SYNERGIA

LEARNING SUPPORT COORDINATOR EVALUATION: PHASE 1 FORMATIVE AND PROCESS EVALUATION

A final report for the Ministry of Education

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26 January 2021

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Learning Support Coordinators (LSCs) are a long-awaited, fully-funded, in-school learning support role. It was a key recommendation of the 2016 Select Committee Inquiry to improve identification of, and support for children and young individuals with dyslexia, dyspraxia, and autism. LSC implementation represents the culmination of many years' work to shift to a more local, collaborative and responsive approach to learning support defined in the Learning Support Delivery Model. The purpose of the LSC role is to make sure that children and young people with mild-to-moderate, neurodiverse, or high and complex learning support needs receive appropriate help when they need it. [1]

In August 2019 623 full-time permanent LSC roles were allocated to 1052 schools in 124 clusters of schools, kura and early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo (clusters). These roles were to start in the 2020 school year as a result of $312 million of new operating and capital funding.

The phase 1 LSC evaluation has been completed to provide feedback on initial implementation of the new role and inform the success of future delivery. The original evaluation plan was disrupted by COVID-19, but the evaluation team completed interviews with 99 individuals across 13 clusters, and surveyed LSCs and schools/kura with an allocation of an LSC in term 3, 2020. Given the pressure on the sector in 2020, the survey response rates were satisfactory: 62% (n=371) LSCs and 40% (n=419) schools/kura completed the surveys. The condensed opportunity for data collection prevented the intended iterative cycles of learning and evaluative enquiry. The timeframe also meant some clusters were less well represented in interviews than others, and enabled very limited input from whānau. This report presents these findings, structured around the key evaluation questions.

What did learning support provision and processes look like in schools/kura before the LSC role?

There are many contributors to effective learning support in education settings. Prior to LSC implementation, some learning supports were provided within schools or at a cluster level by school staff and others were accessed externally, via the Ministry or other providers. While those accessing support were generally satisfied, not all students with learning support needs received support. This includes children and young people with moderate needs who are neurodiverse, gifted, and those at risk of disengaging from education. Limited capacity, capability and system complexity were identified in interviews as barriers to receiving support. Schools/kura said they were better at identifying learning support needs than responding to them, and didn't have the capacity to support teachers/kaiako to work with students with diverse needs as much as they wanted to. Prior to LSCs, Special Education Needs Coordinators (SENCO) were the main conduit to learning support within

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[1] Ministry of Education. (2020). *Learning Support Coordinator: A guide to the role.* https://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/LSC/LSC-Guide-FINAL.pdf

schools/kura. Kāhui Ako or clusters of schools/kura were already engaged in developing collective responses to supporting learning.

How was the LSC role recruited for and established?

Across Aotearoa, 124 clusters received an LSC allocation based on a ratio of approximately 1 LSC to 500 students. Each cluster decided which schools/kura would employ the LSCs (employing school). Some clusters adjusted the allocation of LSC for each school/kura in their cluster. Adjustments in allocation were made predominantly to reduce the number of schools/kura an individual LSC would have to work across. For most, recruitment went smoothly with eight in ten positions filled for the start of the 2020 school year. By July 2020, 596 of 623 FTTE (96% of the LSC allocation identified by payroll data) had been recruited.

This LSC cohort consists of very experienced registered teachers/kaiako and those with specialist learning support experience. Māori medium settings, rural and isolated schools and kura found recruitment harder and the role needs adaptation for Maōri medium settings. This experience is not unique to the LSC role.

Overall, the initial implementation of the role went well for most schools/kura. Schools/kura and LSCs with a vision for the role or a plan to integrate the role introduced it into the school more purposefully than those taking a more organic approach. The Ministry-led induction forums, regional meetings and the publication *Learning Support Coordinator: A Guide to the Role* were very useful but did not provide the role clarity many still expected. COVID-19 disrupted the momentum of early implementation, but the time was used productively by LSCs, often supporting the broader school efforts to maintain student engagement.

How was the LSC role implemented and how is it now functioning?

Implementation is still in a relatively early stage, and nine in ten schools/kura that responded to the survey said the role was partly or fully operational by August. There is evidence that as a cohort, LSCs are delivering on all the five functions identified in the role description. Of these, identifying and supporting students in schools/kura through individual responses or proactive work programmes was the main focus. Connections across the cluster are being made and collaborative working practices are becoming, or are, established. While aspects of the role are transactional, some LSCs require support and vision to grasp the potential for transformational change.

Working across multiple schools/kura provides logistical challenges, alongside some positive role experiences both for LSCs and schools/kura. Recruiting and operationalising the role is challenging for rural areas, and the role needs adaptation for Māori medium settings.

LSCs have altered the dynamic for existing roles key to learning support. Defining role boundaries with SENCOs has been quite straightforward for many but this is still a work in progress for four in ten LSCs working alongside SENCOs. Similarly, the potential overlap with Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) is recognised and is being worked through, with complementary approaches emerging. The facilitation function played by service managers is varied and all stakeholders would benefit from more consistent and clearer expectations regarding this function.

Overall, there is a high degree of satisfaction from schools/kura and LSCs with the role. The LSC role is implemented very differently depending on the context of the clusters but is implemented as intended. The allocation formula seems about right, though further consideration of the requirements of rural schools/kura and those with greater need is warranted. For some, there are barriers to accessing external services and supports for students, or accessing tools and resources required for LSC delivery.

What differences has the LSC contributed to meeting learning support needs?

The introduction of LSCs has made a significant positive difference to the ability of schools/kura to support learning needs. LSCs are a catalyst; doers as well as system enablers. The role is adding much-needed capacity and capability into the system, with benefits emerging where the role is integrated into the school. LSCs are reportedly identifying students whose needs would have previously gone unrecognised, as well as enabling SENCOs and teachers/kaiako to work more effectively. The response to learning support needs is becoming more proactive and strategic. The potential for transformative change is emerging in schools/kura and clusters where the role has been grasped with both hands. Schools/kura struggling to implement the role (around one in ten) are yet to reap the benefits.

How can the implementation and contribution of the LSC role be improved?

Completing planned work relating to defining the service manager facilitation function and launch of Te Rito (standardised Learning Support Register), will support the effectiveness of the LSC role. Where implementation has not gone as well as expected, the evaluation has provided useful insights to support improvements, some of which have already been used by the Ministry. The need for further work to support role clarity and define accountability for the implementation of the role as intended has been identified. More needs to be understood about enabling the role to work well in rural schools and the adaptations required for Māori medium settings. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the LSC role and its impact on the demand for learning support services will help track progress and evidence the impact of this role.

SECTION A: BACKGROUND CONTEXT

2   INTRODUCTION

Learning support is a broad concept. It encompasses the range of practices, systems, supports, and services that help children and young people with diverse strengths and needs to experience success in their learning and relationships. These are underpinned by the inclusive values that ensure that education settings are welcoming places for all learners and their whānau.[2]

In November 2018, the New Zealand government announced a new investment of $312 million in operating and capital funding for the first tranche of 623 Learning Support Coordinators (LSCs) from the 2020 school year. The LSC is a full-time, dedicated role; it is not an add-on to teaching or management responsibilities. The LSC role is designed to identify and address barriers to learning and ensure all students – including those with disabilities, neurodiversity, behavioural issues and who are gifted – have an inclusive education, and are engaged and achieve in education. This is a significant and unique opportunity for the education sector.

The Ministry required a formative evaluation of the establishment and early implementation experiences of the LSC role. The evaluation was to provide timely feedback to support the ongoing development and implementation of the LSC role, and inform future decision making. In November 2019, Synergia responded to a request for quote to conduct Phase 1of the LSC evaluation. Synergia were the preferred provider for this evaluation and a Consultancy Services Order was established.

The impact of COVID-19 on the education sector meant the original evaluation plan was no longer feasible. The evaluation plan was amended to what is predominantly a snapshot of implementation from mixed-methods data that was collected between August and September 2020 with one interview completed in December 2020.

This report presents the findings of the evaluation and discusses the insights and considerations for schools and kura, and those in the Ministry supporting this work, so they can continue to learn about what works and optimise the value of the LSC role already in schools/kura and those in any future tranches.

2.1   Reading this report

This report describes in section A the LSC implementation and the purpose of the evaluation before presenting findings in section B from page 14 onwards in sections representing the key evaluation questions. Considerations for the future, section C, begins on page 55. To ease navigation, the main sections of the report address a key evaluation question and begin with a summary of the findings in that section in coloured text.

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[2] Ministry of Education. (2020). Learning Support Coordinator: A guide to the role. https://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/LSC/LSC-Guide-FINAL.pdf

The lightbulb icon and blue shading are used in subsections of the report to identify key insights and opportunities from that section.

A glossary of abbreviations, key terms and tables of figures and tables in the report is included in the appendices which also include a more detailed account of the evaluation methodology and selected survey results.

3 LEARNING SUPPORT COORDINATOR IMPLEMENTATION

LSC implementation represents the culmination of many years' work, to shift to a more local, collaborative and responsive approach to learning support defined in the Learning Support Delivery Model. This dedicated learning support role is unique in the school environment, is allocated on approximately a 1:500 ratio, and has core functions that flex to local requirements. The purpose of the LSC role is to make sure that children and young people with mild-to-moderate, neurodiverse, or high and complex learning support needs receive appropriate help when they need it. These roles were to start in the 2020 school year as a result of $312 million of new operating and capital learning support funding.

Learning support refers to the additional support some children and young people need to engage and achieve in education. One in five children and young people need some kind of extra support for their learning. This might because of disability, learning difficulties, disadvantage, physical or mental health problems or behaviour issues.[3]

The LSC role was a key recommendation of the 2016 Select Committee Inquiry to improve identification of, and support for children and young individuals with dyslexia, dyspraxia, and autism. The Ministry of Education (the Ministry) has been working to reduce fragmentation and strengthen how learning support is provided, so that all children and young people get the right support, in the right place, at the right time. This has resulted in the design and development of the Learning Support Delivery model (LSDM). The LSDM signals a more localised and flexible approach to identifying and responding to the learning support needs in the community. The four features of the model are: working together to plan and delivering joined-up support, proactively identifying local needs and gathering available resources, collaborative decision making, and strengthening support across a range of needs.[4]

The Learning Support Action Plan (LSAP) released in July 2019, built on the LSDM and set six priorities for the education system. The implementation of the LSC role is the first priority within the LSAP and has an important part to play in implementing and strengthening the LSDM. Other system-wide changes that will enhance the outcomes for students include a

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[3] Ministry of Education. (2019). *Learning support action plan 2019-2025.*
https://conversation.education.govt.nz/conversations/learning-support-action-plan/
[4] Te kete Ipurangi, Ministry of Education. (n.d.). *Understanding the Learning Support Delivery Model (LSDM) and new models for collaboration.*
https://www.inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/collaborative-planning-for-learning/understanding-the-learning-support-delivery-model

refresh of Ka Hikitia (Māori enjoying and achieving education success as Māori) and the Action Plan for Pacific Education.

Clusters of schools, kura, early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo (clusters) that were progressing with the LSDM were considered for LSC allocation, as this would provide a supportive context for LSCs to work in. Clusters who received an LSC allocation included those who were part of a formal Kāhui Ako Community of Learning (CoL) and others that were not. This report uses the term cluster to refer to all collective arrangements.
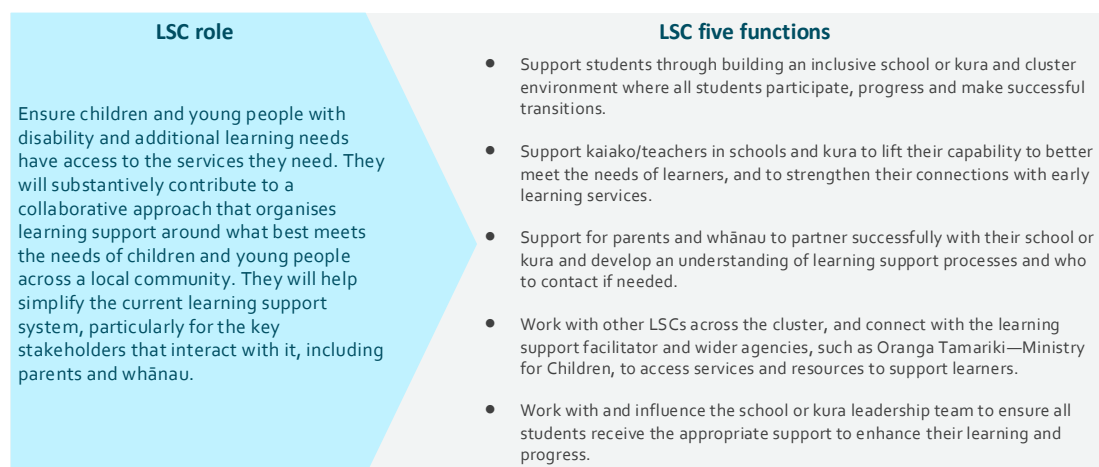
The Ministry's service managers provide a facilitation function for these clusters and the LSC working in them. A review of the service manager role description was underway but not finalised, during the evaluation timeframe.

3.1   The Learning Support Coordinator role

The LSC was designed to be a dedicated full-time teaching equivalent (FTTE) role with an allocation ratio of one LSC to 500 students. The ratio of LSC was increased in rural areas and where school rolls had a high proportion of Māori and Pacific students. While some schools/kura would have at least one dedicated FTTE LSC onsite, smaller schools/kura would have to share an LSC between them with one of them being the employer of the LSC.

The purpose and core functions of the role are presented in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: LSC role and core functions

LSC role	LSC five functions
Ensure children and young people with disability and additional learning needs have access to the services they need. They will substantively contribute to a collaborative approach that organises learning support around what best meets the needs of children and young people across a local community. They will help simplify the current learning support system, particularly for the key stakeholders that interact with it, including parents and whānau.	• Support students through building an inclusive school or kura and cluster environment where all students participate, progress and make successful transitions. • Support kaiako/teachers in schools and kura to lift their capability to better meet the needs of learners, and to strengthen their connections with early learning services. • Support for parents and whānau to partner successfully with their school or kura and develop an understanding of learning support processes and who to contact if needed. • Work with other LSCs across the cluster, and connect with the learning support facilitator and wider agencies, such as Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children, to access services and resources to support learners. • Work with and influence the school or kura leadership team to ensure all students receive the appropriate support to enhance their learning and progress.

LSCs are employed directly by the School Board of Trustees (BoT). They need to be qualified, registered teachers/kaiako with the salary scale dependent on the relevant collective agreement. An additional allowance for networking ($500) and travel ($1,500–$4,000, location dependent) is paid to the BoT for each LSC position. LSCs are not direct teaching staff; their role and time is dedicated to coordinating and promoting learning support and is unique within the school environment. Additionally, the Priority Teacher Supply Allowance (PTSA) is paid for LSCs employed in a school identified by the Ministry as

requiring additional support for recruitment or retention (sometimes called 'hard to staff' schools/kura).[5]

The Ministry provided two-day LSC induction forums in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch during February 2020 for newly recruited LSCs. A draft guide to the LSC role was released at these forums and a final version was released in November 2020.[6]

3.2　Theory of change

To understand how the role was intended to work to effect change, a theory of change was developed by the evaluation team and working group (see Figure 2).

While this evaluation and the theory of change focus on the LSC role, it is important to acknowledge a wide range of individuals, processes and systems contribute to or influence learning support processes and outcomes.

[5] Ministry of Education. (n.d.). *Priority teacher supply allowance*. Pay, leave and personal development. https://www.education.govt.nz/school/people-and-employment/pay-leave-and-personal-development/priority-teacher-supply-allowance/
[6] Ministry of Education. (2020). *Learning Support Coordinator: A guide to the role*. https://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/LSC/LSC-Guide-FINAL.pdf

Figure 2: Learning Support Coordinator theory of change

LSC contribute to LSDM outcomes and integrated education strategies.

Learning Support Delivery Model: All children and young people get the right support, in the right place, at the right time.

Reduced times to access learning support services.

Better understanding of children and young people's learning support needs to support planning and system-level resourcing decisions.

Increased family/whānau satisfaction with the access to, and quality of, services provided.

Increased collaboration within groups of schools/kura to demonstrate progress towards addressing learning support needs.

Increased teacher engagement with learning support services.

