

Learning Support – Briefing for Incoming Minister

Inclusive education

Inclusive education is where all children and young people are present, participating, learning and achieving

- 1 Every child and young person in New Zealand has the right to education. Inclusive education is about giving all children and young people the same opportunity to be present, participate, learn and achieve, regardless of their individual needs or differences.
- 2 At an inclusive early learning service or school, every child and young person is welcome and able to take part in all aspects of life at their school or early learning service. Their identities, languages, abilities and talents are recognised and affirmed, and their learning needs are addressed.
- 3 Inclusive education benefits all children and young people. It ensures that early learning services and schools are supportive and engaging places, and that teachers respond flexibly to the diversity of children and young people's needs.

Enabling and strengthening inclusive education

- 4 To achieve a fully inclusive education system, we have to support presence, participation, learning and achievement to enable all children and young people to reach their potential in education. This continues to be a work in progress. For example, at times it is challenging for teachers and support workers to respond to children and young people with complex behaviour and learning needs while meeting the needs and ensuring the safety of all learners.
- 5 Parents and whānau also experience challenges in having their children's needs recognised and supported. Some parents report that they have been discouraged from enrolling their child at their local school; that their child has not been welcome and/or allowed to attend for full school hours; or that their child has been excluded from education opportunities outside of the classroom.
- 6 A key to addressing these concerns and strengthening inclusive education is the provision of learning support. Learning support is the additional support provided by early learning services, schools, the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) and a range of other organisations to strengthen teaching and learning for all learners. This includes the provision of targeted and specialist support to enable some children and young people to be included in early learning services and schools.
- 7 Children and young people receiving learning support have a diverse range of needs:
 - **Disability** – Students with disabilities (e.g. in relation to sensory, motor, or neurological factors)
 - **Disadvantage** – Socio economic, cultural and or linguistic factors
 - **Behaviour** – Behavioural or emotional issues
 - **Progress** – Educational gaps, disengagement or other barriers that stop children and young people progressing.

- 8 These needs are not mutually exclusive, and they affect children and young people's learning in different ways and in varying degrees of intensity. At a system level we need to ensure that a continuum of learning support is available to help all children and young people make meaningful progress regardless of the challenges they face. This often involves providing advice, training and guidance to the adults around the child, including teachers, support workers, parents, caregivers and whānau.

Framework for inclusion and learning support

New Zealand's legislative framework

- 9 The right to an inclusive education is grounded in the Education Act 1989 (the Act), enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and reinforced by the New Zealand Disability Strategy.
- 10 Recent changes to the Act make it clear that one of the key objectives of the education system is to enable all children and young people to reach their maximum educational potential.
- 11 The Act requires school boards of trustees to enrol students in their schools, irrespective of their needs and abilities. There is also an explicit legal obligation on them to be inclusive, and to take all reasonable steps to act in a manner that is consistent with the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi when performing their roles and responsibilities.
- 12 In early learning services, the Human Rights Act 1993 prevents discrimination in enrolment. Once a child is enrolled, services must meet their obligations under the licensing regulations. These obligations include delivering a curriculum that responds to their children's learning interests, strengths, capabilities and cultures, and acknowledges and reflects the unique place of Māori as tangata whenua, and providing a positive learning environment for those children.
- 13 These legal, national and international obligations are backed up by the New Zealand Curriculum, Te Marautanga o Aotearoa (the curriculum for Māori-medium settings), and Te Whāriki (the early childhood education curriculum).
- 14 The Ministry also provides a range of strategies, policies and guidelines to promote inclusive practices in early learning services and schools. These include Ka Hikitia and the Pasifika Education Plan.

A 'tiered' framework for learning support

- 15 Learning support is conceptualised in three tiers that reflect the varying needs of children and young people, and of early learning services and schools in supporting them. The tiered framework has universal support at the base through to targeted and intensive/specialist support.

Tier One - Universal learning support

- 16 Schools receive a range of universal learning supports designed to develop their inclusive practice capability and ability to provide positive learning environments. For most children and young people, their needs are fully met within their early learning

service or classroom through responsive and flexible teaching, and a positive environment.

- 17 The Education Council's Code of Practice and Teaching Standards are clear that all teachers are expected to create learning environments that are safe, welcoming, caring and respectful. They are expected to provide learning opportunities where every learner can participate and achieve, have high expectations for all learners, accept and value every learner's diversity and uniqueness, and affirm Māori learners as tangata whenua and actively support their educational aspirations.

Tier Two - Targeted learning support

- 18 For a proportion of children and young people, or groups of children and young people, targeted learning support is needed to enable them to be present, to participate, learn and achieve. For example, the provision of braille reading materials for blind students.
- 19 Targeted learning support meets children's needs through early identification and intervention, and a child-centred response that takes into account the full range of support options available.

Tier Three - Intensive, individualised learning support

- 20 For a small proportion of students, their disability, disadvantage, behaviour or progress needs are complex and require intensive, individualised or specialist interventions and supports.

