

The New Zealand Curriculum

Update



Teaching and Learning

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Welcome to *The New Zealand Curriculum Update*

Curriculum Updates support school leaders and teachers as they work to design and review their school curriculum in line with the New Zealand Curriculum and with current knowledge and understandings about effective classroom teaching.

Curriculum Updates are published in the *Education Gazette* and are available online at: http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/curriculum_updates

This Update focuses on inclusion. It highlights presence, participation, and achievement as key aspects for success for all students, in particular those with special educational needs.



The inclusion principle

How inclusive is your school?

Inclusion means valuing all students and all staff in all aspects of school life. It involves removing barriers to presence, participation, and achievement. It is one of the eight principles set out in *The New Zealand Curriculum* and should underpin all school leadership and decision making.

The curriculum is non-sexist, non-racist, and non-discriminatory; it ensures that [all] students' identities, languages, abilities, and talents are recognised and affirmed and that their learning needs are addressed.

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The Government's vision of a fully inclusive education system by 2014 has at its heart confident schools, confident families, and confident students. The inclusion principle applies to all students, but it is particularly important when considering the achievement of Māori and Pasifika students and students with special educational needs.

Ka Hikitia and the *Pasifika Education Plan* guide schools on how to support Māori and Pasifika students. Similarly, *Success for All – Every School, Every Child* helps schools to consider how they support the presence and participation of students with special education needs so as to lift and monitor their achievement.

This Update emphasises the importance of high expectations for all learners, recognising that the resulting outcomes will reflect individual differences. Research has shown that effective teaching approaches create a supportive learning environment that is effective for all students. However, inclusive practice may also require a more specialised response.

There are resources and supports available to schools on inclusive education; they are listed at the end of this Update. By using these resources and working collaboratively with others, schools can improve how they respond to the needs and celebrate the strengths of all their students.

Presence

At its most basic, students' presence means being at school. But inclusion involves far more than that.

For schools, presence requires preparation and a whole-school commitment to welcoming all students in the community. Charters, policies, and processes for enrolment and support need to be robust and inclusive enough to provide learning opportunities for all students, whatever their needs.

Relationships are the key to successful transition to school for all students and their families. We have strong relationships with the early childhood providers in our area, so we know about any children who will require more than the usual support through transition. We attend Individual Development Plan meetings before school entry, and work hard to find the right pace of change for the child, the family, and the teacher. As we prepare the class rolls each year, we work around children we know will require extra support, finding the "best fit" teacher and classmates. This move to school is too important to get it wrong: we need to get it right from the start

Principal, Karori West Normal School

Guiding questions He pātai

- What policies does your school have for including students with special needs?
- How often are the policies monitored and reported on?

For Raurimu Avenue School, inclusion is about being one of us. It's all there – in the curriculum, the NAGs, the special education policy. Inclusion isn't a puzzle, it's what makes us complete. Our school is predominantly Māori, and it's the same message: we need best practice for all our students.

As principal, my role is to lead and model. I use additional teaching time myself so I can work closely with the teachers and the students. We're in constant conversation through the day. I'm very excited about inclusion – the richness it brings to the school far outweighs the cost. When you ask what is important, I say: "He tangata, he tangata, he tangata."

Principal, Raurimu Avenue Primary School



Participation

Participation means belonging – the active involvement of a student with special needs as a valued member of the academic, physical, social, and cultural life of the school. Supporting the participation of all students is a whole-school responsibility, much like the concept that "it takes a village to raise a child". A "one teacher aide–one child bubble", for example, is not participation.



Successful participation requires strong leadership, based on an understanding of the vision and principles laid down in *The New Zealand Curriculum*, the legal and regulatory requirements on inclusion that apply to all schools, and the attitudes and actions that lead to any student – and their family or whānau – knowing that they belong.

The connections and partnerships between school and home are essential and can make or break inclusive practice. Schools that have built successful partnerships with groups such as whānau and the wider Māori and Pasifika communities can build on this experience to fully include students with special needs.

Guiding questions He pātai

- What systems, initiatives, and programmes in your school are most effective in supporting the participation of students with special needs? How do you encourage teachers to work collaboratively with families and whānau?

> CASE STUDY

A parent's story

When my son started school, I was ready to explain the interventions and strategies that had been successful in kindergarten, but the teacher assured me she didn't need my help. Within two weeks, my five-year-old son had been stood down, and things just went downhill from there. In almost two years, he was rarely allowed to attend beyond 10 a.m., despite having a full-time expert teacher aide who worked well with him. He was frequently stood down and finally suspended. When I reluctantly admitted defeat and enrolled my son in a different school, my involvement was welcomed and the staff were open to learning the strategies we used. He's never looked back, and I am a part of the collaborative, active team that supports his learning.