Longer term impact.
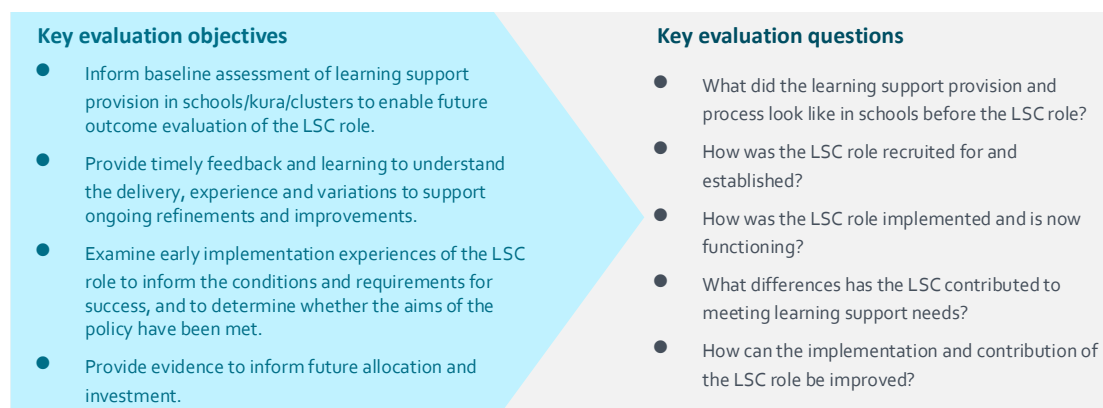
National Education and Learning Priorities achieved

Education reflects and grows the identity, language and culture of all Māori learners.

LSC contributes to all tiers of LS.

Individual: Students have a joined up plan. Less need for individualised supports.

Targeted: Barriers to learning for students with diverse needs are reduced.

Universal: School environment is conducive to learning for all.

Evidence-based decision making on cluster prioritising of learning support services.

Implementation of cluster-wide plans to make appropriate learning support services available.

Learning support reflect student needs across the cluster.

Immediate outcomes for cluster.

LSC operating as intended in their cluster and achieving intended outcomes.

Collaborates across the cluster - with LSC, the facilitator, local services and providers - to develop a cluster strategy and plan.

Provides evidence to inform the identification of learning support needs for the cluster.

Performs key functions for cluster.

LSC are influenced by and influence the outcomes of the LS Action Plan. Other education strategies, priorities and system level changes such as National Education and Learning Priorities and Ka Hikitia influence the context and delivery of LSC function.

LSC operating as intended in their school(s) and achieving intended outcomes.

Immediate outcomes for school.

Students learn, progress and make successful transitions in an inclusive school/cluster.

Kaiako/teachers and LS staff collaborate to meet the needs of all learners.

Whānau well informed, their voice is heard. Access support early and are active participants

LS register used to understand needs, prioritise and make local decisions about best use of available resources.

School-wide systems enhanced to ensure all students access curriculum and learning is enhanced.

Performs key functions for school.

Identifies LS needs and maintains a LS register.

Supports teacher capability.

Supports whānau and families to partner successfully with their school/kura.

Connects with other LSC, LS facilitator, LS providers and wider agencies.

Works with and influences school/kura leadership team.

Initial implementation completed.

Orientation to role, school(s) and cluster creates shared understanding of LSC role and immediate priorities.

LSC with relevant skills and experience employed by host schools.

LSCs have access to the tools, networks and resources required to perform the role.

Initial implementation requirements are met.

Education context is dynamic

4   EVALUATION OF LSC INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION

An evaluation framework was collaboratively developed with a working group of representatives from the Ministry Sector Enablement team, Evidence Data and Knowledge team and the Education System Policy Group. The framework defined the objectives and guiding key evaluation questions for this formative phase of work which are presented in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Key evaluation objectives and questions

Key evaluation objectives

- Inform baseline assessment of learning support provision in schools/kura/clusters to enable future outcome evaluation of the LSC role.

- Provide timely feedback and learning to understand the delivery, experience and variations to support ongoing refinements and improvements.

- Examine early implementation experiences of the LSC role to inform the conditions and requirements for success, and to determine whether the aims of the policy have been met.

- Provide evidence to inform future allocation and investment.

Key evaluation questions

- What did the learning support provision and process look like in schools before the LSC role?

- How was the LSC role recruited for and established?

- How was the LSC role implemented and is now functioning?

- What differences has the LSC contributed to meeting learning support needs?

- How can the implementation and contribution of the LSC role be improved?

This evaluation used a mixed-methods design for gathering evidence from multiple data sources to answer the evaluation questions and explore the LSC role implementation nationally (using surveys) and interviews were used to gain a deeper insight into the implementation of the role. Interviews were completed with individuals in 13 of 14 purposefully selected clusters identified by the Ministry to provide a variety of implementation contexts and experiences. Greater detail about the methodology and data collection is included in Appendix 2: Methodology. The evaluation included:

- Interviews with 99 individuals from across 13 clusters covering a range of roles.
- Survey invitation sent to 1055 schools and kura with LSC allocation achieved a 40% response rate (n=419).
- Survey of 596 LSCs employed at the time achieved a 62% response rate (n=371).

Readiness for engagement and the impact of COVID-19 meant that plans to collect data were adapted several times. Rather than collecting data that would provide iterative learning opportunities, we were able to collect data from schools/kura and LSC only in Term 3, 2020. This introduced limitations into this phase of the evaluation. We are confident, however, that the level of evidence gathered, and the consistency of themes and insights have supported us to address the key evaluation questions.

4.1   Limitations of the formative evaluation

- Between two and 14 individuals were interviewed from each cluster. Given the scale of some of the clusters, we acknowledge that this level of interviewing provided a limited insight into the context of some clusters.
- Cluster leads identified and provided access to individuals who agreed to participate in the interview, this process may have introduced a degree of bias to our sample.

- Whānau experience is very limited (only three whānau interviews) as there was insufficient time for engagement with the evaluation (via LSCs) for this to be completed at the scale intended. COVID-19 also had an impact here.
- Insights have been provided regarding LSC allocation but warrant further exploration to inform any future decision making.
- Two clusters of Māori medium kura contributed to the evaluation, although only three interviews (four people) were completed. This limits the insights into the experiences of Māori medium kura.
- Due to COVID-19, interviews were predominantly done remotely, so the observational and informal information that is gained from site visits and in-person interaction was not available for the analysis. Those interviewed, however, were very familiar with Zoom, and processes to establish rapport within this context were used to support the engagement of interviewees.

SECTION B: FINDINGS

5   WHAT DID THE LEARNING SUPPORT PROVISION AND PROCESS LOOK LIKE IN SCHOOLS/KURA BEFORE THE LSC ROLE?

There are many contributors to effective learning support in education settings. Prior to LSC implementation, most learning support services were provided within schools or at a cluster level by school staff and others accessed externally via the Ministry or other providers. While those accessing support were generally satisfied, not all students with learning support needs received support. This includes children and young people with moderate needs who are neurodiverse, gifted, and those at risk of disengaging from education. Limited capacity, capability and system complexity were identified in interview as barriers to students' receiving support. Schools/kura said they were better at identifying learning support needs than responding to it them and, did not have the capacity to support teachers/kaiako to work with students with diverse needs as much as they wanted to. Some clusters and Kāhui Ako were already engaged in developing collective responses to supporting learning.

5.1   Schools/kura were already engaged in collective responses to supporting learning

The Ministry identified that by late 2018 there were 203 clusters comprising 1,659 schools and kura that were engaging with the LSDM, although clusters and schools/kura were at varying stages of progress with some just beginning the conversations about working collectively and others being more advanced.[7] While the 13 clusters that engaged in interviews for the evaluation were part of formal Kāhui Ako arrangements, this is not a requirement for working in the LSDM and the nature and extent of collective working differed.

There are many contributors to effective learning support in education settings, such as individual educators, systems, and practices. For students with more significant needs, external learning support services such as those provided by the Ministry, Resource Teachers and community organisations are sourced. In interviews, individuals who were asked about learning support before the LSC role focused on the role of Special Education Needs Coordinators (SENCOs), Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) practitioners and Ministry-provided individualised support.

5.2   Current supports met some needs only

Currently schools/kura, the Ministry, the RTLB service and others, are expected to work collaboratively through the Learning Support Delivery Model (LSDM), to support children and young people with learning support needs, their whānau and teachers. Using a tiered

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[7] Ministry of Education. (n.d.). *Learning Support Action Plan & Learning Support Coordinator role allocation.* https://www.education.govt.nz/our-work/information-releases/issue-specific-releases/lsap-lsc/

model, support may be provided at the individual, targeted and/or school/cluster level. There is an extensive range of services available. Examples of the different tiers of support include:

- The Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) and In Class Support (ICS) are two examples of individualised support. These were the most frequently mentioned intensive supports referred to in interviews.
- The RTLB service was the targeted support most frequently referred to in interview. RTLB work with teachers to support learning.
- Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) is an example of universal support.

Those interviewed reflected on limitations to access for intensive and targeted support. Criteria must be met and access is then brokered at a local level through the service manager. Application processes were said to be thorough and could be time consuming. As not all applications could be successful, some students missed out.

Where these services were accessed, teachers/kaiako and whānau were satisfied with services, although not quite as satisfied with wait times. This finding aligns with RTLB and Ministry service satisfaction survey results, as recent feedback shows:

- RTLB 2019 (September) survey of teachers/kaiako (n=1782):[8]
  - 78% (n=1285) teachers/kaiako were satisfied or very satisfied with RTLB.
  - 69% (n=1134) satisfied or very satisfied with time to get the service.
- Learning support 2018 survey of parents/whānau (n= 364):[9]
  - Parent overall satisfaction was rated at 73/100.
  - Parent satisfaction with the time to get the service was rated at 66/100.

In the absence of consistent identification of learning support needs at a school and cluster level through the use of learning support registers, the Ministry does not have a system-level understanding of the extent of unmet need.

- The previously unmet need identified by those interviewed may result in an initial surge in demand for Ministry and other agency-provided supports, which requires monitoring.
- Data relating to the delivery of Ministry support services will reflect provision rather than true demand. If delivery is already at capacity, any increase in demands for services identified by LSCs will not show up in the delivery data. Applications for support would be a more reliable indicator of demand.

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[8] Ministry of Education (2020) *National RTLB Service Satisfaction Survey 2019.*
[9] Education Counts, Ministry of Education. (2020). *2018 Learning support satisfaction survey.* https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/schooling2/learning-support/special-education-client-satisfaction-survey/2018-learning-support-client-satisfaction-survey

5.3 Schools/kura lacked the ability to respond to all learning needs – especially mild to moderate

Interviews completed with staff in clusters described the learning support available and the capacity and capability in schools/kura to support students as sub-optimal despite the expertise, goodwill and action underway. In the interviews there was acknowledgement of unmet need, particularly mild-to-moderate learning needs. This was partly because of the lack of availability of resources and internal capacity and capability to identify, respond and support learning needs.

In the surveys schools/kura with an LSC allocation were asked to rate their ability across a range of learning support functions 12 months previously. These results are included in Appendix 3: Selected charts from school/kura survey, Table 2. Overall, schools/kura rated themselves as more able to identify learning support needs than to respond to them. Of the functions that were rated, schools/kura identified their ability to support teachers/kaiako to work with students with learning support needs as weakest (n=388).

This feedback echoed the findings of the 2018 survey of SENCOs where 91% of 572 responding SENCOs felt some degree of need was going unsupported and only 28% could access external support in a reasonable timeframe.[10]

5.3.1 SENCO is the key coordinator but their capacity is stretched

Prior to the introduction of LSC schools/kura acknowledged that meeting the needs of all students was a challenge. Interview feedback identified that SENCOs tended to focus on the highest and most pressing needs, such as 'funded' students supported through ORS and the School High Health Needs fund (SHHNF). RTLB support teachers/kaiako could be used to work with a range of learning needs, but the request for support process and waiting time, even for successful requests, could be frustrating.

5.4 Increasing need for cross-sector agency relationships

At the school level SENCOs also appear to have led relationships with cross-sector agencies where relationships existed. These tended to be reactive relationships (with Oranga Tamariki following a crisis for example). School staff described an increase in the needs and complexity of needs of students compared to a decade ago. This means schools/kura need to seek more input from cross-sector agencies, particularly mental health agencies, as anxiety was identified as a growing issue for students. Schools/kura in Christchurch said they were struggling to support the complexity and volume of needs relating to anxiety, despite provision of additional agency resources.

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[10] NZEI Te Riu Roa. (n.d.). *Supporting diverse students: Survey of special education needs co-ordinators (SENCO) 2018.* https://www.nzei.org.nz/UploadedFiles/Media/SENCO_report_final_20180501.pdf

- Repeat surveys asking schools/kura to rate their abilities across a range of learning support functions will help identify changes in capability and capacity. Over time the ability to identify learning support needs, and respond to them, should be stronger and more closely aligned.
- LSCs are responding to a range of factors impacting on learning. Mental health seems to be a significant issue.

6   HOW WAS THE LSC ROLE RECRUITED FOR AND ESTABLISHED?

Across Aotearoa, 124 clusters of schools/kura received an LSC allocation (allocated mostly on a 1:500 ratio). Each cluster decided which schools/kura would employ LSCs and some clusters adjusted the allocation of LSC per school between them. These adjustments were made predominantly to reduce the number of schools/kura an individual LSC would have to work across. For most, recruitment went smoothly and by July 2020, 596 of 623 FTTE (96% of the LSC allocation identified by payroll data) had been recruited. This LSC cohort consists of very experienced teachers/kaiako and those with specialist learning support experience. Māori medium and rural schools/kura faced a mixture of typical and unique challenges to recruitment.

Overall, the initial implementation of the role went well for most. Schools/kura and LSCs with a vision for the role or a plan to integrate the role introduced it into the school more clearly and purposefully than those taking a more organic approach to letting the role develop. The Ministry-led induction forums, regional meetings and the publication Learning Support Coordinator: A Guide to the Role were very useful but did not provide the role clarity many still expected. COVID-19 disrupted the momentum of early implementation, but the time was used productively by LSCs, often supporting the broader school efforts to maintain student engagement.

6.1   Clusters used the flexibility in the model to redistribute LSC allocation and make employment decisions

Across Aotearoa, 124 clusters received an LSC allocation (mostly on a 1:500 ratio). Clusters had the discretion to decide the final distribution of LSCs and also which schools/kura would be the employing school for one or more LSCs. Consequently, some schools/kura received more than their Ministry LSC allocation, and others less. Operational logistics was the primary consideration of this process, mitigated by the desire to best respond to learning support needs in the cluster and reach agreement. Decisions were made to reduce the number of schools/kura a LSC worked across as well as ensuring the schools/kura were as close as possible to reduce LSC travel.

Having an LSC that works in a single school was seen as beneficial as this meant the LSC was never offsite at another school, delivery and role performance was under the influence of one principal and school information wasn't shared with 'competing' schools/kura.

Otakaro Community of Learning was one of 11 clusters in urban areas that had sufficient LSC allocation to redistribute LSCs so there was an FTTE at each school. The principal of a smaller school that gained considerable LSC resource was deeply moved by this 'magnanimous act' which recognised the need in that school and the collective concern for all students in the cluster, no matter which schools/kura they were attending.

Those kids go through that school and onto others, so … we see them as all our kids really. (Principal).

An Auckland cluster redistribution decision also provided an FTTE in every school in the cluster. This meant that three small decile 10 primary schools/kura were among those that received additional LSC allocation.

Findings support cluster based decision making regarding the redistribution of LSC allocation is occurring. In some clusters this has supported collective concern and flexible decision making to respond to the needs of all students in the cluster.

- Clusters may make reallocation decisions based on logistics that do not necessarily prioritise need.

6.2   LSCs employed in larger schools/kura but not in hubs

Smaller schools/kura were less likely to be employers of LSCs, with LSC payroll data provided for evaluation purposes identifying only one in ten schools/kura with a roll below 200 as LSC employers.[11] LSC survey results showed that half of LSCs are working solely in one school (50%), the other half are working across two, three, or four or more schools/kura (n=349).

