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Successful Inclusion: What do Teachers say they need?

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Abstract

One of the aims of the New Zealand Special Education 2000 Policy is to create a world-class inclusive education system by the year 2000. Teachers have a crucial role to play in the successful implementation of this policy. To do this teachers need support. What are the support needs of teachers for the inclusion of learners with special needs? Are these needs being met? This paper investigated these questions with 121 participating teachers in 13 primary, intermediate and secondary schools. The teachers identified 972 students for whom they needed some level of support to insure successful inclusion in their classrooms.

Teacher responses were evaluated in terms of the levels of support they required for including each of the identified students and the levels of support they were actually receiving. Teachers' comments were analysed regarding a) reasons for any discrepancy perceived between the level of support required and support received, b) the structures currently in place at their school that successfully support the inclusion of children with special needs in their classroom, and c) what structures could be implemented to support teachers more successfully with inclusion. Results were examined in terms of four levels surrounding the learner with disability. The four levels were the classroom teacher, and support from school, family, and external agencies. This paper outlines these findings and makes recommendations for schools to successfully support teachers in their role as agents of inclusion.

Successful Inclusion: What do Teachers say they need?

The movement towards inclusion of learners with special needs in regular school settings has been formalised in New Zealand with the implementation of the new special education policy, Special Education 2000. While aiming to create an inclusive education system, Special Education 2000 is a policy almost solely about resource allocation. Although structures and resources are important, successful inclusion is not just about the allocation of resources. Inclusion is based (among other things) upon a philosophy of belonging, acceptance and support (Stainback & Stainback, 1992). While it has been common to assess and provide support for the needs of the learner, we suggest that the support needs of teachers have been overlooked on the road towards an inclusive education system. Supporting the needs of learners can help support the needs of teachers, however, teachers also need support if successful inclusive education is to be a reality in New Zealand. An environment of support for teachers can have a positive impact upon their ability to meet the unique needs of their students (Thousand & Villa, 1991).

Special Education 2000 is a policy almost solely about resourcing, yet it is also a policy about change. In special education the support available to teachers is central to successful change (Loucks-Horsley & Roody, 1990). Teachers are responsible for implementing many of the changes necessary to include learners with special needs. As Bailey points out, "unless teachers are enjoying positive, health-enhancing and productive emotional states and high motivation and commitment, and unless they have the skills and the drive to implement change programmes, inclusive education approaches will not be implemented wholeheartedly or effectively" (1995, p. 16).

The purpose of this research was to look at the support needs of teachers, for students with diverse abilities in regular classrooms, during a period of change. To do this we surveyed teachers regarding the support they required and received to include learners with special needs in their classrooms. We further examined teachers' voices regarding what structures/systems could be in place to lessen any support discrepancy that existed.

Method

In February of 1998, principals from primary, intermediate and secondary schools in central New Zealand were approached to consider participating in this research. The study consisted of two parts. Part One focused on identifying: (a) the number of learners with special needs in their classrooms, (b) the area of disability for each learner identified, (c) the level of support they received for each identified learner, and (d) the level of support the teachers felt was required to successfully include the learner in their regular classroom.

Part Two sought the specific opinions of teachers regarding: (a) the reasons for any discrepancy between the support they received and the support they required, (b) the structures and systems currently in place in their school that successfully support them to include learners with special needs, (c) the structures and systems that they believed could be implemented in their school to support them to successfully include learners with special needs, and (d) any other comments about their support needs.

The focus of the study was the amount and type of support the teachers felt they needed in order to teach students with diverse abilities in their classes. For each learner identified as having a special need, the teacher was asked to identify the level of support they felt that they required to successfully include that learner. They were also asked which level of support they were actually receiving for the identified child. The levels of support were adapted from a study into the support needs of teachers by McKinnon, Gordon, Bentley-

Williams, Prunty and Finlay (1997). Descriptors for the different levels of support that were provided to the teachers are indicated below:

Level 1 Student needs require close observation, data collection, monitoring, reviewing and modification of teaching strategies by the class teacher. Learning Support personnel and/or outside agencies may be consulted.

Level 2 Student's needs require that Learning Support Personnel support the class teacher. Other support mechanisms may be appropriate, e.g., peer tutoring, volunteer helpers, mentors or occasional direct intervention. The student may require minor modification of the existing curriculum and/or the physical environment. Outside agencies may be involved.