Achievement

High expectations

The first principle described in *The New Zealand Curriculum* is high expectations regardless of individual circumstances (page 9). Some schools find it hard to enact this principle for students with special needs, particularly within the context of National Standards and reporting requirements.

For children who have special education needs, as with all students, showing progress in relation to the standards will be as much a focus as showing achievement.

National Standards Fact Sheet 10

Schools need to have a clear understanding of what counts as achievement for each student and how the steps towards achievement will be monitored, measured, and reported. *Collaboration for Success: Individual Education Plans and Narrative Assessment: A Guide for Teachers* help inform monitoring and day-to-day decisions about teaching and learning.



Guiding question He pātai

- What systems, initiatives, and programmes in your school support the achievement of students with special education needs?

Working within level 1 of the New Zealand Curriculum

Some students may work within level 1 of the New Zealand Curriculum throughout their schooling, but that doesn't mean there is a limit to their learning. Each level of the curriculum has room to develop breadth of experience and connections between meaningful achievements over time. The steps may be tiny and non-linear, but they still need to be recognised and celebrated as progress. Understanding that some students are on different pathways makes it easier to see their progress "through different eyes".

> CASE STUDY

Including Alex

Alex came to us from the local special school. Our planning for his transition included professional development on narrative assessment.

We decided to put Alex into a class of his age peers (rather than according to his curriculum level) so he could rise to the challenge of peers his own age. We agreed to focus Alex's learning on "relating to others" [within different learning contexts]. We listed the key words from the competency description and linked them to the resources we could use: people and places in the school.

During the next weeks, Alex's teacher aide and I worked closely with Alex, slowly introducing boundaries he could cope with. Over the course of one term, he learned to stop running, to use the class toilet, and to stay in class for longer and longer periods. His classmates were immediately accepting of Alex; they loved their new classmate. We taught them a voice and hand signal for "Stop!", and gradually Alex responded by reducing his sounds and distracting movements. Over the next few weeks, Alex showed that he was learning more and more about interacting and co-operating in a range of situations.

We're delighted with Alex's progress – we've worked with tiny steps, each one gained slowly with a lot of patience and with carefully managed support.

Principal, Raurimu Avenue Primary School

Building and working with a collaborative team

Inclusion involves working together – teachers, aides, families and whānau, and specialists, as well as the student. Supporting a student with special needs to succeed requires people to collaborate, and they need support from the school leadership.

Building a collaborative team requires commitment to the principle of inclusion and a clear understanding of what it means for the school, the student, and their family and whānau.



Our Learning Support Team, which includes the Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO), the Principal, the RTLB, a specialist teacher, pastoral care, and school counsellors, assesses the needs of students and determines the support each student requires.

We maintain a database of students with special needs so teachers are informed and ready to cater for the diversity of the students in their classes. The students have full assessments, reports, and recommendations that support inclusive teaching and learning. I've gained extensive knowledge of how community agencies function and have developed working relationships with them that help us support our students. Agencies have also provided professional development when required – for example, on mental health or learning difficulties.

Successful inclusion comes down to strong, visionary leadership and effective teaching practice. We have had to work hard to change some mindsets, but staff agree that the effort is very worthwhile.

Special Education Needs Co-ordinator, Queen Charlotte College

Support and resources

Ministry Special Education offices co-ordinate and manage specialist support locally. Special Education also provides services directly to schools with students who have the highest level of needs. To learn more, schools should contact their local Ministry Special Education office or investigate the websites in the resource list.

Specialist teachers

Specialist teachers can work in and with schools in a variety of ways to support inclusion. As well as working with individual students, they may provide professional development and in-school modelling and guidance. The expertise and skills gained can be shared across the school.

Resource teachers: literacy work with teachers and other professionals to provide specific advice and support on effective practice for meeting the needs of year 0–8 students who are considered at risk in acquiring literacy.

Resource teachers: learning and behaviour work with students and teachers to improve educational outcomes for students with learning and/or behavioural difficulties.

Resource teachers: vision provide educational support for vision-impaired students from birth to age 21. They work from the 12 visual resource centres managed by the Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ (for more information, see <http://blennzonline.edublogs.org>).