The idea of employing LSCs in centralised hubs was considered in some of the clusters we engaged with, but this was not supported by the Ministry as presence on school sites was promoted. Payroll data identified an outlier with 13 LSCs employed by one school in Upper Hutt that is known as a hub. From the survey and payroll data the existence of hubs is difficult to pinpoint because redistribution of the role may have occurred. It seems there is one large hub and the possibility of only a few small LSC hubs in practice.

LSCs employed by a single school and sharing office space said that being based at the same school as another LSC supported collegial practice and role development, which had made this first year easier and more enjoyable.

Principals are usually the line managers of LSCs, although in larger schools/kura this can be devolved and 15% of LSCs (n=345) indicated in the survey that they report to SENCOs, deputy principals, or other roles.

The capital funds for LSCs have included funding for their laptop, phone, furniture and workspace needs. Once the funding has been allocated the responsibility of ensuring LSCs have a suitable workspace in each of the schools they are allocated to, rests with the employing school/kura. Capital funding is available to make property modifications where necessary to provide suitable working spaces for LSCs across clusters. This process was still underway at the time of the evaluation surveys and interviews. Employing schools/kura also manage the networking and travel budget for the LSCs. In the LSC survey, 20% of LSCs indicated that they did not have the tools to do their job and the interview feedback indicated this was most likely to be related to having a workspace. Cluster engagement identified a range of accommodation provided from a standalone refurbished suite of rooms (including a private office area, meeting room facilities, whānau room, kitchen and bathroom facilities) to an LSC working in a back corner of an active classroom without any quiet time or privacy for phone calls and meetings.

- There are barriers to providing suitable LSC workspaces in some schools/kura that are impacting on LSCs ability to perform their role.

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[11] LSC Ministry payroll start date data, provided to July 2020.

6.3 Cluster functioning can support or hinder the process

LSC allocation and employment decisions were significant and not always easy. Clusters that had solid communication, established decision-making processes and strong leadership, navigated this process with more ease. Clusters that had worked without formal processes or that had experienced recent membership changes that altered the dynamic of the group (for example new principals) identified these as challenges to the process. In one cluster the process had significantly damaged relationships that had to be rebuilt, in another the differing opinions had strained relationships. Some individuals felt that more timely input and guidance from the Ministry regional office would have helped.

> • Some clusters may benefit from support with formal decision making when consensus is not reached.

6.4 Recruitment is almost complete

Schools/kura worked collectively on the recruitment of LSCs and began advertising vacancies in October 2019. At the start of the 2020 school year, 83% (513 FTTE) were employed. This rose to 96% (596 FTTE) by July 2020. This is based on Ministry payroll start date data and is illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Recruitment of LSC shown by cumulative start date
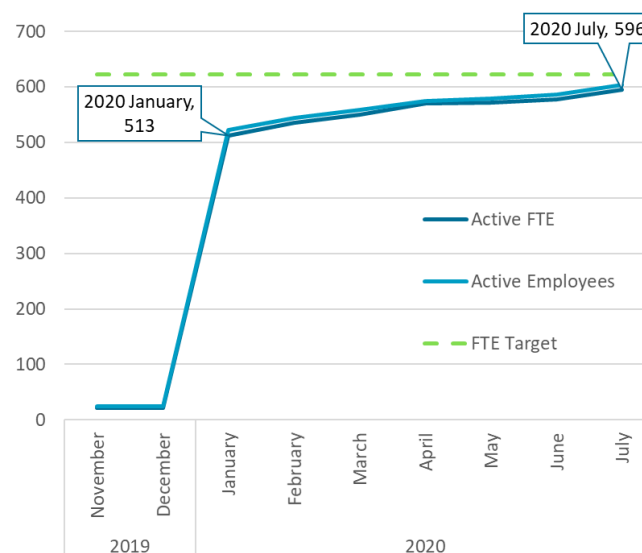
By July, payroll data showed 96 of the 124 clusters with LSC allocation had completed recruitment. Of the remaining clusters with vacancies there were five clusters that still needed to fill half or more of their allocation as of July 2020. These were clusters of rural schools/kura where their allocation of FTTE was four or less and they needed to employ between one and three more FTTE each.

This reflects the challenges for rural recruitment we heard about in both survey and interview feedback.

6.4.1   Recruitment is harder for rural schools/kura and Māori medium

Rural regions and Māori medium kura struggled the most to recruit LSCs and were more likely to be unsatisfied with the pool of applicants. Recruitment challenges are not unique to LSC recruitment and relate to the relative isolation of rural schools/kura; these include long travel times, a small local pool of potential applicants and difficulty attracting applicants from outside the area. One rural principal said it was hard to find someone with the right skills who would travel approximately four hours between schools/kura. The perception in two of the rural clusters we interviewed was that the role is a last step before retirement, and this could have impeded recruitment efforts. That perception was in sharp contrast to the more common view that the LSC role could be a stepping stone into school leadership.

Māori medium settings that were also rural shared the geographical barriers to recruitment, in addition to the unique challenge of not being able to employ individuals who were able to both work effectively in that setting and have the skills for the LSC role.

Some schools/kura may have PTSA available to support recruitment. Payroll data showed 22 part-time positions across both rural and urban locations as a response to recruitment issues for a fulltime role. Ministry guidance is clear that LSCs are not part-time roles and the role should be appointed as a whole FTTE, not divided up.

> - Structural barriers to recruitment in rural areas and Māori medium are not all specific to the LSC role. There may be ways of delivering the role or making it more appealing to explore.

6.5   Highly experienced teachers/kaiako recruited to LSC role

All LSCs had to be registered teachers/kaiako to apply for the role, and 60% of schools/kura agreed or strongly agreed they had a good pool of applicants to choose from (school survey, n=268 responses). Both interviews and LSC survey results identified an LSC cohort that included very experienced teachers/kaiako with three in four also having learning support expertise.

The LSC survey results are shown in Figure 5 and Figure 6. They illustrate 85% of responding LSCs had 10 or more years of teaching experience and only 26% (n=349) did not have any specialist learning support teaching experience.

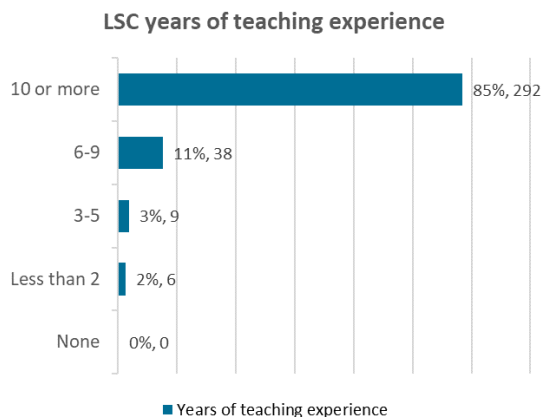**Figure 5: LSC years of teaching experience (n=344)**

LSC years of teaching experience

Category	Value
10 or more	85%, 292
6-9	11%, 38
3-5	3%, 9
Less than 2	2%, 6
None	0%, 0

■ Years of teaching experience

Figure 6: Specialist learning support experience for LSCs (n=344)

LSC years of specialist experience

Category	Value
10 or more	26%, 88
6-9	13%, 46
3-5	17%, 58
Less than 2	18%, 63
None	26%, 89

■ Years of specialist LS teaching experience

While 65% of LSCs were recruited directly from a teaching role, 28% (n=345) of LSC survey respondents were recruited from a learning support specialist role. The LSC role has appealed to many former RTLBs who wanted to really make a difference and thought that working in one school, rather than across many, would make better use of their skills and be intrinsically more rewarding.

Many LSCs were already known to their employing schools/kura, with 58% (n=345) of LSC survey respondents having worked at their school in the past in positions such as teacher, SENCO, RTLB and even principal. Some LSCs were asked to apply for the role; this was more common in rural regions where there were few applying for LSC roles. Knowing the school helped those LSC 'hit the ground running' as they were already oriented to the school structures, processes, students and staff, and could leverage their existing credibility and relationships to embed the LSC role.

> *They understand the school, they understand the culture, they would know the students more. And they also know what my strengths are as a teacher. (Teacher)*

6.5.1 Soft skills highly valued

Recruitment also considered the softer, interpersonal skills of LSCs and 'fit' with the school. Interview feedback suggests this was highly successful with LSCs being a friendly, approachable and highly personable group of individuals who can work alongside school staff, students and whānau.

One principal valued facilitation and leadership skills above the technical knowledge of learning support specialists as LSCs need to work through others to deliver the role, which is an implicit expectation of

> *You know, she's just a perfect personality. That would be the other thing, making sure that you're placing the right personality type in this situation…. she's just been fantastic. When he's yelling and screaming and I'm stressed because he's not at school on time, but she just comes back and she's always so calm. (Whānau)*

the role. A few LSCs identified that knowledge and skills in change management would be useful for this role.

6.5.2 Financial incentives to recruitment used

The LSC role is fully funded by the Ministry and has no management responsibilities. Despite this, Management Units (MUs), sometimes referred to as Middle Management Units (MMU), were added to the role by some schools/kura to boost the salary and attract high-calibre applicants. Without MUs many LSCs would have taken a pay cut from their previous positions and may not have applied. Some LSCs have taken a drop in salary to become a LSC. There is a recognised inconsistency between experience, role expectations and salaries across schools/kura.

LSC role is clearly a leadership role that requires experienced school leaders. By not awarding the role any management units we have LSCs with a leadership role (with MMUs attached), LSCs with insufficient leadership experience and knowledge of school systems and special education, and school leaders who have had to take a pay cut because they passionately believe in the potential of the role to make a real difference. (Principal)

Occasional mention was made of other financial allowances that may be able to be considered useful in future recruitment where structural barriers require mitigation. These included the Priority Teacher Supply Allowance which applies to the LSC role and the Māori Immersion Teachers Allowance which currently does no.

- No one raised recruiting from existing roles in the schools/kura and learning support community as an issue, but the volume of vacancies they leave may be hard to fill if LSC were rolled out to all schools/kura.
- Use of MUs appeared widespread. Further analysis of payroll data could provide a more accurate reflection of its use. Attracting more highly experienced candidates through financial incentives may advantage some schools/kura over others and this may introduce unintended inequalities.
- Some LSC may benefit from support with facilitation skills and change management as part of their PLD to enhance role delivery.

6.6   Initial introduction of the role

The Ministry held regional induction forums for all allocated Principals and Board of Trustees in September, October, November 2019. Two-day induction forums for LSC were delivered in February 2020. The workshops provided a valued opportunity for LSCs to hear a national perspective on the role, to network with peers and to complete some initial professional learning and development (PLD). A principal from each cluster was also invited.

6.6.1   Ministry induction forums were just a start

The induction forums were an inspiring and positive experience with the majority of respondents valuing them highly. Responses showed that 91% increased their knowledge of the LSC role (of 706 ratings of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale across all induction forum days). Feedback ratings and comments indicated more understanding was still required; role clarity (particularly regarding alignment with the SENCO role), PLD (professional learning and development) and access to tools and resources were the most frequent outstanding needs.

The majority (80%, n=339) felt prepared enough for their role but the role description was not as prescriptive as some would have liked. The tension between role perceived ambiguity and the drive to be quickly productive was challenging for many of the LSCs. Regional meetings, communication and workshops helped to ease some of this tension that could only be fully resolved with time and the support of school leadership.

LSCs expected a greater presence of the Ministry in terms of implementation. For many, Ministry support was negligible following the induction forums. LSCs did expect more guidance about the role and settling-in process, and those dissatisfied felt as though they had been left to work it out in isolation. Lack of promised PLD from some regional offices added to this perception.

6.6.2   Principals are key to an effective introduction of the role

Prior to the LSC induction forums in February 2020, the Ministry held regional sessions for all allocated principals and board trustees in September, October and November 2019. The broad role description and the nature of the new role meant that the role was not firmly defined when LSCs were introduced to schools/kura. Schools/kura that had identified their needs and recruited for those needs (e.g. behaviour support, literacy) could be more specific about what the role would look like than other schools/kura that were still working it out, or leaving it to the LSC to work out.

The LSC introduction to the school/kura came from principals. The clarity of the message was vitally important whether the message was specific or the role was still very much taking shape. Participants noted that even while the role was still taking shape, the strategic intent and scope of the role could still be communicated, and an initial orientation period announced. Where this clarity was missing, attempts to promote the role could cause more confusion than necessary.

We were building the role while we were doing the job. It is like building a plane while you are flying it.
(Principal)

Having initial and regular meetings with the principal (or sometimes senior leadership) to review the scope and development of the role brings a focus that is valuable for both parties. Principals pave the way for LSCs to become integrated into the infrastructure of the school, whether this is through meeting key individuals or through being part of learning support teams or relevant initiatives.

One high school, for example, performs 'speed dating' events that enable teachers/kaiako of different departments to regularly connect to discuss students. LSCs are involved in this process, which helps them quickly and efficiently connect with teachers/kaiako to identify and discuss students with learning support needs.

I am frustrated by how and where my role fits into the already existing systems of a large High School. I don't have a job description and senior management don't know what I am here to do so I feel I am doing a lot but nothing well. (LSC survey respondent)

99

By contrast, an LSC who was poorly integrated into a large school had to wait eight weeks for an appointment to see the principal. The LSC had been regarded as a teacher aide by school staff, and without leadership support they had found it difficult to establish the role effectively.

Integrating LSCs into the school also includes orienting them to agencies and setting them up for relationship management. This varies across schools and kura and includes providing education and as well as broader health and community services.

LSCs need to know what agencies they will be working with and what the relationships look like. There needs to be clear guidance around those other agencies, what they do, how they should be worked with. (LSC)

99

Figure 7: LSCs preparedness for the role

LSC role preparedness (n=339)

69, 20%	Strongly agree
202, 60%	Agree
60, 18%	Disagree
8, 2%	Strongly disagree
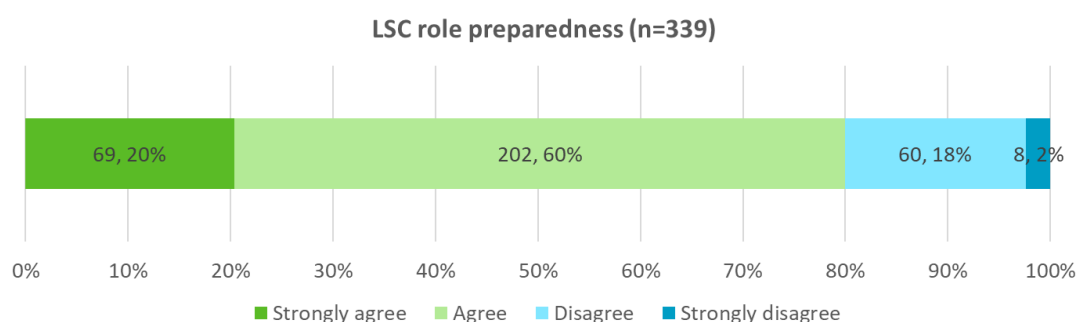
6.6.3 LSCs are advised to invest in relationship building

The most common advice to LSCs was to spend time investing in relationships. The LSC is a relational role; working with and through others. Getting to know individuals, building trust and credibility as an LSC was part of the process that would set the LSCs up for working effectively. LSCs working across several schools/kura spoke about visiting their schools/kura more frequently at the start to get to know the school and kura better, before dropping down their in-school time to once a fortnight or as needed. Ministry guidance is clear that this is an in-school role working alongside teachers and school/kura leaders to meet the learning support needs of students. It is not an advisory role.

Principals supported this by enabling time for LSCs to build relationships within schools/kura, across the cluster, and with learning support staff, whānau and sometimes students. This was particularly important for LSCs who were new to the cluster, school, kura and/or a learning support role.

- Feedback highlighted the value of orientation for principals. Ministry activity to orient all principals is expected to support readiness and a consistent understanding of the role.
- Finalisation of the LSC: Guide to the role in November, and the wider circulation that followed, should also promote consistent understanding.
- LSC new to the school/kura or area may need considerable time to orient and build relationships to support their work. LSCs familiar with the school still have new relationships to build.

6.7 COVID-19 slowed implementation momentum but LSC time was used well

COVID-19 was commonly described as a significant disruption to early LSC implementation. However, the crisis also brought opportunities for LSCs to prepare for the role and contribute to the school community. In such extreme circumstances normal rules do not apply, and LSCs did a mixture of work; 56% doing all or mostly LSC work and 33% doing a mixture of LSC and general school work (tasks that are usually out of scope). LSCs did some work they considered out of their expected scope in this time, but they were willing to do whatever was required.