Learning Support is provided to an estimated 8-10% of young New Zealanders

- 21 In New Zealand, an estimated 80,000 to 100,000 children and young people in early learning services and schools receive some form of additional targeted or intensive/specialist learning support each year. This equates to around 8% to 10% of children and young people in early learning services and schools.
- 22 In FY16/17, the Ministry's budget for Learning Support services, encompassing what was previously known as Special Education, was \$692.5m. This figure does not include services, such as alternative education, that support children and young people who face barriers for a variety of reasons not related to disability, including disengagement and behavioural issues.
- 23 Appendix One shows the learning supports and services at Tiers One, Two and Three. Numbers of students and/or funding for supports and services are included where these are programme-specific appropriations.

Across the system there is significant pressure on learning support services

- 24 Demand is increasing for learning support because of growth in the school age population, earlier identification of needs through early intervention services and increased participation in early childhood education. There are also more children and young people with complex, and in some cases enduring needs, for example neuro-developmental conditions such as Autism Spectrum Disorder and Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder.
- 25 Requests for services are expected to continue to rise. Education sector groups regularly raise concerns about schools' ability to manage challenging student behaviour. Many of the associated cost pressures stem from the fact that funding for the majority of learning support services is not demand driven.

Learning support is provided in a range of contexts

- 26 Over 95% of children and young people who receive targeted or intensive/specialist learning support are enrolled at early learning services or their local schools.
- 27 About 5% of children and young people who receive learning support attend a day special school, a residential special school, a vision or deaf education centre, a regional health school, or an Oranga Tamariki Youth Justice or Care and Protection residence for their education.
- 28 There are 28 day special schools across the country. Most have satellite classes on site at local schools where children and young people can get a mix of inclusive experience and specialist teaching. Some also offer an itinerant teaching service, so that a child or young person can be enrolled at their local school, but receive specialist teaching from the special school.
- 29 There are three residential special schools for students who have high educational, social and emotional needs.
- 30 There are two deaf education centres with a combined board of trustees, and one vision education centre. These centres have residential facilities and specialist early learning services, and provide assessment and resource services to children and young people with sensory impairments.
- 31 Regional health schools provide teachers for children and young people who cannot attend school because they are unwell. Children and young people stay on the roll of their usual school while they get support from the health school.
- 32 In FY16/17 we invested \$92.4m in day special schools, residential special schools, deaf and vision education centres, and regional health schools. We also provided support to Oranga Tamariki Youth Justice and Care and Protection residences. We fund the New Zealand Foundation for Child and Family Health and Development (STAND Children's Services) which provides a therapeutic care and education service for children across seven sites. STAND has an annual budget of \$2.1m, which funds up to 178 places at any one time for students.
- 33 The Cholmondeley Children's Centre provides short-term emergency and planned respite care and education to children aged 3-12 years whose families are experiencing genuine stress or crisis. The aim of the centre is to give the children the opportunity to build their resilience while issues at home are resolved. Approximately 400 students access the centre every year and we provide annual funding of \$0.224m.

We fund schools, early learning services and other providers to deliver learning supports and services

- 34 Around two-thirds of government funding for learning support is administered by schools, early learning services and other providers. This funding is used in two main ways. The first is to deliver Tier One services and supports that are designed to build the capability of early learning services and schools to strengthen inclusion and meet the learning needs of children and young people. The second is to provide Tier Two and Three targeted or intensive/specialist interventions to individuals and small groups of children and young people with additional learning needs.

Enabling locally-responsive learning support

- 35 All schools receive a **Special Education Grant (SEG)**, based on their student role and decile, to support children and young people with learning needs. The SEG is designed to give schools flexibility over how they meet the learning needs of their children and young people. They can use it in a variety of ways including buying resources or materials, accessing relevant training for teachers, or providing extra specialist services or additional teacher or teacher aide time.
- 36 We invested \$39.2m in FY16/17 in the SEG.
- 37 We fund the national school-based **Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTL B)** service to support the achievement of students in Years 1-10 who have learning and/or behaviour difficulties. These specialist resource teachers (RTL B) work within Tiers One and Two.
- 38 There are 929 FTTE RTL B nationally, working together with classroom teachers and schools to provide support that may go beyond the individual student and also benefit the teacher, whole class, groups of students and/or the whole school. RTL B have a particular focus on supporting Māori students, Pasifika students and children and young people moving into State care.
- 39 RTL B are organised into 40 clusters, providing an itinerant service to a cluster of schools. Each RTL B cluster has an employing lead school, lead school principal and a cluster manager. The combined operational and staff funding for RTL B in 2017 is \$93.7m.