Level 3 Student's needs require direct support by Support Personnel. Specialist (itinerant) teacher support on a nonregular basis may be necessary. Modified educational programmes are essential and an Individual Education Plan (IEP) may be required. Outside agencies may be involved.

Level 4 Student's needs require regular direct support by Learning Support Personnel. Student requires a significantly modified educational programme, together with additional specialised support, for example, Teacher Aide and/or Speech Language Therapist. Some adaptation of the physical environment may be necessary. IEP is essential. Specialist (itinerant) teacher support on a regular basis may be required. Outside agency intervention is, or has been, required.

Level 5 Student's needs require significant and continuous support to access and participate in the regular classroom. Daily support from Learning Support Personnel is needed. Alternative educational programme/class placement delivered through the IEP process is essential for all of the student's schooling and substantial teacher aide support is required to assist in programme implementation. Outside agencies are involved, for example, Intellectually Handicapped Children (IHC), Children's and Young Persons Service (CYPS).

In the second part of the study, similar teacher comments were collapsed into response categories. Comments with multiple sections were included in more than one category. Two researchers working together, with a third researcher available to discuss any disagreements that arose, collapsed similar comments.

Results

Teachers from thirteen schools agreed to participate in the study. The number of teachers participating from each school varied. The participating schools included two secondary schools, two intermediate schools, three full primary schools, and six contributing primary schools.

Part One

There were 121 participating teachers who identified 972 students for whom they needed some level of support for successful inclusion. The number of students identified by each school type is indicated in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

The information presented in the next three tables is based on the teachers required and received levels of support. Valid percent refers to the number of students in a category relative to the number of students with complete data. Missing data occurred when the teachers filled out a level of need for a student but did not indicate the level of support received. As shown in the table, this occurred for 19% of the students. Since we could not interpret a no response to the level of support received as "no support received", we had to treat the blank as missing data. Where the level of support received response was omitted the case was removed from further analysis. The valid percent and cumulative percent are based on an N of 786.

Table 2 indicates the levels of support teachers felt they required for the students they identified as having special needs.

Insert Tables 2 to 4 about here

The majority of teachers (74%) felt they required the first or second levels of support for the students they identified. The highest levels of support were needed for approximately 12% of the students identified. Teachers indicated that they needed the highest level of support for 7% of their students, which is considerably more than the 1% allocated intensive support through Special Education 2000.

Table 3 gives an indication of support received for each level of need.

By comparing Tables 2 and 3 (see Table 4) we see that the percent of students for whom teachers received support is consistently smaller than the percent of students at each level for whom teachers required support. As indicated in Table 3, teachers received no support for 27% of the students for whom they felt they required a level of support. In fact, the teachers feel under-supported at every level.

If, however, the missing data for support received are interpreted as "no support received" this picture becomes even bleaker with 46% of the students identified as requiring support not receiving any support. On the other hand, rather than risk misinterpreting what the missing data may mean, we can more conservatively conclude that the teachers received support for 54% of the children identified as requiring support. However, teacher comments indicated that some support came through ORS for 6% of the students identified and through SEG for 17% of the students identified.

Inclusion in New Zealand is needs based rather than categorical, nevertheless there are different initiatives for different areas of student needs. Table 5 gives an indication of the number of children identified in specific areas of special need.

Insert Table 5 about here

The number of students identified by special need area in Table 5 ($N = 1611$) exceed the total number of students identified ($N = 786$) because many of the children identified have needs in more than one area. The areas in which teachers identified students most frequently are learning and behaviour/emotional difficulties, which together comprised 82% of the identified students. The number of students with communication disorders, which often occur with learning and/or behavioural/emotional difficulties, is the third largest area of need.

Preliminary analyses of the data indicate that the majority of teachers require the lowest levels of support, however, they receive considerably less than they require at all levels.

Part Two

Below is a summary of overall findings regarding teacher comments and professional development needs. The italicised statements represent direct quotes from teachers and elaborate upon some of the individual descriptors. Descriptors that were frequently identified by respondents have been represented by quotes. Those descriptors less frequently identified have not been represented by direct quotes to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of participating teachers. The total number of responses in each table do not add up to the total number of participating teachers simply because teachers could offer more than one answer to any question.

Responses by descriptor to the first question are presented in Table 6.