For LSCs not already well connected it was difficult to connect and build relationships within schools/kura, across schools/kura and with the wider community, while schools/kura remained largely in emergency mode.

Many used lockdown time to develop resources for teachers/kaiako, connect with students who were perceived to be high needs and support their own and others' professional development. In Inglewood, for example, the LSCs gathered information, researched the services available and surveyed the schools/kura and cluster about priorities and expectations around the role.

Some LSCs were connected to students who needed additional support with distance learning and provided one-on-one support short term.

LSCs have been a timely addition to the school team and played an important supporting role in enabling the transition of students back to school, particularly where there have been high levels of anxiety about the safety of the school/kura environment.

*Despite the newness of the role, LSCs moved into using natural instincts, including providing pastoral care, helping with food packs for school whānau. LSCs were very generous in their ability to help out wherever they could, they were very instrumental in supporting teaching staff, providing professional development and building toolbox strategies for staff, children and parents.
(Principal)*

> • The LSC role provides schools/kura with additional flexible resource in times of crisis. Their skills and the register of learning support needs will be positive contributions to school's/kura pandemic planning.

7 HOW WAS THE LSC ROLE IMPLEMENTED AND HOW IS IT NOW FUNCTIONING? ROLE FUNCTIONS

In these relatively early stages of implementation there is evidence LSCs are delivering on all functions identified in the role description. Most time is spent identifying and supporting students in schools/kura. Connections across the cluster are being made and collaborative working practices are becoming or are established. While aspects of the role are operational and administrative, some require support and vision to grasp the potential for transformational change.

School survey results identify that by August 2020, the LSC role was operational in most schools/kura (94% of 388 responses). Environments were generally supportive, with only a minority of LSC survey respondents indicating that principals and teachers/kaiako in the school were not enabling them to perform the LSC role (10% of 319 responses).

When we interviewed school staff, overall feedback was very positive and there was a sense of gratitude for this incredible resource. There was also excitement about having additional capacity for the benefit of teachers/kaiako and students.

The role description and guide to the role identifies five key functions. Most of the LSCs work is within the scope of these functions. In practice these functions are interdependent and not standalone activities. We heard of many examples of the interconnections of the LSC functions across the clusters we engaged with for interview. In the LSC survey, we asked LSCs to rate how they were spending their time across the five functions. Survey results identified that LSCs were spending most time on supporting individual students, in particular identifying the needs of individual students. The least amount of time was spent on working with others in cluster level activities. These results are shown in Table 1.

This is exactly what we need, it's a Godsend really.
(Principal)

Table 1: LSCs time spent on key functions of role, shown by number of LSC (n=342)

	Most of my time	A lot of my time	Some of my time	A little of my time	None of my time
Doing activities that identify or respond to the learning support needs of individual students.	69	159	88	23	2
Doing activities that create, develop, maintain or use a register of learning support needs.	15	73	127	106	21
Doing activities that support smooth transitions for learners (any type of transition).	11	71	131	99	28

	Most of my time	A lot of my time	Some of my time	A little of my time	None of my time
Doing activities that support kaiako/teachers to teach learners with diverse learning support needs.	25	111	126	65	12
Doing activities that support parents and whānau to partner successfully with their kura/school.	13	54	144	98	31
Doing work with the kura/school leadership team(s) to ensure all students receive the appropriate support to enhance their learning and progress.	16	102	119	78	25
Doing work at learning support cluster level – with other LSCs, the LS Facilitator and/or agencies to identify needs and access services and resources at cluster level.	9	54	113	125	40

These results aligned with the experiences we heard about during the interviews. The focus on these activities is as expected given the early establishment of the role. The role functions are interwoven and LSCs were working with classroom teachers/kaiako as they responded to the learning support needs of students.

- LSCs are embracing all aspects of the role and only a few individuals (usually where the role isn't yet operationalised) aren't engaged in one or more of these key functions.

The following sections describe the delivery of the role against the five core functions. The green text that summarises each function is from the LSC role description.

7.1 Supporting students

LSC role function: Support **students** through building an inclusive school or kura and cluster environment where all students participate, progress and make successful transitions.

Those interviewed described different examples of the ways LSCs were identifying and responding to the learning support needs of students. These examples can be considered as individual, systematic or special interest responses:

- Initiation and responses were reactive and focused on individual students: addressing learning support concerns raised by teachers/kaiako or as a result of a behavioural incident. For example, LSCs would typically review learning records and observe across multiple classes as well as engage with whānau to identify and develop a response to meet the needs of individual students. The response may include developing Individual Education Plans (IEPs), application processes and coordination for students with new or established learning support needs.
- Initiation and responses were proactive and systematic: following up on observed trends, actioning priorities already noted in the school or conducting a review to assess the scale and nature of need in a particular area, such as literacy or maths. Responses could then be tailored with programmes and resources as relevant with LSCs upskilling teachers/kaiako and teaching assistants in their use.
- Less common were initiation and responses that represented the LSC playing to their personal areas of expertise. This focused LSC attention on a specific aspect of learning support, for example behavioural support, ESOL or gifted students. LSCs may have been recruited for this purpose.

An example of how a small amount of individual support made a big difference is described in the quote from the whānau of one student shown in the sidebar.

Not all solutions lie in the classrooms and the scope of the LSC role enables them to consider the home environment as well. For example, a service manager described intervening in a declined RTLB referral and encouraging the LSC to do more investigation. The behaviour that had been a barrier to learning in the classroom was linked to a poor home routine. Changes to bedtime habits and establishment of a morning routine, coached by the LSC, had benefits for the whānau, the student and the teacher.

These two examples highlight how LSCs can result in within-school responses rather than in a referral for outsourced support.

Early easier access to more flexible support is expected to reduce the need for referrals to external specialists over time. The LSC role contributes to this shift locally. This understanding was not expressed clearly in interviews and instead references were made to LSCs identifying more need, and therefore referring for more external supports.

Some of those interviewed referred to different levels of ability among LSCs and thought those less experienced would be more likely to have a transactional approach to identified need – referring on rather than using the transformative approach of creating solutions. The predictions of more referrals may also be based on the belief that there is a backlog of unidentified need that warrants referral, or that the role of LSC as a capability builder is not well understood; it's likely to be a combination of both.

> *One class in particular, the relationship wasn't working between them. So [LSC] had gone in to make observations… and gave some pointers to the teacher and also to [my son] how they can work more effectively. And one of the things she found out from him was that he felt embarrassed to raise his hand, to ask a question if he wasn't doing something right or didn't know what to do. So, they came up with a system where all the children had cups, like paper cups, where they put the cup one way and if they want to ask a question, they turn the cup upside down. I think it was integrated into maths as well – one other subject anyway – it was just such a great idea. It just meant that everyone was included you know; it was an inclusive thing to do and it wasn't making him feel ostracised or different. I was really impressed with that. So, these little sorts of things were coming in and put in place, and that just helped him, and probably supported a lot of other children too, if truth be told.*
> *(Whānau)*

7.1.1 Learning support registers are becoming established in schools/kura

The role description identifies that LSCs are responsible for maintaining a school learning support register of the learning support needs, support plans, resource allocation, and services for each learner. Learning support registers are recognised as an important tool to help LSCs coordinate the support for individual learners and for school planning and capacity building. At cluster level, aggregated data from registers is expected to be used to identify, prioritise, and respond to local learning support needs. A standardised Learning Support Register (sLSR), is being developed and will be progressively made available to schools/kura and will sit on the Te Rito platform.

Before the introduction of LSCs, schools/kura managed their own record of students with learning support needs as they chose. Sometimes this was an excel spread sheet managed by the SENCO, or a series of isolated folders and papers held by different members of staff.

Schools/kura and LSCs expressed frustration over the delay and lack of communication from the Ministry about the rollout of Te Rito, which was initially expected to be available early in the 2020 school year.

The feeling that I get from everybody in our cluster is just like they've had enough of it and they are just putting it on the backburner because it just takes so much time. You feel like you're recreating something that's going to be eventually given to you anyway.
(Principal)

"

Most schools/kura that responded to the survey have some form of learning support register (93%, n=387), and of these, 47% rated it as comprehensive. LSCs were using the common language provided by the Ministry to ensure learning support registers in individual schools/kura develop along consistent lines. Two LSCs in Māori medium settings said they were not using the common language as it identified learners' needs though a clinical, western lens that did not fit the way they worked.

At this early stage of implementation, most schools/kura with a learning support register are using it for planning at the school level only (63% of 344 who use learning support register). In interview this was described as a fairly basic type of activity, for example, counting the number of students who require programmes for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). It also seems common practice for LSCs to have lists of students they are 'keeping an eye on' that aren't on the learning support register.

7.1.2 Transitions between schools/kura

LSCs were still establishing their work within their own school/kura when we completed the interviews and for most transitions to the next school were not yet a focus. Many schools/kura had established transition processes and LSCs anticipated working within and enhancing these processes. The relationships built between LSCs and those at contributing schools/kura were expected to be highly beneficial.

Transitions from early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo occur throughout the year in the term when students turn five. Clusters had different ways of working with early learning

services me ngā kōhanga reo and this reflects the number (in proportion to the number of primary schools/kura), cluster priorities and existing relationships.

Some clusters have identified work in early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo as a priority, particularly around supporting early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo teachers/kaiako but also with transitions of students. In Whakatane community of learning, for example, the cluster allocated an early learning service me ngā kōhanga reo portfolio to one LSC so they could concentrate on supporting early childhood teachers/kaiako and transitions into primary schools/kura. This meant the LSC would be based in the early learning service me ngā kōhanga reo throughout their day, would move between them as required and have relationships with all primary schools/kura to support transitions.

In urban areas there may be multiple early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo that contribute to primary schools/kura, making relationship building more complex, especially for those new to primary education. Very few LSCs in urban areas emphasised work with early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo, and this may be representative of the stage of implementation and needing to establish ways of working first.

- LSC contribution to transitions and working with early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo would benefit from a deeper and more structured understanding. This would include perspectives of staff. Future surveys can include specific survey items re early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo engagement and practice in the future.
- LSCs are drawn into immediate needs of individual students. It is important this does not become all consuming so the gear change to include systematic proactive practices that will lift learning across the school/kura can also occur.
- Assumptions that more needs identified will result in more referrals for external support, provide opportunities for conversations about the strategic intent of the role.
- There is some reluctance to invest further in learning support registers while LSC wait for the information about the arrival of the standardised Learning Support Register on the Te Rito platform. Delay will impact transition support for the 2021 academic year and the progression of data informed cluster planning.

7.2   Supporting teachers/kaiako – most open to input

LSC role function: Support **kaiako/teachers** in schools and kura to lift their capability to better meet the needs of students, and to strengthen their connections with early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo.

The way LSCs work with teachers/kaiako depends on the LSC role in the school and the individual requests and context of the school. On the whole, teachers/kaiako seem to have appreciated the extra support, and this is especially so for beginning teachers/kaiako and those open to

I've only been teaching just 18 months now. I track them down quite a bit when I feel I might need maybe a little bit of extra help with my low students. They know me very well – I'm at their door knocking when I need something. (Teacher)

receiving guidance, role modelling and support.

The formal support, such as creating resources and responding to requests was valued, but the informal support was also valued. Having LSCs on site and available was conducive to those corridor conversations or brief catch ups that didn't require a referral or appointment. This made it easy for teachers/kaiako to connect to support.

Establishing credibility and trust with teachers/kaiako was necessary for them to be receptive to advice. Learning support experience and also evidence-based practice both helped. For example, some schools/kura adopt a specific pedagogy for literacy that can be challenged by other ways of approaching learning. Here the experience and knowledge base of the LSC is important for encouraging teachers/kaiako to enable changes.

For now, LSCs are largely working with the willing: teachers/kaiako requesting and open to input or seeking support with applications for support. A minority of LSCs in interviews and through the survey identified that getting buy-in from teachers/kaiako was difficult. One LSC explained that teachers/kaiako in her school didn't see it as part of their job to be involved with learning support.

I'm working with staff who were trained in whole language literacy anyway. But they are a bit of a one size fits all kind of approach to reading. So, yes, it is quite frustrating…so I need to know my stuff to justify why, for their struggling readers, they should be taking a different approach. (LSC)

LSCs are working with larger groups of teachers/kaiako where the school is promoting a proactive approach, e.g. screening for low literacy, that connects them to a department or team of teachers/kaiako. This again highlights the importance of senior leadership support for delivery of the role.

- It will be important over time to determine how well networked LSC are within their schools/kura and that the reach of LSCs extends throughout the schools via all teachers.
- The recently released resources include information on evidence based practices that LSCs should find useful.

7.3   LSC emerging as a valued role for whānau

LSC role function: Support for **parents and whānau** to partner successfully with their school or kura and develop an understanding of learning support processes and who to contact if needed.

Initial implementation has seen LSCs positioned as key connection points between whānau and the school as intended. However, LSCs have not replaced the existing relationships that are working well and benefit from consistency, such as the relationship between a SENCO or class teacher and whānau. LSCs have supported some of those existing relationships while creating primary relationships with newly engaged whānau and may transition to be the central communication point more often over time.

I was initially worried that families may not trust LSCs… but by putting a face to the name, getting students to be comfortable with LSCs, getting to know the students individually, LSCs achieved rapport with families. (SENCO)

LSCs also referred to using other members of the school team to support communication and connections with parents; this included school social workers or counsellors and teachers/kaiako who spoke the same language as whānau.

7.3.1   Easier to contact and communicate with LSCs

Having the LSC as a central point of contact makes communication easier for whānau and, as an LSC described, 'a bridge between home and school'. This is because LSCs can coordinate on behalf of the school (especially important post primary where several teachers/kaiako and a dean may be involved), but also because LSCs are more available for whānau than staff members with teaching and extra-curricular commitments. We spoke with only three whānau, but they all appreciated the approachability and relatability of the LSCs they worked with.

My son has come home and there may have been an incident or something that I'm just not quite sure of. You know, I want to check it up. I go straight to [the LSC] and she'll look into it for me. And so that's the other thing; having someone I can communicate with. Prior to that, I was lost. I was having all these e-mails from different subject teachers….it was very, very overwhelming, actually, it was an effort to communicate with the school. (Whānau)

7.3.2   LSCs are advocates for children's learning

Interviews highlighted two interrelated aspects to the role that were especially important to whānau. Firstly, LSCs were seen primarily as a support for their child's learning, and secondly, their unique position of LSCs in the school structure was an advantage. An LSC meant the school was taking the learning of their child seriously but from a fresh perspective that was not overlaid with the gravitas of senior management or the requirements of a subject teacher. One whānau described the LSC as 'celebrating the

wins', and the strengths-based approach and language was notable through our interviews with LSCs.

LSCs were also a support to whānau, providing system navigation and emotional support that was described as pragmatic and non-judgmental.

Whānau we spoke with included those familiar and already engaged with 'the learning support system' and those whose child's needs hadn't been recognised previously. Working with an LSC has improved communication and added value from both perspectives.

It made me feel better as a parent to know that they were helping. You know, I didn't feel like she was gonna be slipping through the cracks anymore. They put it into a way that made me feel very comfortable. And the way they see things, the way they used terminology, instead of using the bigger terminology, they broke it down for me. (Whānau)

- Perspectives of whānau familiar with and those new to learning support provide two different, but valuable, perspectives on the LSC role.
- For now, it seems schools/kura are waiting to introduce the LSC role to the broader school/kura whānau. That means whānau are connected via school/kura staff, rather than being able to instigate contact with LSC themselves.

7.4 Integrating learning support in the school needs leadership support

LSC role function: Work with and influence the **school or kura leadership** team to ensure all students receive the appropriate support to enhance their learning and progress.

As shown in Figure 8 below, around nine in ten respondents to the school survey said the LSCs have had some degree of influence in the school. Those who responded with 'not at all influential' were least likely to report that the LSC role is fully or mostly operational.