Engaging dis-engaged, or at risk of dis-engaging, children and young people in education

- 40 The **Attendance Service** funds 16 external providers to work with schools to reduce unjustified absences and non-enrolment of children in school. The Attendance Service has an annual budget of \$9.6m.
- 41 **Alternative Education (AE)** provides 1,888 places for students aged 13 to 15 years who have become alienated from school, although a higher number of students benefit from the programme throughout a year (2,872 students in 2016). AE is a short term intervention to support students to reengage in a meaningful learning programme and transition them back to school or further education or training. In 2017, 88 managing schools are contracted to deliver AE around New Zealand. AE aims to increase attendance rates and enable students to achieve individual learning programmes which will lead on to achieving NCEA level 2. The AE programme has an annual budget of \$21.02m.
- 42 **Activity Centres** fund 280 places for students annually, and are governed and run by a secondary school that has responsibility for employing registered teachers to provide the learning programme. Activity Centres provide a specialised learning programme intended to lead to increased attendance, engagement and achievement at school, social outcomes and successful transition rates for its target student group. In 2016, 429 students were part of the Activity Centre programme.
- 43 **Teen Parent Units (TPUs)** fund 590 places for students annually. The programme provides secondary education for pregnant or parenting students which is intended to lead to increased engagement and achievement in education and result in successful transitions to further education, training or employment. They are governed and run by a secondary school and may be located on or off the school's site. In 2016 approximately 636 students were enrolled in the TPU programme. TPUs have an

annual budget of \$3.1m in operational funding as well as resourcing for additional staffing and management units, establishment funding, property and ECE.

- 44 **Service Academies** are run within secondary schools in collaboration with the New Zealand Defence Force, and provide 580 places for students annually at 29 schools around New Zealand. In 2016 approximately 522 students were part of the programme. The target student group is Year 12 and Year 13 students, particularly Māori and Pasifika males, who are at risk of disengaging from mainstream school and would benefit from a military-style programme. The programme offers courses in leadership and outdoor education, and is integrated with the wider school, supporting students to achieve at least NCEA Level 2. The total annual budget for the Service Academies' programme is \$3.79m.

Te Kura – The Correspondence School

- 45 In 2016, Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (Te Kura – The Correspondence School) was an alternative schooling pathway for over 20,000 students. Some of those students entered Te Kura through a learning support gateway. These gateways included Activity Centres and Alternative Education, alienation, exclusion or expulsion, high health needs, psychological or psycho-social reasons, a regional health school, or because they had special education needs or were a young parent. In 2016 there were 6,145 students enrolled at Te Kura through one of these learning support gateways. Of these, 34 were in an early learning service, 295 were in Years 1-8 and 4,094 were in Years 9-13. Of those students, 1,722 were enrolled full-time in Te Kura.

Supporting positive behaviour

- 46 **Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L)** is a suite of programmes and initiatives for supporting schools and early learning services to create and sustain positive, safe learning environments. PB4L supports New Zealand schools and early learning services, and parents, family and whānau to promote positive behaviour and create inclusive learning environments that foster well-being and achievement for every child and student.
- 47 PB4L is delivered by the Ministry in partnership with a range of organisations and groups, including RTLB, non-government organisations and universities. In FY16/17 we invested \$20.3m in PB4L.
- 48 PB4L School-Wide is an evidence based framework that looks at behaviour and learning from a whole-school and individual student perspective. It can be tailored to suit the cultural values and particular strengths and needs of a school community. As at April 2017:
- i. 31% (774) of all schools are implementing PB4L School-Wide
 - ii. 56% (195) of all secondary schools are implementing PB4L School-Wide
 - iii. approximately 299,000 students attend these schools of whom 30% (90,000) are Māori and 13% (38,600) are Pasifika
 - iv. 48% of PB4L School-wide schools are in deciles 1-3.
- 49 PB4L is comprised of a number of programmes and initiatives including Incredible Years Parent (IYP); Incredible Years Teacher (IYT); PB4L Restorative Practices; and Kaupapa Māori: Huakina Mai and Te Mana Tikitiki.

Enabling all children and young people to succeed in education

- 50 We provide **English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)** funding so schools can offer extra English language learning support for students who are learning English as a second language. Schools have flexibility in terms of how they use the funding (ie there is no one 'programme', recognising that students have varying and often complex needs), and the use of funding is regularly monitored to ensure students' needs are being met. In 2016/17 we invested \$32.672m in ESOL.
- 51 ESOL funding includes **refugee support**. This is targeted funding for refugee background students for their first five years in the primary/secondary system. This includes funding the educational programmes for quota refugees during their initial six week orientation in New Zealand.
- 52 We fund **mentoring services** in 2017 for approximately 2,278 Māori and Pasifika students to support NCEA Level 2 achievement. In 2016/17 we invested \$1.7m in mentoring services.
- 53 We are funding **Year 9 Plus** which is a concept test that aims to provide intensive educational and social support to 100 of the most vulnerable Year 9 students (taura) in Tairāwhiti at risk of not achieving in education. Lessons learned from this test will be applied to improve student engagement, retention and achievement outcomes of other such vulnerable learners across New Zealand. Year 9 Plus aims to support the individual, their siblings and whānau to achieve better educational outcomes. Year 9 Plus was approved in Budget 2015, with \$2.2m provided over 4 years.
- 54 We fund **Study Support Centres**, which are run outside of regular school time, and aim to assist primary school students from Years 3 to 8, to develop good study habits, including improved attitude and behaviour to learning, leading to increased achievement as they progress through further education. There are approximately 2,600 students enrolled in the programme in 2017 across 71 centres. The annual budget for Study Support Centres is \$1.62m.

