Joint Initiative

Special Education Workstream Report

21 March 2016
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Recommendations

Please note that these recommendations are not in priority order

a. Goals and plans for success set by Communities of Learning (CoL) should demonstrate inclusivity by explicitly reflecting the learning and well-being needs and cultural identity of learners within that community.

b. Develop ways of demonstrating progress and achievement that are meaningful and relevant to the learner and their whanau, including qualitative means.

c. Use CoL roles to build inclusive, culturally intelligent capacity and capability in and across schools and centres.

d. Develop models that allow strategic pooling of resources that lead to improved teaching practices and learning outcomes across CoLs (e.g., facilitating specialist teacher aides to work across a CoL).

e. Have a streamlined and more coherent approach to provision of additional support that is responsive to the needs of community (e.g., Resource Teachers Learning and Behaviour Transformation (RTLB) working with clusters of Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs). Specialists working as part of one service team).

f. Identify and share case studies of good practice within and across CoL. (NB this is also the responsibility of the Ministry of Education).

Recommendations for Ministry of Education and NZEI Te Riu Roa

g. Strengthen criteria for the CoL leaders’ appointment process by including skills and capability to build inclusive culturally intelligent practice.

h. Build capability to respond to the strengths and needs of diverse learners through the formalisation of the SENCO role. Ensure that this role is recognised and resourced consistently, taking into account the differences between schools. This will need to include professional learning and development for this position. The name SENCO may need to be changed to reflect current inclusive practices and pedagogy.1

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1 This role is within individual schools and centres, rather than across the CoL. However, the in-school/centre role is essential for the CoL to effectively meet the needs of diverse learners. Furthermore, this role is consistent with the findings of the Special Education Update (2015) around a single point of contact to liaise with stakeholders and the recent Education Review Office (ERO) report on inclusive practices (2015).
Future Work Programme

1. Recommendation h will require further design, including role descriptions, relationships, resourcing, capabilities and expectations.

2. Recommendations a, c, d, f and g will need to be included in the updating of CoL guidance documents, which may include role descriptions.

3. It is likely that recommendations b and e will be progressed through the Special Education Update work program. However, this will require ongoing collaboration with sector partners and alignment with other relevant work programs.

Background

4. The Joint Initiative was a conjoint piece of work between the NZEI Te Riu Roa (NZEI) and the Ministry of Education (Ministry). The aim of the work was to identify principles, conditions and evidence of best practice, supported by research, to enable effective transitions and collaboration across the sector.

5. Following completion of phase one of the Joint Initiative there was an agreement to progress work further. This second phase maintained progress with smaller groups focussed on progressing the practical steps needed in the areas of: Māori and Pasifika achievement; professional learning and development (PLD); support staff; early childhood education (ECE); and special education.

6. The special education work was to focus on the identification and dissemination of good practice models around inclusive education with use of models and examples to ensure collaborative teaching that leads to high quality teaching practice for diverse learners.

Work stream members

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<tr>
<th>NZEI</th>
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Approach

7. The group met six times between October 2015 and February 2016, including a meeting with all the other workstreams from this second phase of the Joint Initiative. A collaborative approach was taken to the work and as such, all those involved are in agreement with the recommendations. Workstream leads from the NZEI and the Ministry met in between these meetings to help shape the work and add detail to documentation.

Scope

8. The scope of the Joint Initiative Special Education Workstream was developed by all its members and was agreed to by the Joint Initiative Governance Group:

- To identify and share evidence–informed practices leading to educational success for diverse learners within an inclusive education system. This includes early identification and access to supports in partnership with families/whānau, the wider community and other specialists.

- To identify the most effective ways that CoL can build their capability to meet the needs of diverse learners as they move through the education pathway.

Diverse learners

9. Following discussion amongst the Special Education Workstream about the terminology to describe the nature of the learners within this scope, it was agreed that the term diverse learners be used to replace ‘learners with special education needs’.

10. The concept of ‘diversity’ as described within the Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling: Best Evidence Synthesis rejects the notion of a ‘normal’ group and ‘other’ or minority groups of children and constitutes diversity and difference as central to the classroom endeavour and central to the focus of quality teaching in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

11. “It is fundamental to the approach taken to diversity in New Zealand education that it honours the Treaty of Waitangi. Diversity encompasses many characteristics including ethnicity, socio-economic background, home language, gender, special needs, disability, and giftedness. Teaching needs to be responsive to diversity within ethnic groups, for example, diversity within Pakeha,
Māori, Pasifika and Asian students. We also need to recognise the diversity within individual students influenced by intersections of gender, cultural heritage(s), socio-economic background, and talent. Evidence shows teaching that is responsive to student diversity can have very positive impacts on low and high achievers at the same time (Alton-Lee, 2003, p. v)."

**Evidence informed practice**

12. The following diagram represents the Special Education Workstream’s agreed understanding of evidence based / informed practice and reflects a culturally responsive perspective (McFarlane 2012).

13. This diagram represents evidence based / evidence informed practice as being the intersection between:
   - The research evidence
   - Practitioner / teacher knowledge, skills and experience, and
   - The knowledge, skills and experience the whānau and community bring.
Agreed purpose, principles and conditions statement

Purpose
14. One description of the role of a CoL is to nurture, grow and realise every learner’s potential within inclusive, capable and responsive education settings and communities.

Principles and Conditions
15. The Special Education Workstream identified the following principles and conditions needed to successfully meet the needs of all learners within CoL. These principles and conditions reflect an evidence-informed practice perspective:

- Authentic partnership, with whānau, families and communities learning together through inquiry-led practice
- Valuing, acknowledging and respecting student voice
- All learners are participating at all times providing a springboard to innovate, welcome and celebrate diversity
• Leadership at all levels promotes innovation and change
• CoL are underpinned by strong collaborative relationships of mutual respect and trust
• Inclusive practices are championed by strong leaders
• Responsiveness to diversity is demonstrated and encouraged at every level
• Seamless support is provided to meet the unique needs of learners, their families/whānau and communities, throughout their education pathway
• All schools and centres have the opportunity to access quality PLD to strengthen their inclusive practices to meet the needs of diverse learners, particularly Māori and Pasifika
• CoLs have processes and practices that promote early identification and timely access to relevant support for individuals, groups of learners, their families/whānau, educators and communities.

Resources and Tools

16. The Special Education Workstream shared a number of existing tools, resources and references that focus on developing greater capability of schools and their communities to meet the needs of all learners within an inclusive education system.

17. The Ministry has implemented an inclusive education capability-building project, which is part of a wider programme of work to support schools with inclusive education. A key resource on using inclusive practices when designing and delivering the school curriculum has been developed for providers of PLD, specialist teachers and schools to strengthen inclusive practices in the classroom and wider school environment. It can be found on the following link http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Inclusive-Practice-and-the-School-Curriculum
Other tools and resources to support inclusive practice include:


**Success for All foundation document**

What an inclusive school looks like infosheet

Inclusive practice in secondary schools booklet

**Student voice**: the voting wall, or whatu pokeka feathers
School, teacher, and professional development resources

Inclusive Education website
http://inclusive.tki.org.nz

Inclusive Practice and the School Curriculum website

Teachers and teachers’ aides working together (nine online modules)
http://teachersandteachersaides.tki.org.nz/

References


Other documents that have informed our thinking


The Scottish Government. (2012). The right help at the right time in the right place: Strategic review of learning provision for children and young people with complex additional support needs. Edinburgh, Scotland: Author.