Figure 8: LSC level of influence(n=364)

Very influential — 18%, 66
Somewhat influential — 40%, 143
Slightly influential — 30%, 109
Not at all influential — 12%, 44
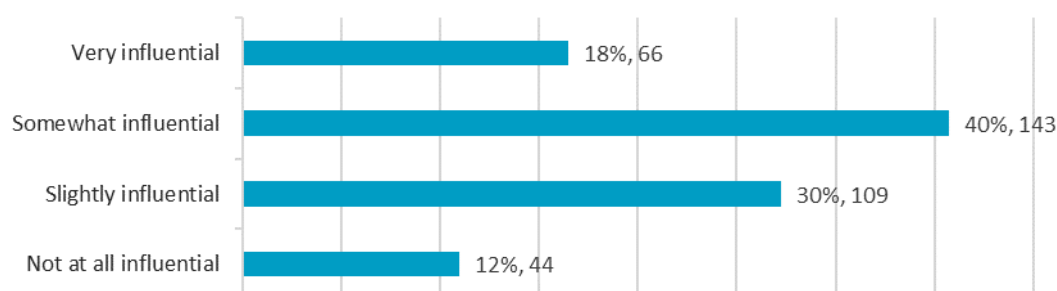
Working at school level required integration or access to the senior leadership team (SLT). In interviews, we learned that the principal is key to this happening and to the extent to which LSCs have the potential to influence.

Around half of LSCs provide regular reporting to the school leadership team and three in ten have not yet reported (52% and 28%, respectively, of 362 responses). Regular reporting provides visibility and helps to demonstrate alignment of LSC activity and contributions to school priorities and initiatives. It is another way for LSCs to become integrated into the school/kura culture of learning.

Despite any difficulties, I am very much enjoying being able to work full-time in this role. Feedback from colleagues too has been they appreciate having someone having time to get on to things that would normally take them a long time. At times I do find it difficult to take a more strategic overview/planning aspect as I am busy usually working on current student needs and getting things put in place. (LSC survey respondent)

LSC supporting Māori and Pacific students through whole-of-school approaches

The LSC role in supporting Māori and Pacific students' needs was described as integrated with the whole-school approach. LSCs typically talked about supporting Māori and Pacific students through providing high-quality learning support across the school and addressing needs through existing school systems and programmes that monitor and support the achievement of these students.

In the school survey, around seven in ten schools/kura rated LSCs as able or very able to work with Māori and Pacific students, see

Figure 9 below. Survey findings and interviews indicated that schools/kura could also draw on capability within their cluster (e.g. from individuals with cultural expertise) to support this work.

Figure 9: School/kura ratings of LSC ability to meet the needs of Māori and Pacific
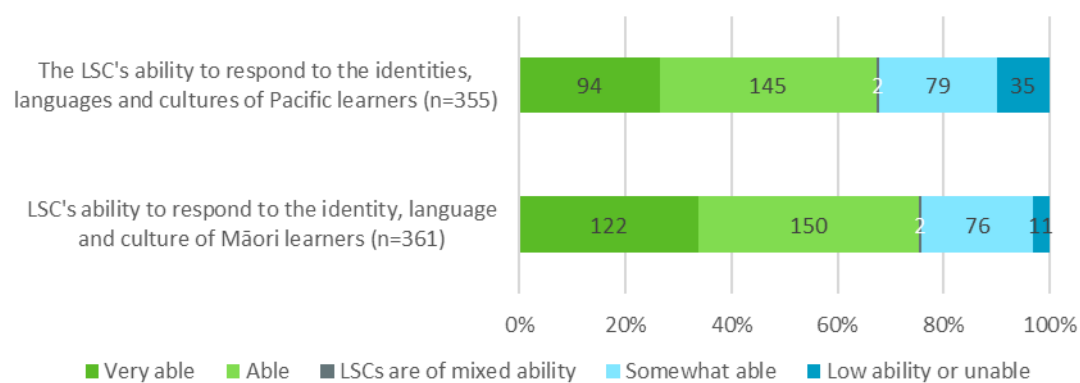
In schools/kura with a high Māori and Pacific roll, LSCs tended to describe the way the school worked as responsive and conducive to supporting Māori and Pacific students. Community and iwi relationships were part of this support landscape, often linked to school through pastoral care activities. The need to prioritise relationships with whānau was commonly recognised, and the need to establish a relationship and build trust before any work could be done was expressed.

Examples of LSC activity in schools/kura to promote learning of Māori and Pacific students included analysis to identify equity of access to support, changes to the physical space (including artefacts and imagery) and the employment of a Māori LSC to support the school to better connect with and engage with all students and whānau.

- Schools/kura generally feel they are supporting Māori and Pacific students well with learning support and few LSCs seem to be carving themselves a role in this space. The refresh of Ka Hikitia , once it is incorporated in schools/kura, may instigate a more specific LSC focus on supporting Māori students and their whānau.

7.5 Working across the cluster

LSC role function: Work with other **LSCs** across the cluster, and connect with the **learning support facilitator** and wider **agencies,** such as Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children, to access services and resources to support students.

LSCs are connecting across their cluster and working together to develop the role and establish ways to support learning. LSC survey results showed that 45% of LSCs are connecting with other LSCs in their cluster daily or weekly and 85% at least on a monthly basis (n=342).

This enables the growing of learning support practice, wider networks across agencies and learning support roles. Eight in ten schools/kura rated improvements in aspects of learning support because of the LSC involvement in cluster-wide work (see Appendix 3: Selected charts from school survey, Table 3).

Whilst [a couple] are very young and new and naive for teaching, they're lucky they've got these [experienced colleagues] who can provide counselling, PLD and all excellent stuff to them. So we've got a real good mix of LSCs. I reckon there'd be a problem if all schools had youngish and inexperienced teachers in those jobs. I mean, they're supposed to be experienced teachers…but if the school couldn't get them, they couldn't get them. (Principal)

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The sharing of knowledge and drawing on the strengths of LSCs in the cluster (experience and subject-specific) were seen as strengths of collaborative working. For example, in Te Kāhui Ako o Kōhanga Moa, LSCs worked as a team and the LSC with the most knowledge and experience around the needs of an upcoming student at a school in the cluster would lead or support the response. This in turn also allowed the LSCs to upskill and learn from each other. All schools/kura were familiar with the LSCs in the cluster team and were able to call on them as required. For example, one of the LSCs was specialised in working with ESOL students. This LSC would travel out to other schools to support staff and their LSC.

7.5.1 Leadership looks different in individual clusters.

Service managers, cluster leads and also individual LSCs were amongst those taking a lead role in different clusters in terms of organising the connection of LSCs. While a one-size-fits-all solution isn't desirable and clusters have agency, these solutions need to be sustainable and also integrated into the broader cluster functioning.

A degree of influence may be required where a commitment to the role or collective practice is not evident. Where there have been challenges experienced and LSC have followed issues up, the chain of accountability has not been clear, and it has taken time for issues to be resolved. LSC implementation is a high-trust approach, which makes those rare but significant issues (such as schools/kura not engaging with the role) complex and time consuming to work through.

7.5.2 From cooperation to real collaborative practice

Interview feedback highlighted different levels of cluster collaboration: the connecting and sharing between LSCs, and the integration of LSC activity with cluster leadership, potential decision making and change. The former may be seen as a low level of

collaboration, requiring cooperation only. The latter represents a more advanced form of collaboration, boding well for true collaborative practice that features in decision making and sharing of risk and resources. Collaborative practice will need LSCs to be integrated with cluster leadership if it is to progress cluster-level priorities and get consistent buy-in across schools/kura.

Te Kaahui Ako O Manurewa is an example of this working well. LSCs attend fortnightly face-to-face cluster meetings led by the service manager, alongside the RTLB cluster manager and the cluster lead principal. SENCOs as well as LSCs are included. The cluster lead principal attends for the first business part of the meeting; this enables two-way communication between the cluster stewardship group and those involved in learning support. The second part of the meeting is a panel allocation or case management discussion, and the third part is a PLD activity.

Just over half of LSCs that responded to the survey had attended two or more cluster meetings that included school/kura leadership in the last three months (56%, n=334). Around a third of LSCs felt cluster priorities were clearly identified (32%, n=338). This may indicate a division between LSCs experiencing strong cluster collaboration (such as that in Te Kaahui Ako O Manurewa) and those in clusters where the integration with cluster leadership and the vision for the LSC role is less intentional or robust.

7.5.3 Restrictions to sharing information within and across the cluster

In general, sharing aggregated data from the learning support register from the schools/kura within the cluster had not progressed due to the delay in the rollout of Te Rito. LSCs were acutely aware of the privacy requirements for information sharing. Though the requirements were widely supported, they were said to prevent some valuable initial exploratory conversations, professional to professional, taking place. Requesting whānau consent was thought to cause a disproportionate degree of concern for whānau.

- LSCs may have increased the capacity and demand of clusters to engage with cross sector agencies, but the indications are that agencies may not have the capacity to engage proactively.
- Cluster collaboration will be supported by a clearer understanding of the facilitation function and keeping the intent of the LSDM front of mind.
- With more time, more robust levels of collaboration may develop. It is still early in the implementation journey but if strong collaborative practice does not emerge across all clusters it is not clear where accountability to address that lies.

8 HOW WAS THE LSC ROLE IMPLEMENTED AND HOW IS IT NOW FUNCTIONING? WORKING ALONGSIDE OTHER ROLES

LSCs have altered the dynamic for existing roles key to learning support. Defining role boundaries with SENCOs has been quite straightforward for many but represents a work in progress for four in ten working alongside SENCOs. Similarly, the potential overlap with RTLB is recognised and is being worked through, with some complementary approaches emerging. The facilitation function played by service managers is varied and all stakeholders would benefit from more consistent and clearer expectations regarding this function.

8.1 The influence of existing roles on the implementation context

Role clarity has developed over the course of the year, but for many it is still a work in progress and one of the main concerns raised. Fitting LSCs into a space where SENCOs, RTLB and service managers were the key players is a transition that is still underway.

8.1.1 Boundaries between SENCO and LSC are the first ones to clarify

Most LSCs work alongside a SENCO and establishing clarity around the roles and responsibilities of each has been one of the biggest issues for LSC implementation. SENCOs are usually recognised financially (MUs) for performing this additional responsibility on top of their existing role, typically a deputy principal.

For schools/kura without a recognised SENCO, LSCs have come in and fulfilled this function, and this has generally been a straightforward assignment of responsibilities.

Viewing the LSC as an "add on" model and cultivating a team atmosphere where everyone in learning support including RTLB and MOE have the idea that we all work together for the students' wellbeing, not against each other or in competition with each other. I think we are improving on this now but it has been a rough process in some regards. (LSC survey respondent)

In the LSC survey, most LSCs (81%, n=342) worked alongside a SENCO, and of these, 44% reported some issues with role boundaries as shown in Figure 10. For some LSCs, one of the first things they did with SENCO was establish their roles to prevent overlap. Many LSCs and SENCOs have established ways of working. It is common for SENCOs to focus on students with high needs (and the LSC to focus on all other students). Some LSCs work to coordinate resources for SENCOs, teachers/kaiako and families while SENCOs work directly with the child. This can speed up an application process considerably. LSCs frequently support teaching assistants either as well as, or instead of, the SENCO.

Figure 10: LSC's view of their employer expectations and clarity of role with SENCO
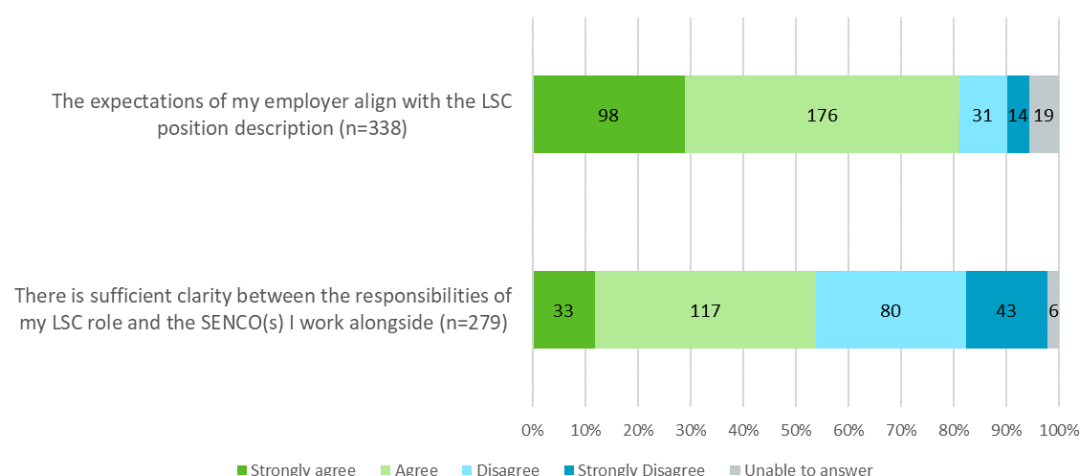
Some LSCs and SENCOs share responsibilities on a different basis for example, playing to their different strengths, or are still in the process of working out what works best for the school and its students.

However, in some cases, tension exists between LSCs and SENCOs where the SENCOs feel threatened by the perceived role overlap. Where LSCs are based across multiple schools/kura they were also seen as less dependable.

8.1.2 RTLB relationship features teamwork and perceived duplication

RTLBs have a varied understanding of where LSCs fit in the learning support space. Depending on the school, region and context, RTLB and LSC roles can be seen either as complementary or be overlapping. Particularly in rural regions, RTLB had an established role as both specialist teachers and coordinators of learning support at the school level

Depending on the context and individuals involved, LSC involvement has the potential to increase or decrease referrals to RTLB. Where the role is seen as complementary, RTLBs find that LSCs are meeting needs and reducing the demand for RTLB or referring only when their support has not worked and specialist teacher input is required. LSCs are also able to identify needs and some have been increasing the number of referrals to RTLB. LSCs are seen by RTLB as key contacts for the schools/kura they work with. This increases school capacity to work with RTLB.

Some LSCs mentioned that they were RTLB prior to applying for the LSC role. This has helped develop empathy and connections between roles. However, some of these LSCs are wanting to continue delivering some of the RTLB-specific specialist work through their new LSC role.

8.1.3 Service managers have different understanding of, and approaches to, their facilitation function

We spoke with service managers in six of the cluster regions. All were supportive of the LSC role and working in different ways to support it. Service managers have a range of involvement with LSCs. This is based on service managers' understanding and preferences; it also mirrors the relationship and role they played in the school cluster prior to LSC

implementation. A review of the service manager role description is intended to strengthen the facilitation function and the interface with LSC.

Some service managers had a hands-off approach, supporting LSCs when LSCs contacted them. A South Island LSC who responded to the survey was completely unaware there was anyone in this facilitation function. Others were highly engaged and booked regular meetings with the LSCs until their role was taking off and had a visible presence and function across the cluster. In the LSC survey 75% agreed (or strongly agreed) that they had an effective working relationship with their service manager. However, interviews identified expectations of the service manager facilitation function were not clear.

LSCs who worked in large geographical areas were also less likely to have much face-to-face contact with their service manager, making it more difficult for the service managers to facilitate or build relationships with LSCs.

The role of the service manager also depended on how much work was being led by cluster leadership. For example, some cluster leads were providing supervision and ongoing support to the LSCs, allowing the service manager to have a more hands-off approach.

Where clusters were functioning well, this introduced efficiencies into the service manager role. Effective cluster meetings and group communication was said to be less time consuming and more effective than a series of individual school meetings and relationships.

LSC are employed by schools/kura but are seen by some as a Ministry role because of the direct funding of the role. A few of the schools/kura said there had been occasions when the Ministry offices had communicated directly with LSCs, for example about the COVID-19 recovery funding, when it would have been appropriate to include school leadership for transparency, inclusion and courtesy.

- RTLB referral patterns will provide useful insight into how the LSC function is being delivered, as this will show both increases in referrals from some schools/kura, (identifying need), and decreases in referrals from some schools/kura (where the LSC is responding to need).
- Including SENCO in the planning for LSC roles in schools/kura and including other roles in the orientation process provides a good foundation for working together.
- The review of the service manager position description should help promote a more consistent understanding and delivery of the vital facilitation function. Understanding their own and others' function and responsibilities regarding learning support is necessary for service managers, SENCO, RTLB and LSC.

9 HOW WAS THE LSC ROLE IMPLEMENTED AND HOW IS IT NOW FUNCTIONING? GEOGRAPHIC AND STRUCTURAL FACTORS

Working across multiple schools/kura provides variety and creates opportunities for synergy but is challenging from a logistical perspective as well as impacting on relationship building and role delivery. Recruitment is more challenging for schools/kura in rural areas and operationalising the role across schools/kura in a large rural area that is isolated from services impacts on delivery of the role. For Māori medium settings, initial implementation has also highlighted the need to realign LSC with te ao Māori.