Building the skills and confidence of professionals and other adults who support children and young people with learning needs

- 55 The Ministry funds a range of **special education study awards and scholarships** that provide financial support for educators to study for specialised qualifications at a New Zealand university. These include opportunities to study for postgraduate diplomas in four specialist teaching qualifications and Scholarships for Teaching English in Schools for Speakers of Other Languages (TESSOL). In 2016/17 we invested \$3.01m in study awards.

The Ministry directly provides a wide range of learning support

- 56 We provide a wide range of services and supports to meet differing learning needs at each tier of learning support. The remaining approximately one third of learning support funding is administered by the Ministry for specialist services that are mostly provided to individual students.
- 57 We work closely with parents and whānau, other agencies, non-government organisations, other specialists and providers, schools and early learning services to ensure learning support is appropriate to the needs of the child or young person and enables them to reach their full potential.

- 58 To deliver learning support, we employ around 900 front-line practitioners in our regional offices with a wide range of learning support expertise. This includes psychologists, speech-language therapists, advisors on deaf children and early intervention teachers. It also includes around 140 education, behaviour and communication support workers to work alongside our staff and teachers.
- 59 Other learning support staff carry out a range of roles, including professional practice support, verifying eligibility for services and support, service design and operational policy advice.
- 60 We recently made changes to the way our learning support staff are organised, so that we better reflect a broader view of learning support, and have more visibility over the full range of support provided to early learning services, schools, and Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako in our regions.
- 61 These changes have involved creating a single learning support directorate, and changing the reporting lines of our regional staff so they report to the Director of Education in their region.
- 62 Our learning support staff are part of the Sector Enablement and Support group, led by Deputy Secretary Katrina Casey.

We support children as early as possible

- 63 The Ministry's **Early Intervention Service** supports young children from 0-6 years of age who have additional learning needs due to disabilities, delays in development or communication, or behavioural difficulties – or often a combination of these. The service also supports their parents/whānau.
- 64 In the 2016/17 financial year, we invested \$31.9m in the Early Intervention Service and provided a service to 11,532 children and their parents/whānau.
- 65 Our Early Intervention teams work closely with parents/whānau and educators to build their knowledge, skills and confidence to support the child at home and in early learning settings. We also contract early intervention specialist providers to deliver specialist services to support a further 468 children with the highest needs.
- 66 Our Early Intervention staff work closely with health professionals such as audiologists, physiotherapists, paediatricians, dieticians and occupational therapists.

We support children and young people to be present, participate and achieve in education

- 67 Children and young people can access a range of Ministry funded services and supports that enable them to participate and achieve in education, for example (all figures are for the 2016/17 financial year):
- i. **specialised transport assistance** helps children and young people with learning support needs to be present at school (\$40.1m)
 - ii. **boarding allowances** help children and young people living in remote areas or facing other barriers, to board away from home and focus on their studies (\$11.32m)
 - iii. **youth justice assessments** identify educational needs to help re-engage young people in education and move away from offending

- iv. **assistive technology** helps children and young people to participate and achieve, including computer hardware and software, specialised furniture or hearing devices (\$2.58m)
- v. **accessible format materials** are provided by the Blind Foundation to pre-school and school-aged children who are blind or have low vision. They give timely access to learning resources that are appropriate to their learning needs (\$1.06m).
- vi. **physical disability service** works with schools and teachers to adapt the environment to fit around the child or young person's needs and to help them participate and achieve
- vii. **deaf and hard of hearing moderate needs (not ORS funded)** provides a service to school age students with moderate learning needs related to hearing loss. The student would have some hearing technology such as hearing aids.

We support children to communicate

- 68 Our **Communication Service's** speech-language therapists support children aged 5-8 years who have difficulties with talking, listening and understanding language. They also provide parents/whānau and teachers with advice and practical ways to make a difference.
- 69 Communication support can include individual therapy that is followed up at home, help from a teacher aide at school, small group work and classroom strategies for teachers.
- 70 In the 2016/17 financial year, we invested \$15.8m in the Communication Service and reached 6,000 children and their parents/whānau.

We support children and young people with their behaviour

- 71 Our behaviour services and support encompass Tiers One, Two and Three. They are based on evidence that shows positive behaviour can be learned. Our behaviour services and support often work in partnership with other agencies, including the Ministry of Health and Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki.
- 72 At Tier One, we support **Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) School-Wide** (see paragraphs 75-78 below), **bullying prevention guidance**, and **violence prevention and de-escalation** guidance and training.
- 73 At Tier Two we provide or fund a range of initiatives and services to support the student, the parents and the early learning service or school.
- 74 We fund the **Interim Response Fund (IRF)** as part of the Ministry's focus on addressing disruptive student behaviour. The IRF aims to keep students engaged in learning following significantly challenging behavioural events. In 2017 students benefitting from the fund totalled 3,528. The IRF has annual funding of \$4.0m.
- 75 Also at Tier Two, we provide services, including the **PB4L Incredible Years programmes**, and our specialist behaviour staff provide advice, strategies and support for parents/whānau and teachers.