Insert Table 6 about here

Each of the following reasons was given by only one teacher respondent and consequently has been described as 'other' in Table 6:

severity of problems

lack of parental support

greater needs are elsewhere

bulk funding by Government

lack of support from senior staff

not enough real assessment
receive more support than is needed
need for collaboration with specialists
lack of support from Ministry of Education
need for professional development

Some indicative comments for the frequent descriptors for Question 1 are below:

Lack of Funds. Lack of funds was clearly the most frequent response. Although often simply stated as "lack of funds (!)" more elaboration is given in the quotations below:

There has in the past been a discrepancy. This has been no fault of the school or the system the school has established. I believe we are doing the best we can with the limited resources we have available. Needs are continually arising and government intervention isn't adjusting to the changes. Funding is not realistically dealing with special needs children. The funding has been narrowed so much that children who do need it can't have it and schools and class teachers are left to cope. More importantly, don't all children have equal rights to quality education?

The Learning Support Department is supposed to help but if funding is not available for a particular student they don't - or didn't when I needed help desperately! (secondary school teacher)

No Discrepancy. Several respondents saw no discrepancy between the support required and received for learners with special needs in their classrooms.

Lack of Support. Eight of the nine comments categorised under this descriptor specifically name lack of support from Specialist Education Services. Lack of support was seen as delay of action, delay acknowledging referrals, demand exceeding supply, and lack of understanding.

I find it most hard to help children all the time when they are receiving little help from a support team. It is not on to wait over a term for help for some children.

If you do a good job in your room, you are seen to be coping.

The discrepancy between support required and support received is partly due to the fact that to get support takes so long and so many pages of work. It has taken ten weeks to get the support required for one pupil.

Some SES members are excellent and brief you fully, some are letting the side down by not giving more support and follow up.

SES and other outside agencies available to schools are inadequate. If they are able to access a child with special needs, they do not have time or funding to assist beyond the initial consultation the child has to have very high needs before they are even considered. However I have found GLU to be most helpful.

Unskilled Teachers. Comments in this descriptor indicate the concerns of participating teachers to adequately cater for students with special needs in their classrooms.

Absolutely! The pressure on teaching staff is far too high. Only children with very high needs attract funding, whereas 'at risk' children receive teacher support if they have a teacher who has the skills to do so. Some children are never identified as children with special needs if the teachers they have don't have the skills to cope. Identifying a student as having needs means you (the teacher) have to programme for them. A big ask if you are not skilled!

Teacher Aide Difficulties. This descriptor included problems associated with lack of experienced teacher aides and insufficient allocated hours. Other difficulties with teacher aides included scheduling of allocated hours, and the pressures on the teacher aides.

There is not enough Ministry funding to pay for a full time teacher aide's help. For example, I have a child with Downs Syndrome in my class. She is not a behavioural problem. However to further her education by developing her skills, she needs more teacher aide hours. She is limited by what she can do without this help. Because she is not getting enough hours I feel she is not receiving an equitable education - she is being disadvantaged.

Responses by descriptor to the second question are presented in Table 7.

Insert Table 7 about here

Each of the following reasons was given by only one teacher respondent and consequently has been described as 'other' in Table 7:

database of identified learners

team teaching

parent/teacher partnership

no support in school

Some indicative comments from Question 2 included:

Teacher Aides. The successful structure most frequently identified in schools are teacher aides.

Teacher aides are a wonderful asset.

An excellent teacher aide system that whilst never enough, does go a long way towards filling the need.

Extra teacher aide hours are available which are able to be divided around the children who need extra support. These hours are to be decided within the confines of the school without having to ask for additional support from SES.

Teacher aides in class are a marvellous support. They often are helpful with the 'normal' but behaviourally disturbed other children. It is very helpful to have an adult allied to you to act as an observer of student behaviour and as a second opinion. AS WELL as their obvious role of modifying the curriculum for their assigned student(s) they also can move around and jolly along others in moments when their student is coping well alone.

Although the question asks for successful support, some respondents qualified the support of teacher aides, for example:

Current support consists of very small amounts of teacher aide time to spread amongst a large number of children. These teachers are unqualified to work with these children and trying to work with three or four children in the classroom for half hour periods doesn't achieve much.

Resource/Support Teachers. In our descriptor for resource/support teachers we included all support teachers identified by respondents (e.g. reading recovery teacher, resource teacher special needs and ESOL teacher). The frequency in the table reflects the number of respondents who mentioned resource/support teachers rather than the number of resource teachers identified. The large response to this descriptor suggests the importance of specialised support teachers for the successful inclusion of students with special needs in the classroom.