9.1 Working in one school is much simpler than working across more than one school for LSCs

LSCs who work in one school/kura found this easier than working in several schools/kura, as their role was able to be fully embedded in the school/kura. They felt this enabled them to be more accessible to staff, students and whānau, which supported role promotion and relationship building, which are key elements of LSC success. Staff and whānau we spoke to confirmed the value of LSCs being available to them, being on site and present as school team members.

The LSC allocation is not sufficient for every school with an allocation to have a full time LSC at their school so the role has to be shared across schools/kura. The distance between schools/kura was considered as part of the allocation of this tranche of LSCs, so that no LSC will need to work across more than five schools/kura. Additional LSCs have been allocated to clusters with a number of small rural schools/kura and/or significant distances to cover. There is shared LSC resource in all but 11 clusters, and LSC survey results suggest around half LSCs work in more than one school. This is difficult to accurately quantify using payroll data, which only identifies the employing school, and the Ministry allocation may have been adjusted. LSCs are full time positions, and recruiting part time to one school was not an option schools/kura were meant to consider.

Working across more than one school/kura has some advantages. Some LSCs preferred the variety of working across more than one school/kura, and where this was a mixture of types of school/kura they anticipated being able to support transitions of students effectively. However, primary, intermediate and high schools/kura require knowledge of different developmental stages as well as of school processes (from school entry requirements right up to NCEA), which can feel overwhelming for LSCs to absorb.

Working across multiple schools/kura means it takes longer to embed the role, and different ways of trying to make it work are evident. Working across multiple schools/kura may translate to a pop-in once a fortnight, making it much harder to establish responsibilities and relationships and develop a clear role for the LSC.

LSCs are experimenting with being available to a narrower range of schools per person, as availability encourages staff trust, allows better support and for demonstration and embedding of support practices.
(LSC survey respondent)

A key challenge identified for LSCs working across multiple schools/kura is differing expectations of the LSC role in the different schools/kura. Creating role consistency for themselves across different school contexts was challenging, especially when the scope of the role and relational functions differed in each school.

Other logistical issues, such as having a workspace in all schools/kura (e.g. to meet whānau), and administrative sharing costs for printing and resources, Wi-Fi and digital support were raised, as well as having email addresses that reflect a single school. While some of these issues can be worked through, they clearly remain an issue for some LSC and impact on the delivery of the role and are frustrating for the LSCs.

The travel budgets provided for LSCs will be tested this year, to see if they have been sufficient and well managed.

I am in three schools. I have to share a desk with another teacher at the same time one day I am in a school. I have nowhere to store resources. Another school I have no allocated area. My employing school is still awaiting building. I share a space, I have no desk, nowhere to meet parents. I carry my resources in my car. (LSC Survey response)

- There are clearly limits to the number of schools/kura one LSC can support, as multiple settings bring challenges and complexities, even in urban areas, that are not recognised by enrolled student volumes alone.
- More needs to be understood about making the role work across multiple schools/kura. A review of travel budget use and needs, part time roles and adaptations that are occurring will support this.

9.2   Rural schools/kura have unique considerations

As noted, rural schools/kura have found it harder to recruit LSCs; this is not unique to LSC recruitment, as attracting teaching staff to rural areas is challenging compared to provincial and large urban centres. The smaller sizes of rural schools/kura means LSCs are more likely to be working across more than one school, often several, which can be some distance apart.

Strengths of rural schools/kura that were conveyed during interviews included the close relationships between students, school staff, whānau and local communities. This setting can provide a highly collaborative environment, with less competition for students between schools/kura. This closeness was highlighted as sensitive to personalities and relationships. In rural areas LSCs were likely to be asked to consider or apply for the position.

Being at a distance and only being able to be in those schools one or two days every three weeks definitely makes establishing these relationships harder but I have already spent the whole year's travel budget in seven months. (LSC survey respondent)

Principals of rural schools/kura tend to be more present in the day-to-day work of the school and LSC (they may have teaching and SENCO responsibilities too). While the readiness and understanding of all principals is important for establishing the roles, in rural schools/kura it is particularly influential.

Rural schools/kura tend to have close relationships with early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo as there tend to be few of them, and LSCs are becoming part of an existing tight relationship, which supports transition. LSCs are likely to work across all different types of schools/kura, which is beneficial in terms of school transition but demanding in terms of school/kura system knowledge.

A common experience in rural schools/kura is the challenge of accessing learning support services and resources because of low local availability and the physical distance from centres of population. This context will influence what LSCs can draw on to support students and the nature and extent of within-school and cluster solutions that emerge. Greater challenges of accessing services, vacancies remaining for a long time, and logistical issues with delivery were highlighted by those in rural areas.

- Rural schools/kura can be a deeper focus area in the next phases of evaluation. This will help understand unique strengths and challenges and understand how the role can work well in such contexts.
- LSC recruitment did not appear to leave gaps in the local education sector that would be difficult to backfill.

9.3   Māori medium has unique considerations

We engaged with two clusters that consisted of all Māori medium kura, completing two interviews in each. In these settings the LSC role was said to be seen and used flexibly and embraced as an opportunity to focus on learning support and really make a difference. LSCs described responding more holistically to presenting needs and building on the strong relationships that exist within kura and their communities.

In Māori medium kura, community engagement, whanaungatanga – networks of relationships – are valued above all else, and the need to get to know the whānau and community to gain trust and respect is paramount. LSCs report that an in-depth introduction, supported through hui or wānanga to introduce the LSC to all staff, whānau and wider networks through panui and whakatau were valued. Regular hui were important as a way to build collaboration across LSCs, with senior leadership and other agencies.

Identified as a need was a shared space where LSCs could meet, connect and collaborate with one another. This would enable whanaungatanga, sharing of learnings and ideas, celebrating successes and support meetings with key contacts from agencies.

Like other LSC, LSCs in these kura were not always clear about their roles, and in the absence of guidance about PLD and role delivery they have simply responded in the best way they see fit.

Recruiting LSCs able to work in a kura setting who meet recruitment criteria and are available (in rural areas particularly) is challenging and can disadvantage these kura. A concern was raised by two LSCs about the MU they are paid and the impact of this on the cost for kura and availability of MU for other kaiako. It was suggested that using the Māori Immersion Teacher Allowance (MITA) would go some way to address this issue.

Concerns about the geographic isolation from learning support services were exacerbated for the kura because learning support is based on western learning models. For example most learning support tools are in English with some unfamiliar content that reduces kura confidence in their utility.

The current LSC role was also described as being based on a western understanding of learning support without due consideration of te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori.

Although there was support in principle for developing a learning support register, two LSCs said they were not using the common language because the deficit-based, clinical, western lens was seen as inappropriate and not mana enhancing, and they were concerned about the information following and defining ākonga into the future.

> *Most probably more wananga styled systems at the very beginning to really flesh out the role and have a stronger understanding of how it looks in kura. Each kura has its own needs. Would have been good to take the time to see how it could blend. (LSC survey respondent)*

"

- The LSC role in Māori medium is valued but there are some specific barriers identified including recruitment, working in rural settings and lack of alignment with te ao Māori. This signals the need to listen and understand more about what is needed to enable the role to support learning needs, learners, kaiako, and whānau as effectively as possible.
- This initial feedback indicates that issues and solutions are much broader than the LSC role itself. For example, the challenge of recruitment for Māori medium and rural settings is not unique to the LSC role. Neither is the availability and accessibility of kaupapa Māori learning support tools and services. The insights provided through the LSC role, however, provide an opportunity to make change to and for the LSC role to ensure that appropriate support is available for Māori.
- Without embracing the opportunity to make changes to the LSC role in Māori settings and kura in isolated, rural settings, the role may not contribute to meeting the learning support needs of Māori learners'

10 HOW WAS THE LSC ROLE IMPLEMENTED AND IS NOW FUNCTIONING? SUMMARY REFLECTIONS

Overall, there is a high degree of satisfaction from schools/kura and LSCs. The role is implemented differently depending on context, which is as intended. The allocation formula seems about right, though consideration of the requirements of rural schools/kura and those with greater need is warranted. For some, there are barriers to accessing services and supports for students, or accessing tools and resources required for LSC delivery. These will need support from the Ministry to address.

10.1 High level of satisfaction with the role

Survey findings show a high degree of satisfaction with the LSC role when rating on a 10-point scale. The chart in Figure 11 shows more than 70% of schools/kura are satisfied with the LSC role (rated 6/10 or higher). Similarly, more than 70% of LSCs are satisfied with their roles with almost 60% being extremely satisfied (rated 10/10). Those schools/kura who were most satisfied with their LSC roles tended to have fully operational learning support clusters and fully operational LSCs.

I LOVE MY JOB!!!! The best thing is helping families to support their children – there are so many families that just don't have the basic parenting skills. I do feel like a Social Worker a lot of the time – BUT this role is making a difference and the job is very worthwhile and VERY rewarding. Thank you for the opportunity to help and support our teachers, our families and our students (LSC survey response)

Those LSC who were dissatisfied (rated 4/10 or lower) with their roles were most likely to feel they were not provided with accurate information during recruitment, felt that teachers/kaiako and principals didn't enable them to fulfil their roles and were unclear about the roles and responsibilities of others in the cluster.

Figure 11: LSC role satisfaction (n=341) and School/kura (n=393) satisfaction with LSC role
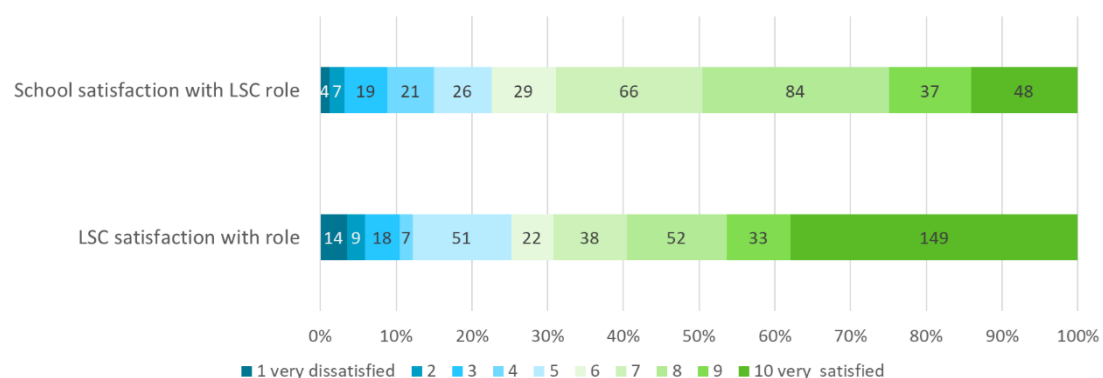
10.2 Few adaptations to the role – intentional or otherwise

The LSC role is flexible to local context, with five core functions that work with a range of stakeholders and provide the role with a broad scope. Although the role definition is still emerging in some schools/kura, there seems to be very little deliberate out-of-scope working. Only ten survey respondents described teacher aide or teaching or relief teaching, and nine LSCs referred to doing duty as some of the out-of-scope activities they were required to do. Out-of-scope working was associated with principals not understanding the scope of the LSC role.

I am managing, I am experienced and resilient, I consider these initiatives of the MoE/Government to be long overdue and if implemented will make a huge difference to students. I want to be part of that change. (LSC survey response)

In a few schools adaptations include the use of part-time LSC roles. Individuals who discussed part time roles in interview all said it was the only feasible option to recruit to the role. A special school divided its allocation across several specialist outreach teachers/kaiako to offer their expertise to teachers/kaiako and students in the schools/kura they visited. These arrangements are clearly at odds with Ministry guidance that LSCs roles should not be split.

It is noteworthy that we heard of two schools/kura that have used their own funding to create an additional LSC role. One is a large intermediate school and is implementating and using the role exactly as the Ministry-funded LSC.

Interview feedback identified that grey areas or ways of working were emerging. This refers to those tasks which are not directly within the role scope of LSCs but may support LSCs in their ability to do their roles. For instance, some LSCs talked about doing playground duty, or working one on one with children or small groups short term. Some saw this as an opportunity to promote their roles with teachers/kaiako and students and also build relationships.

On a few occasions, LSCs have worked one-on-one to provide direct support for a learner. This is not a common situation as the role is not a teaching role, so would not expect a LSC to be providing whole-class teaching, teacher release, or relieving'.

10.3 Allocation is about right but there is more to consider

Overall, at this stage the allocation of LSCs seems to have been about right. For every two survey repondents that said allocation was about right, one expressed a need for increased allocation. Increased allocation may be for some of the reasons identfied in this report such as LSCs working across multiple schools/kura and in rural areas. It may also be reflective of greater learning support need. Figure 12 below shows that perceptions of FTTE allocations across both schools/kura and LSCs responses were about the same, with about 60% of both groups reporting the allocation was about right and about 30% reporting it was less than required.

Figure 12: LSC and School/kura perceptions of their FTTE allocation
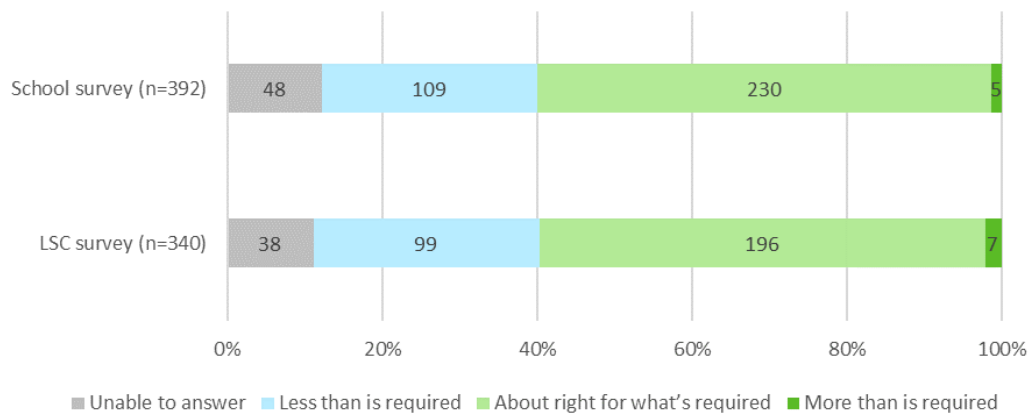
In interviews, a small number of individuals expressed an opinion about any future allocation decisions. They said learning support need should be a factor, and school decile ratings were a suitable proxy for need.

- Any future allocation decisions should consider deprivation/needs based allocation as well as the logistical limitations of working across multiple schools/kura

10.4 Some barriers to delivery are not resolving with time

Some of the barriers to role delivery LSCs talked about in interview, were the same issues identfied in the LSC induction forum feedback in February 2020. In the LSC survey, 60% (n=332) of respondents said they were experiencing some kind of barrier that was significant enough to prevent them delivering on role expectations. The main barriers are role clarity, PLD, access to services and access to resources.

Role clarity has developed over the course of the year, but three in ten survey repondents (30% of 345 repondents) are still not clear about their reponsibilities in school/kura (see Appendix 4: Selected charts from LSC survey, Figure 21). Working alongside other roles is difficult when role boundaries and responsibilities are not clear or there are different understandings with others, particularly employing principals. These difficulties are exacerbated for LSCs working in multiple schools/kura.

PLD is still a concern for LSCs. This relates to knowing what PLD to do, what is available, and how it is funded. It may be that these LSCs are isolated or have unique or unmet needs, as PLD planning and activites to support PLD was sometimes occuring at cluster level, if not within the school. Not all LSCs received the regional PLD as they expected to, and there is a perception that some regions have received more support than others. LSCs in one cluster said the regional training that was provided wasn't relevant for Māori medium settings.

Access to learning support services for students, and to written resources have been highlighted as barriers to delivery. These are discussed in more detail below.

10.4.1 Accessing learning support services and resources

Just over half of LSC survey responses (52%, n=337) indicated they were able to access learning support services and support from agencies without significant issues. Of those who experienced barriers in accessing services many talked about long waiting lists to access services such as Speech Language Therapists (SLT), RTLB and mental health support. Others couldn't say which services they hadn't been able to access as they felt they didn't know what was available or how to access them.