- 76 These services and supports help to make changes to a child or young person's environment, both at home and in their school or early learning service. They help the child or young person learn how to cope with situations and relate positively to others.
- 77 The **Behaviour Service** at Tier 3 is for students in years 1 to 10 who behave in a way that
- i. significantly affects their learning; and/or
 - ii. risks their safety or the safety of other people; and/or
 - iii. gets in the way of positive relationships with other people.
- 78 In the 2016/17 financial year we provided specialist behaviour support to 4,250 children and their parents/whānau. We invested \$25.4m in FY16/17 in the Behaviour Service.

We support children and young people with high and complex needs and challenges

- 79 Children and young people with high and complex needs can receive support from the **Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS)** throughout their schooling. Children and young people receiving ORS have access to additional teacher time, specialists, teacher aide support and some funding to cover necessary costs.
- 80 As at 4 July 2017, 9039 students were receiving ORS funding. Total ORS funding is approximately \$191m.
- 81 The **Specialist Teacher Outreach Service** provides specialist teachers that can travel to schools in their local area to support students in ORS. In 2017 there are approximately 607 students receiving this service across 28 service provider schools. The service has annual funding of \$2.08m.
- 82 The **Intensive Wraparound Service (IWS)** provides individualised support for children and young people aged 8-14 years with highly complex and challenging behaviour, as well as social and education needs or an intellectual impairment.
- 83 IWS is funded to deliver a service to 335 children and young people a year. In the 2016/2017 financial year 341 children and young people were supported. IWS provides a holistic approach for students who require support at school, at home and in the community. IWS plans can be carried out in mainstream schools or could include enrolment at one of New Zealand's three residential special schools. Enrolment at a residential special school provides a targeted, brief programme as part of the IWS plan. In FY16/17 we invested \$13.0m in IWS.

We support children and young people with high health needs

- 84 The **School High Health Needs Fund** supports children with significant health conditions to attend school safely and become independent in managing their own care. Some children and young people may need the fund's support throughout their schooling.
- 85 Numbers of students change daily, but as at 19 October 2017 we provided support to 1,073 children and young people through the fund. In FY16/17 we invested \$7.4m in the fund.

Mental health and wellbeing in schools

- 86 Schools are required to provide a safe physical and emotional environment for their students. The health and physical education curriculum includes a focus on mental health education, and requires schools to help students develop competencies for mental wellness, build resilience by strengthening identity and make good life choices. Mental health is part of the compulsory school curriculum up to Year 10.
- 87 Factors that we know make a difference to student's mental health and wellbeing include:
- i. a school culture that is inclusive and welcoming of all students
 - ii. effective pastoral care, guidance and counselling systems
 - iii. effective referral systems to school-based health services; other external health services such as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services; specialist schools – the Regional Health Schools; and appropriate Learning Support services
 - iv. strong links with family/whānau and the community
 - v. teachers who have a vital role in promoting wellbeing by, among other things, fostering caring and supportive relationships; and responding to the warning signs of emotional distress
 - vi. positive relationships with peers.

Guidance and counselling in secondary schools

- 88 Every school that has students at secondary level (years 9-15) is entitled to the guidance staffing entitlement. Guidance staffing is a component of staffing entitlement which can be used to help employ teachers or guidance counsellors that are registered teachers. Boards of trustees decide how to spend their staffing entitlement (which includes guidance staffing entitlement) to best meet the needs of their school community.
- 89 The Ministry does not have information on how schools allocate their guidance staffing entitlement. However, some information is available on how schools designate their staff. In 2017, 161 staff roles were primarily designated as 'guidance counsellor' or 'guidance counsellor trainee' across 132 schools. This information relies on schools using the right code for staffing in their systems and does not count teachers who may work primarily as teachers or managers, but do some work as a guidance counsellor.
- 90 As part of the Prime Minister's Youth Mental Health Project (PMYMHP), the Education Review Office (ERO) evaluated the national provision of guidance and counselling in secondary schools in 2013. They found that the capacity of pastoral care needs to be lifted to ensure efficacy and consistency. ERO found that only 11 of 68 schools were 'well placed' to promote and respond to student wellbeing.

Other Government agencies fund and provide services and supports that complement learning support

- 91 Other Government agency partners, including the Ministry of Health (MoH), the Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki, the Ministry of Social Development and the New Zealand Police, also fund and/or provide complementary supports.

- 92 Examples include, Social Workers in Schools and Youth Workers in Secondary Schools (Oranga Tamariki), School Based Health Services (MoH) and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (MoH).