Resource teachers: deaf work with schools to ensure a balance for each hearing-impaired student between language development, adaptation of curriculum content to the level of the learner, and social interaction and participation with peers (for more information, see www.vanasch.school.nz and www.kdec.school.nz).

Supplementary Learning Support teachers provide teaching and learning support for students who have significant and ongoing needs but are not eligible for the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme.

The **Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS)** provides additional specialist teacher support for students who have severe communication, behavioural, physical, or complex needs. Specialist teachers in the **outreach service** from a special or lead school support students who are funded by ORS and are enrolled in their local schools. (See the *Education Gazette*, 21 November 2011, page 2.)

Regional Health Schools provide outreach teaching services to enable students with severe health needs to transition back to school.

Guiding questions He pātai

- How effective are the partnerships between teachers, specialist services, and parents and whānau in your school? In what ways do they ensure the presence, participation, and achievement of students with special needs?

You may wish to use the guiding questions (he pātai) within this resource to inform a self-review process in your school, in conjunction with Appendix 4: Self-review Questions from the Education Review Office's 2010 national report, *Including Students with High Needs*.

Making best use of resources within the school

Schools with a mix of support for their students often find ways to maximise the effectiveness of people's skills and expertise. Co-ordination and a clear management structure are important, as are strong ownership and support from the board of trustees and the management team. The school's policies and use of funding need to demonstrate a commitment to inclusion.

Many schools use the Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) model, which assigns a range of responsibilities to a senior staff member according to the school's needs. The SENCO often has a teaching and leadership role within the school; this can be key to the successful co-ordination of services, support staff, and programmes.

For many students with special needs, the use of information and communication technologies can open up the world. Special Education and other specialists can advise on how students can access assistive equipment (through the Centre for Assistive Technology) and use tools already in the school (such as computers, electronic whiteboards, and tablets).

> Useful resources

The references for this Update and a list of further resources are available online.

For school boards of trustees

> New Zealand School Trustees Association

www.nzsta.org.nz

This website provides comprehensive support services to assist school boards of trustees.

For educators

> IEP Online

<http://seonline.tki.org.nz/IEP>

This TKI website contains: information, guidelines, and support for using individual education plans; an online version of *Collaboration for Success: Individual Education Plans*; tools for educators; and links to related Ministry of Education programmes and initiatives.

> A Quick Guide to Extra Support

www.minedu.govt.nz

Look for the "Special Education" link in the "Popular Questions" column.

> Through Different Eyes: Assessment for Learners with Special Education Needs

www.inclusive.org.nz/throughdifferenteyes

This TKI website contains: the New Zealand Curriculum exemplars for learners with special education needs; an online version of *Narrative Assessment: A Guide for Teachers*; and case studies of schools using learning stories.

> Services and Support

www.minedu.govt.nz

Look for the "Special Education" link in the "Popular Questions" column.

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> References and other useful resources

References

- Education Review Office (2010). *Including Students with High Needs*. Wellington: ERO. Available at <http://www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/Including-Students-with-High-Needs-June-2010>
- Ministry of Education (2009). *Narrative Assessment: A Guide for Teachers*. Wellington: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education (2011). *Collaboration for Success: Individual Education Plans*. Wellington: Learning Media. Available at <http://seonline.tki.org.nz/content/download/281/1689/file/CfS-IEP-web-low-res.pdf>
- Ministry of Education (n.d.). *National Standards Fact Sheet 10: Special Education Needs*. Available at <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/National-Standards/Key-information/Fact-sheets/Special-education-needs>
- Ministry of Education (n.d.). *Success for All – Every School, Every Child*. Available at <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/SpecialEducation/SuccessForAll.aspx>

Additional resources

- Education Review Office (2011). *Including Students with Special Education Needs: School Self-review Questionnaire*. Available at <http://www.ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/National-Evaluation-Topics#SuccessforAll> under the link "Success for All School Questionnaire".

Ministry of Education resources online

- Alton-Lee, A. (2003). *Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration (BES)*. Wellington: Ministry of Education. Available at <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2515/5959>
- Robinson, V., Hohepa, M., and Lloyd, C. (2009). *School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration (BES)*. Wellington: Ministry of Education. Available at <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2515/60169/60170>

Parent Information Kit

- <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/Parents/AllAges/ParentInformationKit.aspx>
- This kit is available on the Ministry of Education website and includes downloads of booklets for parents, information sheets, and the *Family/whānau File*. The kit contains mostly general information, including some about special education.

National Standards Questions and Answers: Students with special education needs

Will students with special education needs be assessed against the standards?

- <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/National-Standards/Key-information/Questions-and-answers>