There is no funding available for a child who does not meet the ORS criteria but requires a high level of support at school. This funding issue has a huge impact on how the LSC can operate within a school. (LSC survey respondent)

LSCs rely on schools/kura making discretionary funds available for them to purchase resources and engage in PLD to support their broader work programme. Google Read&Write™ (literacy software) and Lucid assessment and training are examples of resources LSCs wanted access to. Suggestions to provide within-school or cluster-level discretionary funding to LSCs for purchasing resources and PLD were made.

10.4.2   Accessing learning support written resources

Similar barriers were discussed in relation to accessing written resources (such as screening tools and diagnosis-specific information). Of those who could identify which resources they were struggling to access, dyslexia resources were identified most frequently, followed by more generic mentions of Ministry resources and screening tools.

No screening tools have been provided, I have only a handbook on dyslexia and a few brochures. The majority of my findings are through searching online, recommendations of PD through the school and other professionals I work with. (LSC)

The final version of the LSC: A Guide to the Role, and the refreshed Learning Support Network of Expertise that collates resources as well as providing an interactive professional space (https://www.lsn.nz/), were launched on 17 November 2020.

- There is a gap in awareness of what's available (or not) and how to access it. The Network resources and role guide now in place and online follow-up sessions for principals and LSCs planned by the Ministry in early 2021 will respond to this need.
- Not all LSCs have familiarity with resources available from the Ministry and local agencies, what they provide and how resources are accessed.
- LSCs would benefit from a budget or access to some discretionary funding for PLD, Teacher PLD or resource purchases

10.5   Learning what supports successful implementation

Though LSCs, schools/kura and local contexts differ, there are some common themes that have reoccurred in terms of supporting successful implementation. These are summarised into three main but interconnected themes of leadership, the calibre of candidates, and ongoing support.

10.5.1   School and cluster functioning – leadership

The leadership of the schools/kura LSCs are employed by or allocated to is instrumental to their experience of the role. Principals set the tone for how the role is perceived, used and valued. Principals who have identified key areas of need in the school (and may recruit for these needs) can give clearer guidance on work programme and priorities.

Where there are established ways of working developed at cluster level, it is easier for LSCs to connect, as there are existing systems, leadership and communication pathways. Service managers that have a relationship with LSCs and are part of the collective work help connect sector, cluster and school resources. This can be as simple as being present at meetings, guiding and providing PLD, and orientating LSCs to processes, Ministry specialists and services.

10.5.2   High-calibre candidates

LSCs with a real passion for improving learning support and who can build relationships, establish trust and have been proactive in terms of promoting their role are establishing the

LSC role with relative ease. The LSC role is a coordination role and the ability to work collaboratively and influence others is how the work gets done.

LSCs with broad teaching experience and learning support expertise are drawing on this credibility to create trust with teachers/kaiako, and identify and respond to learning support needs. LSCs within a cluster can have (by accident or design) specialist knowledge and skills that can be complementary across a school/kura or cluster.

10.5.3   Ongoing support re role readiness and delivery

LSCs need the tools to do their job and ongoing support to navigate learning support cultures within schools/kura and create their role and influence within it. Support from principals, cluster leads and service managers is important. There is a balance between highly prescribed and highly organic approaches to role development. Those LSCs that seemed to strike the balance had clear priority areas that both they and school/kura leadership teams agreed on, and there was in-school support for that activity. This was facilitated by engaged and enabling principals who met frequently and regularly with the LSCs, enabling the LSCs to become integrated into the working of the school/kura. Agreeing an orientation programme and work programme that is reviewed means the operational needs and resources of LSCs are reviewed regularly.

> - Learning what works to support success can inform ongoing refinement and future readiness for the role

11   WHAT DIFFERENCES HAS THE LSC CONTRIBUTED TO MEETING LEARNING SUPPORT NEEDS?

The introduction of LSCs into schools/kura has made a significant positive difference to the ability of schools/kura to support learning needs. LSCs are a catalyst; they are doers as well as system enablers. The evaluation has found that LSCs are adding much-needed capacity and capability into the system, with positive differences emerging. LSCs are reportedly identifying students whose needs would have previously gone unrecognised or unmet, as well as enabling SENCO and teachers/kaiako to work more effectively. The response to learning support needs is becoming more proactive and strategic, and the potential for transformative change is emerging in schools/kura and clusters where the potential of the role has been grasped with both hands. A minority of schools/kura (one in ten) are struggling to implement the role effectively and are yet to reap the benefits.

Sections Supporting students7.1 to 7.5 have described the activities and benefits emerging from LSC activity across the five core functions of the role. These functions are supporting students, teachers/kaiako and whānau, while working within their schools/kura and across their cluster to coordinate learning support.

Schools/kura were asked to rate improvement in their schools/kura ability across these five functions since the introduction of the LSC role. The survey responses are presented in Appendix 3: Selected charts from school/kura survey, Table 3 (n=362)and show that around

a third of schools/kura (32%) said they had improved a lot and just over a third (35%) said they had improved a little across this range of functions.

Of these five functions, the greatest increase related to the ability of schools/kura to respond to learning support needs and to support teachers/kaiako. The minority of schools/kura who did not rate improvements tended to be schools/kura where the role was not fully operationalised.

> • For a new role introduced during a pandemic, two thirds of schools/kura are seeing increases in their ability to support learning needs. Being more able to support teachers/kaiako working with diverse learners is an outcome valued by the sector.

11.1 Not just more capacity but different thinking

Adding capacity into any system should be expected to produce benefits. The evaluation has evidenced how the LSC resource has been implemented and how it is working in schools/kura. This is largely as intended (though operational aspects vary) and the immediate changes expected are emerging. This report has described how the role has impacted positively on students, teachers/kaiako and whānau, removing some of the barriers to learning support and simplifying access to support by providing capacity and expertise within schools/kura and clusters.

LSCs have provided a mandate for schools and kura to think differently about supporting learning needs. The capacity LSCs have added has also given schools and kura the breathing space they needed to reflect on this. This tipping point represents a changing mind set and approach to identify and responding to learning support needs.

It has allowed the school that we're in to have the time to really sit down and talk about diverse students and how the school can best meet its needs or how the school is able to now best meet its needs. Before, we would meet regularly but it was difficult to [engage] because people were spread so thin. (RTLB)

> • Perhaps the most valuable change emerging where the role is well integrated, is the shift towards a proactive approach to learning support and shifting mindsets about behaviour as a barrier to learning.
> • The LSC benefits of the role are emerging as intended, though the extent of this varies considerably, depending on how well the role is working.

SECTION C: LOOKING FORWARD

12 HOW CAN THE IMPLEMENTATION AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE LSC ROLE BE IMPROVED?

At this relatively early stage of implementation, the indications are very positive that the role is, or is well on its way to be, working as intended in most schools/kura. Where it is not, the evaluation has provided insights into the context and implementation processes that have influenced these varied experiences. These insights and learning about what supports implementation can be translated into actions. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the LSC role and its impact on the demand for learning support services will support progress and evidence the impact of this role.

12.1 Considerations to support implementation

The short-term considerations are summarised here as they apply to the Ministry, clusters and schools/kura. These are intended to address issues that have been identified through the evaluation to improve LSC delivery.

Considerations for the Ministry

- Communication about Te Rito implementation is important to the ongoing development of learning support registers, the rollout of the standardised Learning Support Register (sLSR) and to the sharing of information.
- Service managers, with their facilitator function, are crucial to the delivery of the LSC role working as intended. There is an opportunity to clarify what can be expected of this function.
- The current high-trust implementation process relies on employing principals enabling the role at school/kura and cluster level. Consideration by cluster leaders of who is accountable for the oversight of the LSC role could clarify how challenges can be resolved.
- All those who work in learning support roles in schools and kura need further clarity to understand the LSC role and build collaborative approaches that improve learning support for learners and whānau. This can help to take advantage of the flexibility in the model and manage the different expectations of the LSC role.
- There is a need to reinforce the message and support the expectation that the LSC role is not simply to identify more learning support needs (just to make referrals for support) but also be part of the solution. The LSC role within schools/kura and clusters is about tailoring responses to local needs and using local resources flexibly within the LSDM.
- It is important that the Ministry keeps principals in the loop of communication and does not communicate with LSCs in isolation.
- LSCs identified the need for support to access resources and PLD. The recent launch of resources (LSC: A Guide to the Role and the Learning Support Network of Expertise) may help to address this need. Monitoring the interactive Learning Support Network of Expertise will help to identify how well this meets LSC needs in the short term.

Considerations for clusters of schools and kura

- The new 2021 school year provides an opportunity for clusters and schools/kura to review, refresh and promote the LSC role.
- Where required, clusters can consider the steps needed to better integrate LSC activity with cluster leadership and broader cluster planning and prioritisation.
- Where LSCs are not regularly reporting on their work programme, activity and progress against it, consider the value of this and its contribution to making the role visible and integrated with the school/kura and cluster working culture.

12.2 More learning to inform future adaptation

This phase of the evaluation has provided limited insight into the implementation of the role in Māori medium, but gleaned sufficient insight to know that kura are experiencing both common experiences and unique ones. More work is needed to understand what is needed in this setting to align learning support and the LSC role with te ao Māori.

Similarly, more work is required to understand the needs and nuances of providing LSCs across rural areas and multiple schools/kura. The potential value and implications of aligning allocation towards clusters with greater need also needs further consideration. Together these represent a potential refinement rather than a rethink of the current allocation process.

As implementation matures and eventually expands it will be important to keep monitoring and understanding any increase in demand for external learning support resources.

The next phases of evaluation will be able to support this learning. The next phase of evaluation will also draw on the perspectives of a broader range of stakeholders, including whānau, to give whānau a strong voice in the evaluation and shaping of LSC implementation.

13 EVALUATION OF ONGOING IMPLEMENTATION

This initial formative evaluation provides a basis for ongoing process and outcome evaluation of the implementation of the LSC role.

This initial, formative evaluation has provided a snapshot of the LSC implementation in Term 3, 2020, a year that has brought unprecedented challenges to the education sector because of COVID-19. The next phases of evaluation will build on this learning, explore some aspects of delivery in more depth (includes Māori medium and rural schools/kura), include a strong whānau voice in the work and include a broader range of education (including early learning services me ngā kōhanga reo) and community perspectives.

One of the objectives of this phase of the evaluation was to inform the process and initial outcome measures by which the future impact of LSCs can be measured. The subsequent phases of the evaluation will measure the value of LSC implementation by June 2022. This time frame indicates that implementation will be maturing but not mature. It will therefore

be important to measure outcomes in a way that reflects the stage of implementation and considers the contribution of LSCs to those outcomes.

13.1 Measuring change to demonstrate future LSC impact is guided by the theory of change

The LSC theory of change developed for the evaluation provides a simplified blueprint for evidencing what it is the LSCs do, and the changes they will effect (outcomes) as a result. These outcomes are important to track to demonstrate that firstly, implementation is occurring as intended, and secondly, that the LSC role is contributing as expected. LSCs are a key role in learning support but there are many other individuals, initiatives, processes, and systems that influence it too.

13.1.1 Using a range of data and a rubric to evaluate outcomes

A measurement framework will need to be created using data from multiple sources to align with a mixed-methods approach. A rubric provides a transparent method of weaving data sources and transparently assigning value, and we recommend this approach is considered to measure future changes in implementation, capacity and benefit. These standards will also need to reflect equity of outcomes.

13.1.2 Understanding LSC contribution in a dynamic environment

The education sector is dynamic, with various strategic initiatives in place that are expected to have some influence on the outcomes LSCs are expecting. Determining the value of the LSC contribution to the outcomes will require exploration of methods to account for other contributing elements to add rigour to the measurement and attribution of outcomes. This would usually require a control or comparison group; the value and feasibility of this is to be explored in the next phases of the evaluation.

14 APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY, FIGURES AND TABLES IN THIS REPORT

Acronyms	Full
AP	Assistant Principal
CoL	Communities of Learning
DP	Deputy Principal
ICS	In-Class Support
IEP	Individual Education Plan
LS	Learning support
LSAP	Learning Support Action Plan
LSC	Learning Support Coordinator
LSDM	Learning Support Delivery Model
MU	Management Units
MMU	Middle Management Units
MITA	Māori Immersion Teacher Allowance (MITA)
ORS	Ongoing Resource Scheme
PB4L	Positive Behaviour For Learning
PLD	Professional Learning and Development
PTSA	Priority Teacher Supply Allowance
RTLB	Resource Teacher: Learning And Behaviour
SENCO	Special Education Needs Coordinator
SM	Service Manager
sLSR	Standardised Learning Support Register
TA	Teaching Assistant

14.1 Table of figures in this report

14.2 Table of tables in this report

15 APPENDIX 2: METHODOLOGY

15.1 Data collection and analysis

We collected the following evidence to answer the key evaluation questions:

15.1.1 Cluster feedback

The Ministry identified and approached, via regional directors, 14 clusters of schools/kura representing a range of differing contextual settings to be included in the evaluation. These included clusters that were known to be progressing at different speeds with implementation, Māori medium clusters, and rural and urban clusters. In our initial plan we intended to visit schools/kura and conduct most of the cluster interviews face to face. It was however necessary for this plan to be adapted due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the different levels of restrictions that applied. We adapted by using Zoom and phone calls to conduct the vast majority of cluster interviews. Interviews were completed between the 24th of August and the 25th of September. One outstanding interview was competed in December 2020.

Of the 14 clusters approached, we were able to engage with 13 within the timeframe for reporting. Engagement was via a nominated cluster lead who guided the selection and inclusion of key personnel in interview. For each cluster we attempted to include the service manager and a RTLB representative as well as school staff. This was not always possible.

LSCs were asked at the conclusion of their interview to approach whānau for inclusion in interview. In the timeframe available this only resulted in three whānau providing permission for their contact details to be passed to the evaluation team and completing an interview. They were provided a $50 voucher as koha.

Figure 13: Number of interviewees by cluster Figure 13 and Figure 14 show the total number of interviewees by cluster represented and their role type.

Figure 13: Number of interviewees by cluster

Cluster	Number of interviewees
Te Kaahui Ako O Manurewa	14
He Waka Eke Noa	11
Kōtuitui Community of Learning	11
Mawhera Community of Learning	10
Otakaro	9
Puketeraki	9
Matanui O Kahungunu	8
Porirua East Community of Learning	8
Te Kāhui Ako o Kōhanga Moa	8
Whakatane community of learning	6
Te Kaahui Ako o Tainui	2
Te Kāhui Ako o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori o Ngāti Porou	2
Ngā Kura mo te ako o Whangarei Kāhui Ako Group 2	1
Grand Total	99

Figure 14: Number of interviewees by role

Role type	Number of interviewees
LSC	32
Principal	22
SENCO	12
RTLB	10
Teacher	7
Service Manager	6
Whānau	3
Deputy Principal	2
RTLB cluster manager	2
Manager Learning Support	1
SENCO DP	1
Teacher aide	1
Grand Total	99

Analysis of interview data

The 99 interviews were almost all recorded (with permission). These were uploaded into NVivo and the automated transcripts were cleaned and/or written notes were used for analysis. An analysis template based on topics of interest for the key evaluation questions and other miscellaneous feedback was used. This template was then uploaded into NVivo. NVivo was used to develop a two-phased coding framework; firstly, around the evaluation questions, and then themes emerging from feedback.

15.1.2   Surveys of LSC and schools/kura with LSC allocation

Two surveys were also developed to understand aspects of LSC implementation from the perspective of schools/kura and LSCs. Using connections from the Ministry team, the survey was sent to 1055 schools/kura (for school responses) and 494 employing schools/kura (to forward to LSCs as we were unable to contact LSCs directly to administer the survey).

The response rate for the school survey was 40% (n=419) and the response rate for the LSC survey was 62% (n=371). A denominator of 596 was used for the LSC survey response rate as 596 was the number of LSCs employed by schools/kura by July 2020. Using this number provides a more accurate estimate of response rate than the total 623 LSCs who were planned to be employed.

There were some differences regionally with the larger cities tending to have lower response rates for LSCs as shown in Figure 15 below.