The way we provide learning support is changing

- 93 We have been working to modernise learning support to make it more focused on children's needs and easier to access for parents and whānau, so that children get the right support at the right time, within an inclusive education system.
- 94 Our learning support system has evolved in response to emerging issues. As a result, over many decades, it has become complex, slow, fragmented, and difficult to access and navigate. Parents/whānau have to deal with a range of different people and jump through multiple hoops. Children and young people are often referred and assessed several times and have to meet specific criteria to access the help they need.
- 95 During 2015, we engaged with over 3,650 parents/whānau and the disability and education sectors on the changes needed to the learning support system. The feedback was that the system needs to be easier to access, more focused on children and young people's needs, more flexible, and better linked in with other health and social services.
- 96 From 2016, in response to this feedback, 22 small local improvement projects were run nationwide, in a variety of school and early learning settings. These trialled new initiatives to deliver learning support to children and young people and their parents/whānau in a faster, simpler and more coordinated way.
- 97 Success in these small projects has given us the confidence to further extend the new approaches. In March 2017, we began a small scale pilot to test more flexible, better coordinated ways of providing support in the Ōtūmoetai (Tauranga), Whakatane and Taupō Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako. A total of 14,500 children and young people attend the participating early learning services and schools.
- 98 The new ways of working that we are further testing include:
- i. **A single point of contact** – a key worker is the primary point of contact for each child or young person. It is their job to talk with parents and whānau, co-ordinate services and monitor progress.
 - ii. **A move to one plan** – the child or young person has one plan to support their individual learning needs, with better joined up support tailored to better fit the child's individual needs.
 - iii. **Collaborative practice** – working together as early learning services, schools and Kāhui Ako draw from a wider community to share knowledge and resources and better support children and young people. Specialists can work with teachers to identify ways to address issues earlier and build learning environments that better support children's learning. Schools, early learning services and the Ministry can support better transitions for children and young people as they move through their learning journey.
 - iv. **Better facilitation** – a facilitator working to convene learning support services, provide a point of contact for the team, and connect to wider social services.

- v. **More flexibility** – local specialists and decision-makers can use their judgment about a child or young person’s access to support, rather than applying inflexible criteria. They know their young people best and will be able to make timely decisions, on an individual plan, to help them learn and achieve.
- vi. **Sharing data** – schools and early learning services within a Kāhui Ako will be able to share information to build a clear picture of their population of learners, understand their strengths and priorities, and take a collaborative approach to responding to all the additional learning needs of the children and young people.

Linking in with health and social services

- 99 Part of the new way of providing learning support includes working more closely with MoH, MSD, and Oranga Tamariki to explore better ways of connecting to non-education services such as nurses and social workers to support the wider needs of students. This will build relationships with strategic partners outside of the education sector, and seek their expertise to respond to their children and young people’s needs.

Improving the way learning support services are provided

- 100 Over time, the new approaches to providing learning support will enhance our understanding of the wider outcomes of intervening earlier and providing learning support more proactively and flexibly.
- 101 In light of this, we are doing policy work on how we can better integrate the different approaches used to provide learning support, with an emphasis on early intervention, and more personalised pathways for children and young people with additional learning needs.

Improving the Communication and Behaviour Services

- 102 We have been working to improve the way children and young people are supported by the Communication and Behaviour Services so there is greater flexibility in, and more access to, support. As part of this, an additional \$63.3 million over four years was announced in Budget 2017 to support students with additional learning needs.
- 103 The 2017 Budget announcement included a tagged contingency to expand the Ministry’s Behaviour Service to enable greater focus on children aged under eight. The Expanding Behaviour Services initiative will support an additional 1,000 children aged 0-8 each year through the employment of 56 FTE specialist staff. The initiative also provides 46 psychologist internships over four years to build the supply of specialist staff. This is subject to authorisation by the Ministers of Finance and Education to drawdown from the Expanding Behavioural Services tagged contingency.
- 104 A second initiative trials a new approach to identifying and supporting three and four year olds with oral language needs. This involves engaging Speech Language Therapists (SLTs) to work with selected early childhood services. The SLTs will provide specialist support to children with particular or additional oral language needs, while building the capability of the services’ teachers to support oral language development and literacy in all children.
- 105 A third initiative extends Incredible Years (IY) to the parents and teachers of children aged 2-5 years presenting with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) patterns of behaviour. The goal of the IY Autism programmes is for children on the Autism

spectrum to have sustained improvement in their social communication, reduction in repetitive behaviour and increased emotional regulation.

Meeting increased demand for services and the associated cost pressures

106 As noted above, across the system there is significant pressure on learning support services. Requests for services are increasing and expected to continue to rise. Education sector groups regularly raise concerns about schools' ability to manage challenging student behaviour. Many of the associated cost pressures stem from the fact that funding for the majority of learning support services is not demand driven.

107 We note that:

- i. Demand for ORS has been rising consistently since its inception – the scheme is funded to support 1% of the school age population, but is currently supporting closer to 1.17% of students
- ii. ESOL demand has risen over the past four years by about 2,000 students a year, bringing the total to 41,000
- iii. Demand for early intervention has increased, due to increased ECE participation, population increases, the increased prevalence of some conditions, and better awareness and identification of some needs
- iv. The rate we pay schools for teacher aides has not increased since 2012. As a result, schools are funding cost increases from their operational grants. This impacts on funding for ORS, In-Class Support and the School High Health Needs Fund.
- v. We are facing demand and cost pressures in all areas of Deaf education. In addition, current funding for New Zealand Sign Language is coming to an end in 2017/18.
- vi. There are price increase pressures for a number of service providers including the Mangere Refugee Centre, STAND Children's Service, Cholmondeley Children's Home, Barnardos and Service Academies.

