

Appendix 3: Evaluation indicators: including students with special education needs

Whole school culture and commitment which underpins the actions and initiatives to promote presence, participation and engagement, and achievement of students with special education needs	
Students with special education needs are valued.	• The board of trustees and principal are committed to building an inclusive school through their comments, policies, processes, resourcing and planning. • The principal provides ethical leadership and is committed to meeting the diverse needs of every student, including students with special education needs. • The board has allocated appropriate resources to support inclusion of students with special education needs e.g. the use of special education and local funding for PLD and staffing. • Students with special education needs are expected to achieve and contribute to school culture. • School staff understand that it is their responsibility to adapt to the needs of the student – rather than 'fit' the student to their school and class. • Parents, whānau and the wider school appreciate the benefits for all students of their children working with students with special education needs.
School systems and actions are designed to support students with special education needs.	• The school has a plan to improve inclusion of and provisions for students with special education needs. It reviews progress, including charter goals and actions in the annual plan. • Teachers openly share the successes and challenges in their teaching of students with special education needs (no-blame approach). • The success of students with special education needs is celebrated. • Regular students have been provided with coaching, support and modelling to appropriately relate to students with special education needs. • The school has an appropriate positive behaviour programme to encourage pro-social behaviour and attitudes. • Planning and reporting includes evidence to demonstrate how schools are using the Ministry of Education's Special Education Grant. • Regular monitoring and review cycles inform strategic planning and decision-making for students with special education needs. • The board receives reports about provisions and outcomes for students with special needs, and about the school's progress towards being fully inclusive.
Services and support for students with special education needs are coordinated to meet their needs.	• An effective, senior member of staff is given responsibility for coordinating specialist services and resources to ensure optimum inclusion of children with special education needs (and this is given high status in the school). • A Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) (or equivalent) coordinates involvement of families, staff and specialists to develop IEPs. • A SENCO (or equivalent) coordinates an appropriate range of services or staff to support any specialised needs presented by students with special education needs, for example resource teachers of learning and behaviour, speech-language therapists and teacher's aides. • A SENCO (or equivalent) provides professional learning and development (PLD), support and guidance for teachers and teacher's aides to effectively include and teach students with special education needs. • A SENCO (or equivalent) oversees the progress of students with special education needs and identifies effective strategies that may help other students. • There is a formal process of planning for students as they move from teacher to teacher.

	• There is a plan in place so that students with special education needs are able to attend school even when their teacher or teacher's aide is absent.
PL D supports the specific needs of students with special education needs.	• Leaders have undergone PLD on creating an inclusive school. • Staff receive PLD on creating a school-wide culture of inclusion and on inclusive teaching practices. • PLD for teachers supports their ability to teach students with diverse needs (e.g. differentiating teaching). • Teachers and teacher's aides receive high quality PLD to understand and support the specific learning needs of particular students with special education needs, for instance PLD for Autism Spectrum Disorder or challenging behaviour.

Presence	
Students and families are inducted into the school so that they feel welcome and confident that their needs will be met.	• The school welcomes students with special education needs (i.e. has not suggested to parents that their children would be better off elsewhere). • The school's induction process supports a smooth transition for students with special education needs and their families. • The school has adapted its physical environment to meet the needs of students with special education needs (e.g. putting in a ramp). • The induction process works well at all times through the year.
Students' needs, strengths and interests are identified and documented in high quality IEPs.	• The school supports the learning and development of students with special education with high-quality, collaborative processes and systems to identify and respond to their educational needs, strengths and interests. • The school uses effective tools and systems, including National Standards and benchmarks, to gather, collate, analyse and use assessment and other information for students with special needs to improve teaching and learning. • The school has culturally responsive processes to identify and support the needs and aspirations of Māori and Pacific students with special education needs and their whānau/families. • The school seeks and uses the student's point of view about what supports their inclusion and learning (decision-making). • IEPs include appropriate goals, teaching strategies, support and resources in relation to any physical, sensory, neurological, psychiatric, behavioural or intellectual impairments. • The school liaises with ECEs or previous schools to share information about needs, strengths and support.

Participation and engagement	
The school develops a constructive partnership with families to support the ongoing inclusion of students with special education needs.	• The school respects, values and uses the knowledge parents have of their child's learning, development and achievement to contribute to plans for students with special education needs. • Parents are included in IEPs and any planning processes, and are informed about resources and specialist help available. • The school provides parents with regular feedback about their child's progress, including celebrating success, and how they might complement school-based learning at home. • The process for complaints from parents and whānau is clear and used effectively to resolve complaints. • The school responds appropriately to concerns from parents and whānau. • The school surveys parents about their experiences and satisfaction with provisions for

	their child.
Class teaching supports the participation and engagement of students with special education needs.	• Students with special education needs learn alongside their peers in regular classes as much as possible. • Teaching is planned and differentiated with the diverse learning needs of all students in mind. • School staff actively support the social development of students with special education needs by encouraging them to participate and work cooperatively along with other students. • Learning programmes and experiences support the objectives identified in IEPs or other planning and are not just 'busy work'. • Teachers use teacher's aides effectively to support inclusion of students with special education needs.
Students with special education needs are included outside the classroom.	• Students with special education needs engage with their classmates during intervals, lunchtimes, before and after school • Students with special education needs are supported to take part in physical activity (where appropriate) and other learning activities outside the classroom. • Students with special education needs are supported to take part in sporting and cultural activities, events and camps alongside regular students at the school.
Responsibility for supporting students with special education needs is well understood and its effectiveness monitored.	• IEPs are developed for students with high needs so that resources, roles and responsibilities are clear. • The school has resourced high quality physical and educational support for the range of needs demonstrated by students with special education needs. • The effectiveness of learning supports is monitored. • Learning support is coordinated with IEPs, and well developed objectives for student learning and development.