Figure 15: LSC and School/kura survey response rate by region
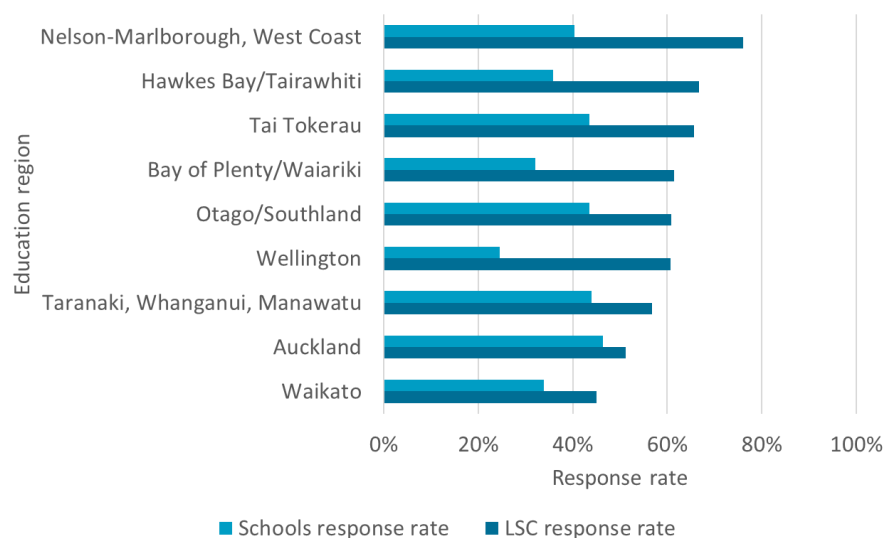
Analysis of survey data

The LSC and school survey was administered using Survey Monkey. Surveys were in field from 4 August to 17 August. Data was extracted from Survey Monkey, cleaned and prepared in excel. Data was then put into pivot tables to view the responses for individual questions. For key questions, further frequency analysis was done to see trends in responses with other questions. (e.g. LSC working in regional areas tended to be less satisfied). NVivo was used to code and quantify themes emerging in the open text fields of the surveys.

There is potential to further interrogate these survey responses in future phases of the evaluation.

15.1.3   EDK administrative data

The EDK team have developed two resources following a consolidation exercise to provide trend and granular data relating to learning support services. These are:

- A static 'data index table' consisting of a list of LS services with initial volumes delivered annually 2015-2019 to show trends by intervention type.
- A 'meta data file' that would enable queries/pivots to be run, for example the reach of learning support can be viewed overall by tier, region or ethnicity. However, not all LS data is available to the same degree of granularity. This represents a valuable resource for the Ministry and future evaluations relating to learning, but there are some limitations in the data and its interpretation. This file also includes other potential outcome data, such as stand downs and expulsions.

15.1.4 Ministry LSC payroll data to July 2020

EDK provided the evaluation team with de-identified payroll data to July 2020. This identified the employing school, cluster, FTTE and LSC start date by identification of the LSC payroll code of S13. It did not contain salary information. The data may contain errors but these were thought to be negligible. This data was used to identify recruitment patterns across the 124 clusters with LSC allocation.

15.1.5 Analysis of LSC induction feedback

Synergia completed the analysis of induction form feedback. Data from 706 responses over 6 days of workshops was provided to Synergia and we reported the findings and a discussion section on using those findings on 1 May 2020. Given the restrictions that prevented Synergia from collecting data, this provided a welcome opportunity to explore some feedback from LSCs through the ratings and open fields of the survey.

15.1.6 Key stakeholder conversations

To prepare for survey development and cluster feedback informal conversations with three of four contacts provided by the working group were completed. These were helpful in terms of setting the scene for the evaluation and understanding strategic considerations relating to implementation.

15.1.7 Integration and sensemaking prior to reporting

Internal sensemaking consisted of a series of internal workshops to integrate the data against the evaluation questions. A sensemaking session with the working group to validate and explore findings was held on 5 November 2020.

APPENDIX 3: SELECTED CHARTS FROM SCHOOL/KURA SURVEY
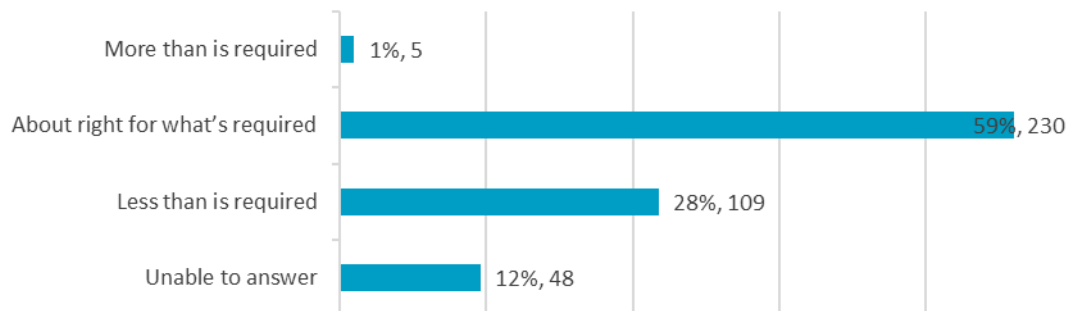
Figure 16: School/kura rating of FTTE allocation (n=344)

- More than is required: 1%, 5
- About right for what's required: 59%, 230
- Less than is required: 28%, 109
- Unable to answer: 12%, 48

Table 2: School's/kura rating of their baseline ability for key LSC role functions, shown by number of LSC (n=388)

	Very able	Able	Somewhat able	Low ability or unable	Unable to answer
Identify the learning support needs of individual students	155	157	59	9	8
Respond to the learning support needs of individual students	56	138	152	33	9
Have visibility of the learning support needs across the kura/school	99	155	95	31	8
Support smooth transitions for students	57	160	136	24	11
Support kaiako/teachers to teach students with diverse learning support needs	33	121	184	40	10
Work in partnership with parents and whānau to provide learning support	70	150	140	17	10
Work collaboratively with other education providers	55	132	140	50	11

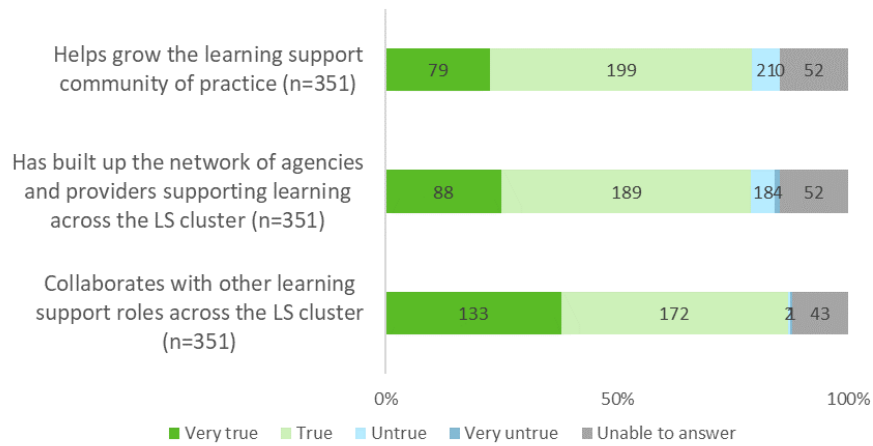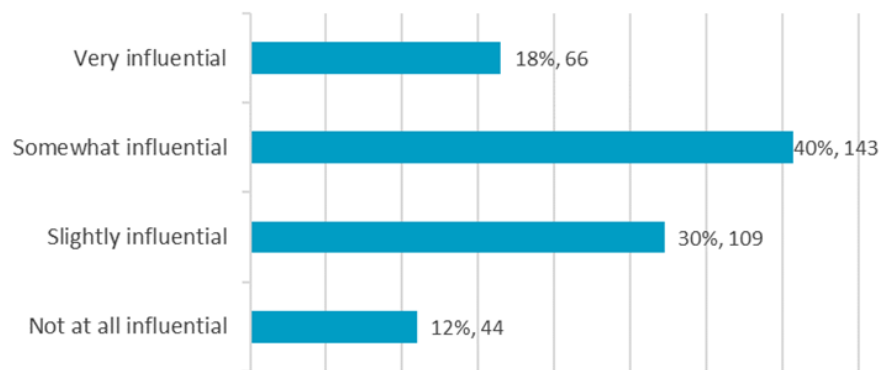**Figure 17: School/kura ratings of LSCs ability to create collaboration across the cluster**

	Very true	True	Untrue	Very untrue	Unable to answer
Helps grow the learning support community of practice (n=351)	79	199	21	0	52
Has built up the network of agencies and providers supporting learning across the LS cluster (n=351)	88	189	18	4	52
Collaborates with other learning support roles across the LS cluster (n=351)	133	172	2	1	43

Figure 18: LSC level of influence so far (n=364)

Very influential	18%, 66
Somewhat influential	40%, 143
Slightly influential	30%, 109
Not at all influential	12%, 44

Table 3: Rating improvement in ability against key LSC role functions (n=362)

	Improved a lot	Improved a little	About the same	Declining a little	Declining a lot	Unable to answer
Identify the learning support needs of individual students	119	122	105	4	2	10
Respond to the learning support needs of individual students	139	127	77	5	2	12
Have visibility of the learning support needs across the kura/school	126	114	108	4	1	9
Support smooth transitions for students	99	131	105	7	1	19
Support kaiako/teachers to teach students with diverse learning support needs	115	135	96	5	1	10
Work in partnership with parents and whānau to provide learning support	112	128	99	8	1	14
Work collaboratively with other education providers	110	134	96	6	0	16

17 APPENDIX 4: SELECTED CHARTS FROM LSC SURVEY

Figure 19: LSC working across schools/kura (n=335)

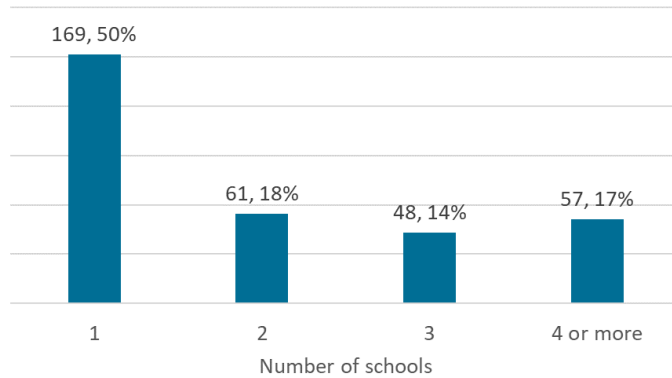**Figure 20: LSC clear about their responsibilities in schools/kura they are allocated to work in (n=341)**
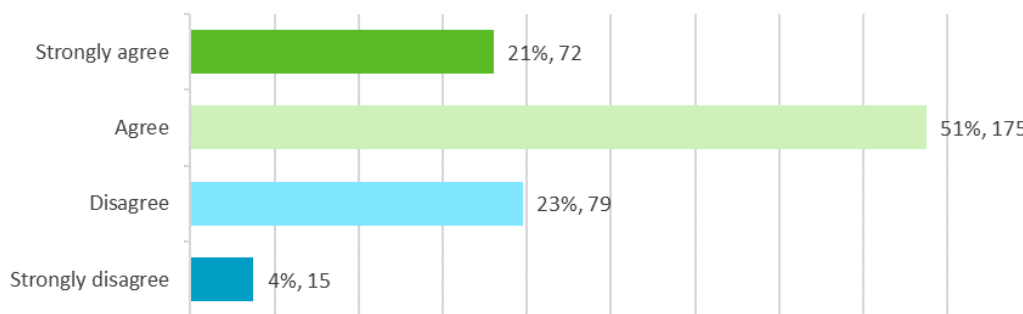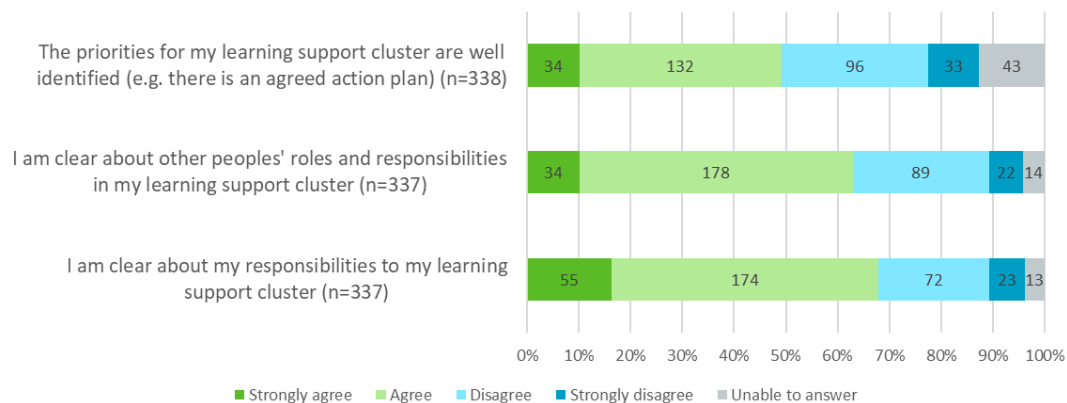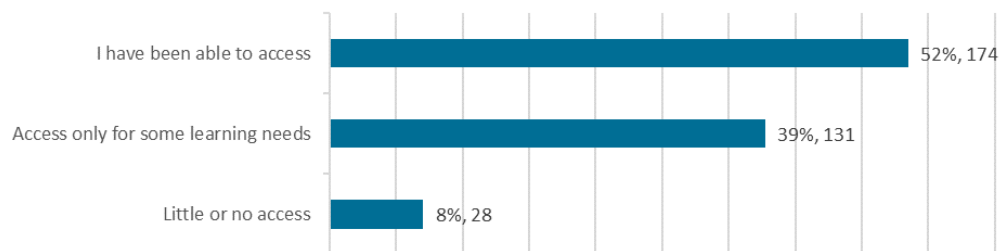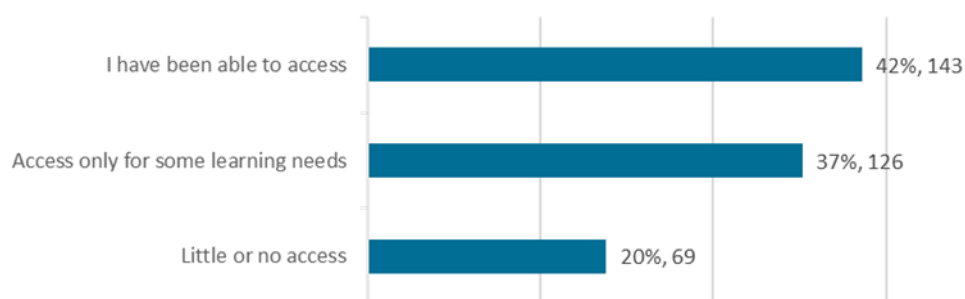

Figure 21: LSC awareness of priorities and responsibilities at cluster level

Figure 22: LSC ability to access learning support services

I have been able to access	52%, 174
Access only for some learning needs	39%, 131
Little or no access	8%, 28

Figure 23: LSC ability to access written resources

I have been able to access	42%, 143
Access only for some learning needs	37%, 126
Little or no access	20%, 69

18 APPENDIX 6: MINISTRY OF EDUCATION NETWORK LAUNCH MESSAGE

Launched 17 November 2020

The new network of expertise for LSCs and SENCOs

The refreshed Learning Support Network of Expertise is now live. We have contracted Massey University to provide a free, open online space where all network members can access and share resources, connect with each other via forums and participate in professional learning. It has dedicated spaces for LSCs who work in English medium settings and LSCs who work in te reo Māori and Māori medium settings.

As well as access to tools and resources, this new online facility will enable LSCs and SENCOs to further upskill and learn from each other in a shared space, with expert moderation. It will have a range of professional learning opportunities, including weekly webinars, spotlights on good practice, forums, knowledge modules and updates on PLD opportunities.

LSCs and SENCOs can create logins to access all aspects of the Learning Support Network including ongoing PLD with no charge. The network builds on the existing network for SENCOs which has been funded by the Ministry. SENCOs who are already members do not need to re-register.

All other participants (e.g. Ministry specialist practitioners, resource teachers) can join the open access parts of the network with no charge, with the option of joining the paid membership sections ($250 per annum) to access ongoing PLD.

The link to this network is: https://www.lsn.nz/. Massey has recorded a five minute video introducing the network which can be found at https://youtu.be/qSqVIWnplww.