A very supportive teacher of special needs who works incredibly hard.

The support teacher means that I can quickly get answers and support if needed.

Our special needs teachers - you can approach them at any time about any child and vice versa. They are invaluable! We are very lucky.

Special Programmes. Responses to Question 2 identified the following programmes as successful structures currently in place in their schools. The special programmes identified included: Reading Recovery, behaviour management (including anger management and peer mediation), social skills, counselling, extension for students with special abilities, remedial (including reading, maths, and oral/ written language), speech language therapy, homework programmes, peer tutoring, buddy classes, English as a second language (ESOL) and correspondence school programmes. Many schools named specific programmes, for example, TARP, HELP, MSB, and STEP to name a few.

We have a behaviourally management system school wide to assist in this area.

Deputy Principal runs programmes for children with special abilities and also helps with one of my reading groups

Being able to send some students who need extra help to the extension room is helpful.

1-1 Teaching/small groups. This category describes working with children in small groups, extension room work, and 1-1 teaching. Teacher aides and resource teachers frequently facilitate individual and small group teaching.

[One good system is] trained teacher time funded by the Board of Trustees to allow a teacher to work with small groups in various areas, e.g., spelling and reading.

Support from Principals, Senior Staff and Colleagues. In school support among colleagues, particularly from principals and senior staff, was important to several participating teachers.

Caring principal who has done her utmost to gain funding.

Having senior teachers released means children with special needs can get some one to one teaching.

We have the support of the Principal and each other.

The school makes support systems available to best cater for our children because support from outside agencies is not easily accessible.

Responses by descriptor to the third question are presented in Table 8.

Insert Table 8 about here

Each of the following reasons was given by only one teacher respondent consequently has been described as 'other' in Table 8:

assessment and evaluation

support from principal and senior staff

streaming

home room

IEP

less paper work

retain present system of RTSN resourcing

partial integration

support for *moderate* learning and behaviour needs

Some indicative comments for the frequent descriptors for Question 3 include:

More Teacher Aide Hours. Teacher responses to the second question indicated that their most important support came from teacher aides. Responses to the third question indicate teacher aides remain the most frequently suggested support for inclusion.

Teacher aides who could work with a small group of children to support the teacher, rather than children on an individual basis.

Teacher aides could relieve teachers of their increasing administrative load so they can devote more time and energy to teaching.

More teacher aide time/hours so that children can be helped early on in their problems so that the gap between where they are and where they should be widens.

Far more implementation of teacher aides in the classroom to check/modify student's work.

Attach a permanent trained teacher aide in each classroom over and above anything ORS students may have.

Special Programmes. Responses to Question 3 suggested that the following special programmes be implemented: Reading Recovery; correspondence school; therapy; remedial work in reading, writing, spelling, mathematics; extension/enrichment; ESOL; computer; behaviour management; counselling/guidance; programmes for students with special abilities; as well as assessment programmes. Rather than elaborate, some respondents just identified the need for "appropriate programmes".

We need specialised tuition for some pupils, for example, physically disabled students should work with a physiotherapist and gifted students need to have experts come in.

I would like to see a remedial programme in place. 40 minutes in the morning for children who are experiencing difficulty with basic facts (renaming, multiplication etc). The children could be selected through class- based tests and referred on. This could even include enrichment in handwriting skills and ball coordination skills in physical education.

Smaller Class Numbers. Class size remains an issue. Several participating teachers indicated that smaller class numbers would facilitate support for learners with special needs in the class.

Smaller classes are required to enable us to compensate for extra time spent with special needs/mainstream students.

I don't think there should be more than two special needs children in a class. The rest of the children have needs too and some "normal" children need a lot of support.

Reduce the numbers in our rooms!!!

Support from Resource/Support Teachers. Participating teachers responded that, in general, they would like to receive "hands on" rather than "theoretical" support from resource and support teachers. They brought up issues of the resource teacher working with either the learner with special needs or with the rest of the class (enabling the classroom teacher to work 1-1 with the learner with special needs).

Extras RTSN to provide release time in preparing resources; IEPs; planning; curriculum modifications; to lower numbers in cross grouping for reading and maths, and to take bulk of class so that the teacher could work with special needs students.

We need adequate support in the classroom for children who don't "belong/fit" into the conventional classroom environment.