Achievement	
Students with special education needs progress and achieve.	• Schools can show that students with special education needs are making progress in their IEPs and/or any agreed goals, and have improved in learning, social, communication, physical, behaviour and/or attitudes. • Schools can show that students with special education needs are making progress and achieving in a variety of contexts: leadership, sporting and cultural. • There is a process to describe progressions within level 1 of the curriculum. • There is a process for smooth transition to next school, tertiary provider or community support group.
Students with special education needs feel safe and valued as part of their peer group.	• Students with special education needs have supportive relationships with their peers. • Students with special education needs have friendships with regular students and are included in social events outside of the school. • Regular students demonstrate tolerance, warmth, understanding and friendship to students with special education needs in their classrooms.

Appendix 4: Further information about methodology

Two additional documents were developed – a questionnaire and a review tool – to provide information to be used as the basis for discussion with school staff, and to guide judgements in the synthesis sheet. Completed questionnaires were obtained for 147 schools and the review tool was completed for 141 schools.

Questionnaire for schools

A questionnaire was sent out before the review to gather facts and attitude information from schools. It covered similar information to previous years' questionnaires. The earlier responses were used to develop pre-coded response categories for most questions. The questionnaire also provided an opportunity for schools to express their views and was used for planning the review.

The questionnaire was in three sections:
- Context: the number of students with special education needs in various funding and service categories.
- School systems to support inclusion: such as SENCOs, systems or specialist support.
- Developing and improving inclusion: the use and usefulness of resources (particularly those newly developed by the Ministry of Education), schools' confidence about providing a fully inclusive school, strengths, challenges and barriers.

Review tool

A review tool was developed for reviewers and schools to complete together to provide a means of quickly and systematically recording some descriptive information about various aspects of inclusion:

- Documentation regarding students with special education needs (charter, annual report, policies, procedures).
- Reporting to the board.
- PLD to support students with special education needs and develop inclusion.
- Self review.

Having a complete set of information meant relationships among different aspects of inclusion could be explored in a systematic and reliable way.

Analysis

The systematic collection of data in the questionnaire and review tool meant responses could be compared with evaluative ratings to explore relationships. For example:
- Are schools that have had more PLD more inclusive and do staff feel more confident?
- Are schools where the SENCO has special education qualifications or training more focused on improvement?

- Are schools more likely to review the provisions they make or the outcomes of these?

Schools included in this report

The table below shows that the schools responding were broadly representative of schools nationally, except that the resulting sample had proportionately fewer full primary, composite, rural, small and schools.[9]

	Number of schools included (152)	Percentage	National percentage (2306)
School type			
Full primary	60	38	44
Contributing	59	38	33
Intermediate, Year 7-10	10	6	5
Composite (Year 1-15, Year 1-10)	2	1	4
Secondary (Year 7-15)	2	1	4
Secondary (Year 9-15; 11-15)	20	13	10
Location of school			
Main urban	92	60	52
Secondary urban	15	10	7
Minor urban	21	14	12
Rural	24	16	29
Size of school			
Very small	3	2	8
Small	18	12	22
Medium	75	48	39
Large	38	24	20
Very large	22	14	10
Low decile (deciles 1-3)	44	28	29
Medium decile (deciles 4-7)	66	42	41
High decile (deciles 8-10)	46	29	30

Judgement when there are currently no students with high needs

ERO's judgement of inclusive practices was primarily based on how schools provided for the students currently enrolled. If there were no students with high needs at the time of the review, the judgement was based on the school's reported previous experience with high needs students, supported by documentation of school values, systems, and procedures.

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[9] Differences between the responding schools and schools nationally were tested using chi square tests and those for location and school size were found to be statistically different ($p<0.01$).

Appendix 5: Self-review questions on including students with special education needs

School values, culture, and commitment

- To what extent is the school committed to including students with special education needs and meeting their needs?
- To what extent do the school's relationships with the families and whānau of students with high needs support the inclusion and achievement of these students?

School-wide systems, initiatives and practices to meet the needs of students with special education needs

- How well does the school plan and coordinate its provisions for students with special education needs?
- How well do staff understand their responsibility for students with special education needs and collaborate to meet their needs?
- How effectively does the school use a range of information to identify students with special needs and monitor their progress?
- How effective are the processes for transition into and through the school, to the next school and out of school?
- To what extent has PLD supported leaders and teachers to improve inclusion and achievement of students with special education needs?

Teaching and support to promote participation and engagement

- How well does the school consider the requirements of students with special education needs when deciding on their placement and selecting staff to work with them?
- To what extent do IEPs provide specific, measureable, achievable, realistic and time-bound goals for students?
- How well does the school respond to the needs of individual students?
- How well do teachers differentiate teaching and adapt the curriculum to promote inclusion and achievement of students with special education needs?
- How effective is the guidance for teacher's aides to provide effective support for students with special education needs?
- How well does the school promote positive relationships between students with special education needs and other students?
- To what extent are students with special education needs included outside the classroom?

Outcomes for students with special education needs

- To what extent do students with special education needs progress and achieve their goals?

- To what extent does the school support the cultural identity of students with high needs?
- How well does the school provide a caring culture where students with high needs feel valued, comfortable and safe from bullying?