Addressing waiting times for services

108 Increased demand for learning support has impacted on the wait times (time from initial assessment to actually receiving specialist support) for our core specialist services.

109 The Early Intervention Service presents the biggest challenge, with an average wait time of 71.93 days. Some children and their families are waiting up to a year for an appointment.

110 The average age that children access the Early Intervention Service is relatively consistent across ethnicities: Māori (3 years 6 months), NZ European (3 years 4 months) and Pasifika (3 years 4 months).

111 While wait times have reduced over the last few years, we consider the current wait times to be unacceptable. We are continuing work to drive them down to the extent possible, within current resourcing.

Measuring outcomes of specialist services

- 112 We want to ensure that children and young people with additional learning needs are making learning progress. This is a complex task.
- 113 We have developed and piloted an Outcome Measurement Tool (OMT) to help our specialist frontline staff measure how well their work is supporting a child or young person to meet the goals that are important for them and to the team of people supporting them.
- 114 Our frontline staff have begun using the tool to inform their practice. We are looking at how the information we get from the OMT connects with wider student pathway information, such as student achievement data, enrolment information and records of other interventions. This will help us to better understand how we can best support student achievement through specialist support.

Improving the way we capture, share and use learning support data

- 115 We have limited system-level information about the adequacy, quality, effectiveness and timeliness of learning support services. We lack comprehensive data and evidence around the outcomes for children and young people receiving learning support.
- 116 Until recently, there has also been very little information about learning support in the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI), so we have had limited ability to analyse the overlap between children and young people receiving learning support in the education system and those receiving support from other agencies. As of September 2017, a wider range of learning support data is in the IDI, which will enable us to do more cross-agency analysis of pathways and outcomes for students with learning support needs.

Tracking progress and achievement of students who are working long-term within Level 1 of the New Zealand Curriculum

- 117 We are working with the New Zealand Council for Educational Research to develop an approach to report at an individual, school and system level on the progress and achievement of students who are working long-term within level one of the New Zealand Curriculum. There is currently no consistent way of assessing and reporting on this group of students, with the result that their progress is generally invisible.
- 118 The approach is to build on the Learning Progressions Framework which illustrates the steps students are taking as they develop their expertise in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 1 to 10. This will ensure the process is inclusive and within the New Zealand Curriculum. The work is being received positively by those involved as it is providing professional learning and development at the same time as providing insight into potential assessment and reporting.

Improving the way disputes are resolved

- 119 We are working with the New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) to develop a Dispute Resolution Process for schools and families/whānau where there are issues and concerns about students with learning support needs that cannot be resolved between the parties.
- 120 The new process will focus on early resolution of issues by supporting facilitated conversations, introducing a review process to consider all options, and providing a mediation service for complex issues. There will be a phased implementation in three

regions (Auckland, Whanganui/Manawatu and Marlborough), which will be evaluated before being rolled out nationally.

Linking learning support with the wider disability system

- 121 The **Disability Action Plan** (DAP) sets out the priorities established by the Ministerial Committee on Disability Issues for action. These priorities advance implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the New Zealand Disability Strategy 2001.
- 122 We are the lead agency for priority action 1a of the DAP, which is about **making improvements intended to increase the number of disabled people transitioning from school and tertiary education into employment**. The work is being undertaken by a cross-agency working group including the Ministries of Health and Social Development and the Accident Compensation Commission and an independent advisor from the disability sector. Advice to government is due in June 2018.
- 123 We are also the lead agency for priority action 4b, **A Good Start in Life**, which is focussed on developing policy options to improve government supports for parents, family and whānau of disabled children aged 0-6 years. We are scheduled to provide a progress report and initial advice to government in early 2018.
- 124 In February 2017, Cabinet directed the Ministries of Health and Social Development to work alongside the disabled community to design a process for a nationwide transformation of the disability support system (the System Transformation). The Ministry has been closely involved at a range of levels.
- 125 The changes being made to modernise learning support and strengthen inclusion align with the high-level design of the System Transformation. Both approaches seek to ensure that:
- i. disabled children and young people have access to support that is coordinated and is right for them
 - ii. the main person with whom disabled children and young people and their families/whānau connect is knowledgeable and empathic
 - iii. there is ongoing strategic data analysis based on robust information gathering in order to further develop and grow the system
 - iv. control over resources shifts more to a local level to respond to the support needs of the eligible population within that locality/community.