I think that if the special needs teachers are spread thinly it is the children and their programmes that are going to suffer. I would be happy to see our current structure remain. Change for the sake of change isn't always a good thing.

Professional Development. Respondents indicated that they require ongoing professional development to competently cater for learners with special needs within their own classrooms.

We need training, education, upskilling in the special needs area - and it needs to be ongoing.

Inservice courses that relate to the various special needs in a teacher's class.

There should be courses and discussions even just about how others manage special needs children and talking to those who have experienced special needs children rather than always experts.

Funding. In Question 1, a lack of funds was the most frequently given reason for the discrepancy between support required and received. Again in Question 3 funding is frequently suggested by respondents as a means to support structures and systems for inclusion.

More funding so that more children can get the support they "deserve" but this needs to come from Government resources. How much more can schools do!!!

The allocation of more money for moderate learning and behavioural needs children because at the moment these are the ones falling through the cracks in the system.

More Government funding to allow for extra resource teacher hours and more teacher aide time.

Insert Table 9 about here

Each of the following comments was given by only one teacher respondent and consequently has been described as 'other' in Table 9:

balance of disabilities within each class

lack of support for special needs teachers

daily remedial programmes

policy changes without thought of consequences

job security

CWSN dependency on 1-1 teaching.

Some indicative comments for the frequent descriptors for Question 4 are below:

Funding Issues. The issue of funding emerges again as a concern for the respondents with the majority respondents mentioning insufficient money to support learners with special needs in regular settings. In addition, single respondents made comments highlighting inadequate funding to support families, bulk funding, and inequities of funding between learners with special needs and abilities.

It is really frustrating seeing a student disadvantaged because of funding issues. We've been sold on "inclusion" because of the issues: human rights, best educational opportunities, etc., but the practicalities of dealing with students when funding is denied and teachers are loaded with more work and accountability will begin changing teacher attitudes – which are vital to the success of inclusion.

I think this school supports both staff and children wonderfully well within the constraints of available finance.

I believe too much time and money is being poured into the wrong end of special needs (CWLD) instead of spending time and money on children (CWSA) who are "just as special."

Needs for Professional Development. A number of respondents identified their own lack of preparedness for catering for learners with special needs. A number highlighted the needs for professional development and inservice training.

Sometimes I feel that we need expert advice on what to do to manage these difficult children – few of us have had specialist training.

I feel that I am not well enough informed on what students have difficulties and often how to help them.

Additional staff development on special needs. e.g., ADHD and in particular how to deal with some children with special needs who are not in your class but may have difficulties at playtime/lunchtime. Training in negotiation, behaviour management etc.

Time Issues. Time is a precious resource for teachers. Respondents identified not having enough time primarily because of the amount of time learners with special needs demand for planning, the IEP process, special programmes, and behaviour management.

Having to plan and make sure IEP goals are being worked towards takes a lot of extra of time on top of planning for groups in all subject areas for the class. Also finding appropriate resources takes time. I think this issue of time should be looked at. Teacher aide time can only be effective if the teacher has planned appropriate programmes to follow.

Less time should be spent on IEPs. No other child in the classroom has this amount of time spent on evaluating their programme.

It is successful to have the teacher run the programme but release time is needed for this to happen.

All schools need support for teachers especially taking children with learning and behaviour difficulties as this takes up a lot of teaching time and those children are taking a lot of extra hours to help them cope and keep on task.

Successful inclusion requires teachers to have time to gain necessary specialist knowledge of the condition from experts and plan an appropriate modification of the lesson plan, then to

communicate this to the teacher aide. If this time is not made available then the child's special needs cannot be met and they are merely being babysat.

Need Smaller Class Sizes. A number of respondents commented on the need for smaller classes to successfully cater for students with special needs.

If class numbers are below 25 coping with individuals is manageable - any higher and special needs children tend to miss out.

It is very frustrating working with large classes when you identify needs in children and are unable to work with them because of lack of time and resources and funding available.

I really feel my greatest problem is coping with the sheer numbers of children in my room. I know I have strengths in teaching to individual needs, but the job becomes almost impossible as the numbers of students with needs rise and total class numbers remain at 30 to 31.

ESOL students at a senior level need tutors in their specialist subjects, e.g., chemistry and physics. With 25 students in a class I do not have time to tutor these students. If class sizes were smaller then maybe I would have the time.

Lack of Support from Outside Agencies. A number of respondents commented on the need for support from outside agencies and highlighted the issue of response time for referrals.

I want support when it is required/needed – not going on a waiting list.

I have had to be very assertive (to the point of rudeness) with some outside personnel to show them what is required.

Children with extreme behaviours need immediate backup and support. Classroom teachers know within what is acceptable and not. However by the time the application is made to SES you have just about reached the end of your tether. GLU is more supportive but again there is a wait.

We have to wait a long time to see some outside agencies.

Need more Teacher Aides and Support Staff. Respondents have consistently commented about this issue in all four questions. Teacher aide difficulties were identified as a reason for discrepancy between support required and received. Teacher aides were the most frequently identified support structure/system in place in the schools. More teacher aide hours was the support most frequently suggested that could be implemented to successfully include children with special needs in the classrooms. Although the number of additional comments regarding teacher aides and support staff is somewhat smaller, final pertinent comments are included.

In larger schools a resource teacher special needs is vital.

I find it invaluable to have classroom teacher aide time to help with classroom management, especially during reading time. I find that I am more able to give my full attention to the children whom I am working with while the others are able to have their needs addressed.

Increased workload means it is increasingly difficult for teachers to upskill themselves. More administrative support would enable them as professionally people to spend more time actually planning and teaching.

Final comments. The following comments reflect the general tone of many of the participants.

The inclusion of mainstream children is a great concept, but is only workable for the teacher and other class members if there are support systems in place.

I believe teachers have not been 'properly trained' and equipped to deal with special needs children. I believe these children should be in the mainstream and that to maintain quality education for all, more support is needed. It is unfair to suggest that teachers are not coping with these children. I believe at my school we are doing the best we can with the funding, time, resources and skills we have, but that the expectations of government and society are really quite unrealistic.

Conclusion

The survey deliberately relies on the classroom teacher's perception of student diversity because it is that teacher who is primarily responsible for meeting each student's needs. We hope that gaining an understanding of inclusion from the teacher's perspective will increase teacher support for inclusion and assist schools to focus support on teaching staff as well as students.

While teachers have identified funding as a key determinant in the provision of adequate support, it seems unlikely that significant changes will be made to the funding levels of special education provisions in New Zealand. Teachers respondents did however, identify other factors they consider useful that do not rely heavily upon extra funding. Many of these supports already exist in schools or can be implemented with some resourcefulness on the part of schools. Bourke, Carroll-Lind, Kearney and Bevan-Brown (1999) have suggested that it is the resourceful use of existing resources within a school that makes the difference between a successful or unsuccessful inclusive school. As funding for special education is finite, the following suggestions may enable schools to better support their teachers, while keeping within budget constraints.

1. Allow opportunities and time for teachers to consult and collaborate with colleagues both within and outside of the school. This may mean teachers covering classes for each other in appropriate times such as school assemblies, silent or class story/novel reading times and so forth. Specify meeting times or part of meeting times for special education issues to provide opportunities for collaboration among colleagues.
2. Foster a culture of sharing and support among staff. Buddy systems are one way this can occur where each staff member is buddied to another to provide support and encouragement. Schools can also set up systems where resources are shared, for example, if a common unit or work is adapted by one teacher it is placed in a central store that can be accessed by all teachers.
3. Implement school wide programmes that help meet the needs of a diverse range of learners such as social skills programmes, peer tutoring programmes or remedial or enrichment programmes.
4. Provide clear channels of communication between teachers, senior staff and outside agencies as well as parents. These channels of communication should not be left to chance, but formalised within schools as policy.

5. Rethink the best use of teacher aides. Schools should consider allocating teacher aides to teachers rather than to individual learners. This would allow teachers to use the aides to the most efficient way, for example freeing the teacher from administrative duties so they can provide support to the learner. This could also discourage the unhelpful dependencies that can develop between students and their teacher aides which can be detrimental in fostering inclusive practices.
6. Use existing strengths within the school to provide for some of the professional development needs of teachers. This may be as simple as teachers being given the opportunity to observe the practices of other teachers and discuss with them methods and strategies that have proven successful. More expert teachers could also share their practices with staff in more formal meetings.

Successful inclusive education will take time to develop in New Zealand and will be dependent on a variety of factors. However, we believe that central to this success will be the adequate provision of support teachers. Schools that recognise and provide for the support needs of teachers will be more successful in creating inclusive environments.

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Table 1

Number of identified students by school level.