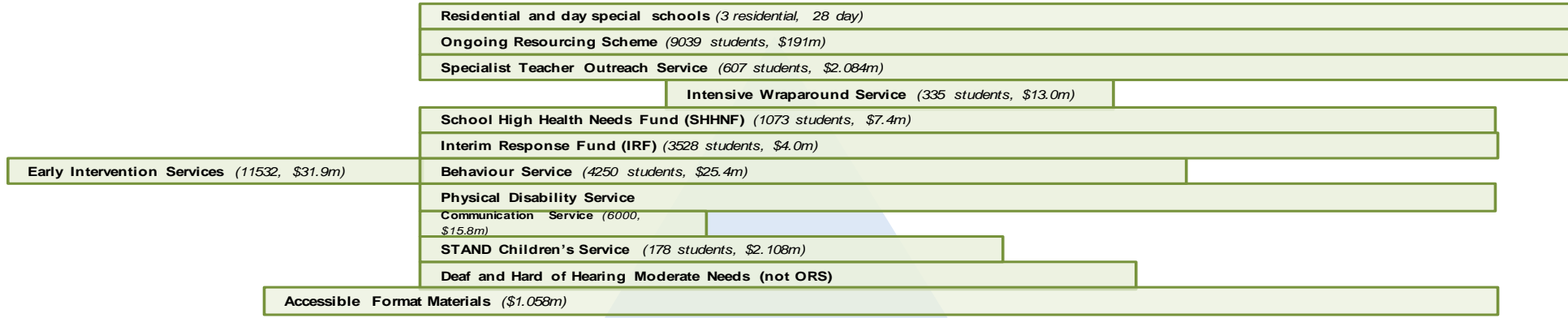
Appendix One – Learning Support by tiers of support

Learning support

Numbers of students and/or funding for supports and services are included where these are programme-specific appropriations.

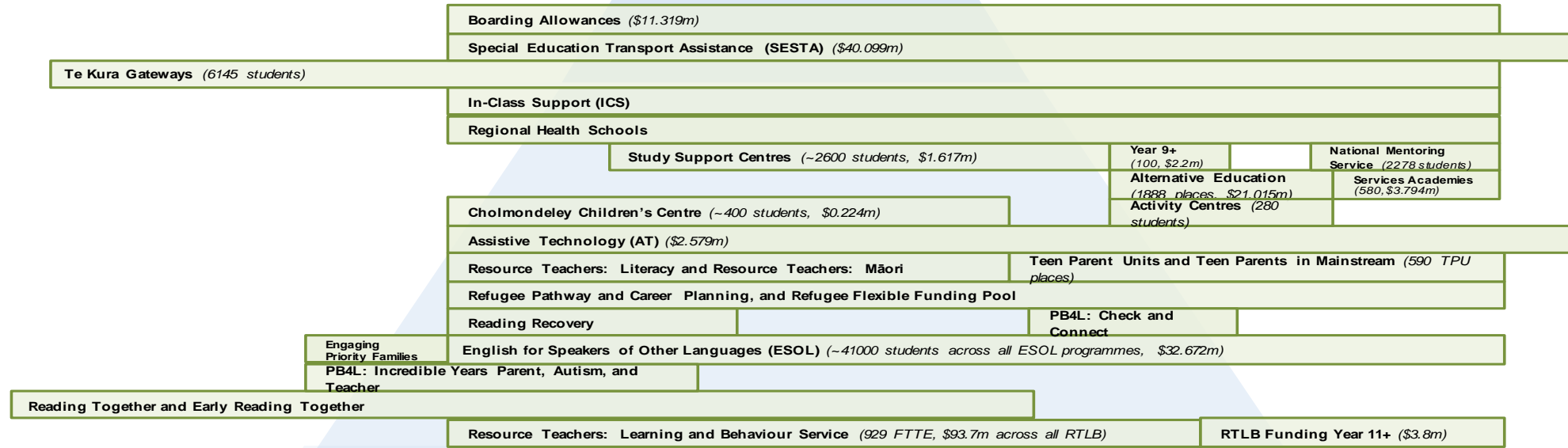
Tier Three

Intensive, individualised learning support for smaller numbers of students who require intensive, individualised or specialist intervention and support



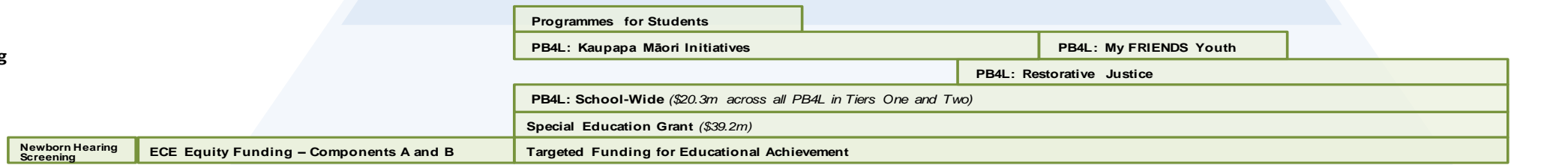
Tier Two

Targeted learning support through early identification and intervention, and a child-centred response that takes into account the full range of support options available.



Tier One

Universal learning support is provided for all children and young people to meet their learning needs within an inclusive education system.



Age Prenatal 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18-21