Level of school	Number of students	Percent
Primary	358	36.8
Primary/Intermediate	205	21.1
Intermediate	90	9.3
Secondary	319	32.8
Total	972	100.0

Table 2

Levels of support teachers required for students identified.

Level of support required	Number of students	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Level 1	368	37.9	37.9
Level 2	348	35.8	73.7
Level 3	143	14.7	88.4
Level 4	42	4.3	92.7
Level 5	71	7.3	100.0
Total	972	100.0	100.0

Table 3

Support received for each level of need identified.

Level of support	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No support	261	26.9	33.2	33.2
Level 1	245	25.2	31.2	64.4
Level 2	172	17.7	21.9	86.3
Level 3	48	4.9	6.1	92.4
Level 4	20	2.1	2.5	94.9

Level 5	40	4.1	5.1	100.0
Total	786	80.9	100.0	100.0
Missing	186	19.1		
Total	972	100.0		

Table 4

Level of support required and received for students with special needs.

Level of support	Percent required	Percent received
Zero support		26.9
Level 1	37.9	25.2
Level 2	35.8	17.7
Level 3	14.7	4.9
Level 4	4.3	2.1
Level 5	7.3	4.1
Missing		19.1
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 5

Number and percent of students requiring support for inclusion by special need area.

Special need area	Number of students identified	Percent of the number of students identified (N=786)
Learning disability	491	50.5
Behaviour/emotional difficulty	304	31.3
Communication disorder	244	25.1
ESOL	170	17.5
Intellectual disability	166	17.1
Early achievers	110	11.3
Physical/medical disability	60	6.2
Visual impairment	41	4.2
Hearing loss	25	2.6

Table 6

If there is a discrepancy between the level of support you require and the support you receive, what in your opinion are the reasons for this?

Descriptors	Frequency
Lack of funds	46
No discrepancy	12

Lack of support	9
Unskilled teachers	8
Teacher aide difficulties	7
Lack of time	5
Large class numbers	3
Pressure on number of teaching staff	3
Lack of communication	3
Waiting time for referrals	3
Staffing problems	3
Lack of appropriate programmes	2
Lack of skilled, experienced staff	2
Advanced learners needs are being ignored	2
Difficulties with resources	2
Insufficient data on students	2
Unidentified students	2
Lack of understanding of teacher needs	2
Other	11

Table 7

What structures/systems are currently in place in your school that successfully support you to include learners with special needs in your classroom?

Descriptors	Frequency
Teacher aides	55
Resource/support teacher	53
Special Programmes	29
1-1 teaching/small groups	18
Support from principals, senior staff and colleagues	11
Outside agencies	6
IEP process	5
Assessment and evaluation	4
Effective organisation	3
Support from guidance structures	3
Low class numbers	3
Special needs unit	2
Communication and collaboration	3
Volunteers	2
Professional development	2

Student peer support	2
Material resources	2
Adaptations	2
Other	4

Table 8

What structures/systems can you suggest that could be implemented in your school to support you to more successfully included children with special needs in your classrooms?

Descriptors	Frequency
More teacher aide hours	23
Special programmes	14
Smaller class numbers	12
Support from resource/support teachers	12
Professional development	12
Funding	11
More time	7
Extra 1-1 teaching/small group work (in class & withdrawal)	7
Material resources and adaptations	7
Extension programmes	7

More support for ESOL students	6
More support from SES	5
In class support	4
Release time	4
Support for behaviour disordered learners	3
Support from guidance/counsellor structures	3
Collaboration/consultation/support	2
Use of parent volunteers	2
Preparation prior to entry to class	2
Limit number of students with special needs in each class	2
Cross grouping	2
Other	9

Table 9

Responses by descriptor to the fourth question: Do you have any other comments?

Descriptors	Frequency
Funding issues	11
Need for professional development	10

Time issues	7
Need smaller class sizes	6
Lack of support from outside agencies	6
Need more teacher aides and support staff	5
High stress levels for teachers with special needs learners	4
Difficulties with identification	4
Recognition of support from teacher aides and special needs teachers	4
Learners with low and moderate needs get little support	3
Receiving adequate support	3
Inclusion will only work with appropriate support	2
Class teachers lack special needs training	2
Lack of support from parents	2
Behaviour management	2
Need immediate support	2
ESOL issues	2
Difficulties with IEPs	2
Difficulty including learners with high needs	2
Organisation and continuity of teacher aides	2

Importance of teacher planning and modifications	2
Other	6